

Flora & Fauna

Container Gardening

What makes container gardening so great? Consider the following short list of pluses:

Flexibility. Containers allow you to enjoy plants in areas where a traditional garden is awkward or impossible. Even with limited space in an urban apartment, you can grow fruits, vegetables, flowers and shrubs just about anywhere. Plants thrive on rooftops, decks, balconies, stairs and even on the stoop of your mobile home. If you do have a nice outdoor garden, you can vary your selection or save yourself the trouble of walking out to the yard by keeping herbs in the kitchen.

Container gardening also enables you to experiment with plants and to optimize or to control environmental conditions. If you live in New Hampshire, you can offer your sun-starved vegetables and herbs more light indoors or you can grow cacti or parsley in dry, well-drained soil that just doesn't exist in your outdoor garden. And if you live in Arizona, you can shelter those Siberian crabapple plants.

Your hanging wire baskets and old tin buckets are great tools to restrain plants such as sage that spread quite easily in an ordinary garden by containing them alone or in reserved areas.

Additionally, you can grow different types of plants in one cordoned container in order to allow plants to exist in symbiotic relationships. Plants help each other to survive. For example, oregano repels insects that bother broccoli and enhances the flavor of beans.

Also, containers allow you to offer special attention to your favorite fennel plant or Casablanca lily. If your particular herb sits on your windowsill next to your desk, then you can determine each day whether or not it needs a little more water or compost.

Mobility. Plants in containers can be moved easily. Whether it's shifting your pots of gardenias from your front porch to your backdoor during the rainy or cold season or transporting them to a new home, your plants can go with you. Do you have heavy pots? Then garden dollies can transport those containers indoors during an early frost.

Pest Control. If pests infect your calendula, you can easily move and treat those containers with appropriate sprays without disturbing other plants. Additionally, you can arrange containers so that plants can attract and repel insects or flies according to your needs. Some plants emit allelochemicals from their roots or leaves, which repel pests. For example, sweet basil can frighten away hover flies that bother your fennel. And beans attract insects that eat leaf beetles, which harm your corn.

Decoration. Pots of blooming petunias make the most austere entrance or sparsely decorated balcony or deck feel warm and inviting. Or maybe you want to draw more attention to your seasonally decorated doorway or window? Use geometrical techniques, below, for that bare wall, courtyard or patio. What's more, if areas of your yard look scraggly or muddy, you can mask such eyesores with a large pot or two of colorful nasturtiums or strawberries.

Even the smallest patio or porch can boast a wonderful crop. The container gardener is limited only by his imagination!

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How to Trim Your Pet's Nails

You should trim your pet's nails about once a month. You'll need a clipper designed specifically for the kind of animal you have (ex. scissor- or guillotine-style clipper).

1. Have your animal sit beside you. Place one paw in your hand and gently pull it forward. If your animal resists being held this way, help him or her grow accustomed to it by offering treats & praise.
2. Gradually shorten one nail. Be sure to stop before you reach the quick, the part of the nail that contains nerves and blood vessels. If you cannot see the quick clearly, stop cutting just behind the point at which the nail begins to curve downward.
3. If you cut into the quick, do not panic. Put some clotting powder on a moist cotton swab and press it firmly against the nail for several seconds. You can purchase clotting powder at a local pet store.
4. Repeat the process until all of the nails have been trimmed.
5. Do not forget to trim the dewclaw, which is located on the inside of each front leg just above the paw. (Some dogs do not have dewclaws.)
6. You can also look into purchasing special claw caps to fit over your pet's nails to further reduce scratches on floors and furniture. Check out www.softpaws.com.

May

- 1626 Native Americans sell Manhattan Island to the English for \$24 worth of cloth and buttons
- 1643 Louis XIV becomes king of France at the age of 4
- 1761 First US life insurance policy issued in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 1812 A new dance called the waltz is introduced at English ballrooms; critics call the dance disgusting and immoral
- 1877 The first Westminster Dog Show is held in England
- 1886 Atlanta pharmacist John Pemberton invents Coca-Cola; credits its energy boost to cocaine, an active ingredient in the drink
- 1947 B.F. Goodrich manufactures the first tubeless tire in Akron, OH
- 1964 Soap operas “Another World” and “As the World Turns” debut on national TV
- 1991 The world's largest burrito, weighing 1,126 lbs, is made

Health Tips: Stay Healthy While Traveling

You've planned and packed – you're all ready for your trip – but you may have overlooked one of the key ingredients for a great vacation: taking the necessary steps to ensure you and your family have a safe and **healthy** trip. Here are a few common ailments and their remedies:

Jet Lag. The headache, light-headedness and nausea associated with jet lag can cause a lot of suffering; plan ahead and you may be able to avoid it all. Several days before you leave, try going to bed a little earlier or a little later (if you are flying east or west, respectively), and start a stretching regiment. Hydrate yourself and eat lightly the day you travel.

Motion Sickness. There are some over-the-counter and prescription medications available to help with motion sickness as well as a few other tricks. When traveling by car, sit in the front seat and avoid reading as it only heightens the feeling of motion sickness. When traveling by boat, sit as close to the middle of the vessel as possible and look straight ahead at the horizon, a fixed point that will not move. When flying, try to sit near the wing of the plane, or the side where you are accustomed to driving. Ear plugs may help, too.

Dehydration. It's very easy to get caught up in the excitement of a vacation and get dehydrated. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids, and don't wait until you feel thirsty. Avoid caffeinated drinks and alcohol (especially when flying), which can dehydrate you even more.

Allergies. Bring any medications used on a regular basis. It's also a good idea to bring an antihistamine in case of accidental exposure to a substance that triggers an allergic reaction. It also may be helpful to pack your own pillowcase for use in hotels, and to request a non-smoking room.

Diarrhea. For most destinations, the major health risk to travelers is diarrhea, which may be easily avoided. In general, common sense prevails. Steer clear of uncooked meat, raw fruits and vegetables and un-pasteurized milk products, and drink only bottled water or water that has been boiled for at least 20 minutes. If you begin to feel sick or develop a fever, rest and drink tea or purified water. Most cases of traveler's diarrhea clear up within a few days.

Animal and Insect Bites. If you are bitten by a wild animal, see a doctor as soon as possible. You may require a tetanus shot and, in certain cases, a rabies shot. If bitten by a snake, lie as still as possible so not to spread the venom that may be present; then send others to get help. If hiking in the woods, check your body for ticks. You can remove a tick by putting Vaseline on a cotton ball and placing it over the tick. It will suffocate and die, allowing you to easily remove it with tweezers. Watch the area for rash over the next few weeks. See your doctor if you develop abdominal pain, diarrhea, fever, rash, cough or weight loss.

It's also a good idea to **keep a first-aid kit handy** for any emergencies that may arise during your trip. It should include: bandages, gauze, tape, scissors, tweezers, thermometer, antibiotic ointment, antiseptic, antihistamine, aspirin, cold and flu tablets, throat lozenges, anti-diarrhea medication, motion sickness medication, water purification tablets, antacid, insect repellent, cortisone cream and sunscreen.

Kid Corner: Internet Safety

"Don't talk to strangers" has been a caring parent's mantra since time immemorial. Yet when it comes to keeping their kids safe online, many parents fail to enforce the same safety rules. Kids today are growing up online. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, almost every school child has been online, and three-quarters of young people have Internet access from their homes.

Kids go online to research and complete school assignments and to learn about topics that interest them. They also go online to chat with friends, play games, download music, keep a journal or web blog, create websites, shop and more. It may seem like kids are pretty savvy web users, and many parents think that their children are better with computer than they are. But that doesn't mean that kids understand the dangers they could encounter on the Internet or how to avoid them.

The anonymity of the Internet allows stalkers, sex offenders, scam artists and a whole host of "bad guys" to come in contact with children more easily. According to the 2006 report "Online Victimization: A Report on the Nation's Youth" by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children:

- 1 in 7 children between the ages of 10 and 17 received a sexual solicitation online
- 1 in 3 had unwanted exposure to pictures of naked people or sexual activity
- 1 in 11 was threatened or harassed.

These statistics can seem quite dire and frightening, but the good news is that parents can help. Start by talking to your child about the benefits and dangers of the Internet.

- Ask your child what they do online, what websites they visit, who they chat with and what games they play. You can also look up what websites your child has visited by looking through the "History" folder on your computer
- When possible, go online with your children. Have them show you their favorite websites, online games and chat rooms. If they have a MySpace or FaceBook page, check it regularly and monitor the content and pictures that they post
- Keep the computer in a busy area of the house
- With your children, agree on rules of what they can and cannot do online. For example:
 1. Never give out your name, address, phone number, school name or any adult's credit card number to anyone online
 2. Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with anyone you meet online
 3. Never go into chat rooms unless a parent says it's okay
 4. Never open emails from people you don't know and never go to links you don't recognize
 5. Always tell an adult if you see anything online that makes you feel uncomfortable
- Teach children about plagiarism. Explain that if they conduct online research, they must give attribution to the author, organization, or website that created the content
- Consider using a filter, blocking or ratings system for your computer

For more information on Internet Safety, visit iKeepSafe.org.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/4 cup strawberry gelatin powder
- 2 drops red food coloring (optional)
- 1½ quarts strawberries, sliced (reserve a few for garnish)
- 1 pie shell, baked, 9-inch
- Whipped cream or topping

Preparation:

Combine sugar, cornstarch and water in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat until thickened and clear, stirring constantly. Remove from heat; stir in lemon juice, gelatin powder and food coloring if used.

Chill until mixture begins to thicken. Place strawberries in the baked pie shell and spoon slightly thickened gelatin mixture over the top. Chill the pie at least 4 hours, then top with whipped cream or whipped topping and garnish with reserved strawberry halves.

May Day History

May Day has a long and notable history as one of the world's principal festivals. The origin of the May Day as a day for celebration dates back to the days before the birth of Christ. Like many ancient festivals, it has a Pagan connection. For the Druids of the British Isles, May 1 was when the festival of Beltane held. For the Romans, the beginning of May was devoted to the worship of Flora, the goddess of flowers. In America and Britain, May Day has come to be regarded more as a day of joy and merriment for the kids, rather than a day of observing the ancient fertility rights.

Organization and Storage for a Child's Room

Children are wonderful, but they also come with **lots of baggage...** and toys, and clothes and games and school supplies and the list goes on! If a little one lives in your house, you'll have to find places to store lots of stuff. Discovering **space for storage** and using just the right items to organize your child's "stuff" will make the life of your child, and your life as a parent, more **peaceful and orderly**.

If you have an **infant**, you'll need space to put away tiny clothes, blankets, diapers, changing items and gifts that they'll use later. As a child grows to be a **toddler**, the clothes get bigger, toys multiply in number and books get thicker. And an **older child** acquires more and more: more clothes, more toys, more books, more things related to hobbies or school. It's amazing how much can be accumulated to provide a child with clothes, toys, books, hobbies and other *necessities* of life.

Out in the Open. Lots of things that a child uses can **go on shelves, hang on hooks or rest in containers** on a desk or tabletop. To keep things looking neat and orderly, keep books neatly arranged, games in boxes or toys hanging on pegs on the wall. You can also place smaller items into coordinated baskets or plastic boxes for a neat look on open shelves.

Out of Sight but Close at Hand. For things that simply cannot be made to look neat, use shelves or a chest of drawers **in a closet, arrange boxes in an armoire or slide things in shallow boxes under the bed**. Stacks of clothes, hobby supplies, school bags can easily be hidden **behind doors**, but remain convenient and ready at any time. For the ultimate organization, use boxes, files or storage baskets to keep things organized.

In-Room Organization. Probably the most useful and convenient storage space in a child's room is **the closet**. This is where things go that the child (or parent) uses every day, including clothes, books, school supplies or toys. Place seldom-used items near the back of the closet, with items used frequently up front and accessible. If closets are small or inconvenient, look to **furniture pieces for storage space**. A toy box can hold toys, a cradle is a great home for a collection of dolls, an armoire offers both hanging space for clothes, shelves for organization and drawers for smaller things.

Out-of-Sight Storage. Find areas **away from the bedroom** for storing outgrown toys or clothes that you can't part with, seasonal sports equipment or treasured school projects or art works. The areas that come to mind in a home that work well for out-of-sight storage are the **attic, under the stairs, in a garage or in a dry basement**. Use weather-tight storage containers to protect items from moths, mildew or dust.

Carpet Talk: Clever Quick Fixes

We all know it's not always safe to take matters into our hands when it comes to lifting a bad stain from carpet or upholstery. It's best to have your carpet care professional on your speed dial 99% of the time. That said, on occasion, immediate action can save your pricey investment and we've got a few tips that have proven to work for homeowners just like you (especially if you have taken the precaution of having your carpet sprayed with a protector like Scotchgard®). We make no guarantees because all carpet is different, but if you're caught in a bind, you might want to try any of these four quick fixes.

1) **Commercial glass cleaner** is usually formulated with rubbing alcohol, a great quick fix for a small spill like coffee – but only if you use a colorless one! Soak the area; let it sit for 5 minutes and blot. It might do the trick and it won't leave residues that attract future grime. If all you've got is the blue stuff, f'getaboutit!

2) We've had great success using **hair spray** (it also contains rubbing alcohol) on small pen ink stains. Spray and blot with a damp rag as soon as you notice the spot on the pile.

3) If you've got young kids, you know getting them to the bath-room immediately after they announce, "Mommy, I don't feel well." Acidic vomit (even if it's from your four-legged creatures) needs to be addressed immediately and the solution is in your fridge. Either **club soda** or a mixture of **baking soda** and water will do the trick.

4) If there's one household item that's indispensable, it's **salt**. Not only does it add zest to food but a number of household items can be cleaned up and made to look like new with this household staple. For grease-based carpet stains, try rubbing paint thinner on the stain with a 100% cotton cloth, then dump a generous amount of table salt on the area to absorb the grease. Vacuum up the salt and you should be stain-free.

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