

GOING POTTY



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When it comes to pots, there are so many different considerations in terms of shape, size, style, materials, placement and planting, that it's often difficult to know where to get started. Here's our guide to choosing containers without going potty!



Kirsty McLean has created hundreds of garden designs, for clients all over the North-east of Scotland and many community gardens in her work with Beechgrove Garden as guest designer since 2001.

Given the weather conditions here, outdoor containers need to be frost resistant to survive through the winter. Soggy soil expands when frozen and can cause some pots to crack and break, so it is important to look at the type of compost mixture you are using, too.

Go for heavier materials such as granite, terracotta or ceramic which should be less likely to blow over in a gale. Wheeled pot supports make it easy to move the container around and help improve drainage. You'll also want to either make sure your pot has drainage holes, or create some yourself.

Fill your containers with a peat-free multi-purpose compost, as garden soil is too heavy. Soil based John Innes - composts are good for potted shrubs or long-term plants, while Japanese Maples, Rhododendrons and Camellias need an ericaceous compost. Tall containers can be weighed down by half-filling the pot with aggregate before overlaying this with a permeable membrane then adding about 500mm of compost on the top. You can also fill the bottom of a pot with broken

polystyrene if your spot is sheltered. Adding some water retaining crystals and slow release fertiliser granules will cut down your maintenance workload.

For formal gardens, try Buxus spiral topiary in square lead cube planters, or try stone urns on pedestals overflowing with trailing ivy and hanging basket favourites for classic appeal. Terracotta containers look great with a standard bay tree, or go for a tall granite pot with Buxus balls.

Want something funkier? Try a colourful glass fibre reinforced plastic container with a metallic finish with a spiky Yucca gloriosa.

