

Easy Container Combos: Vegetables & Flowers

By Pamela Crawford

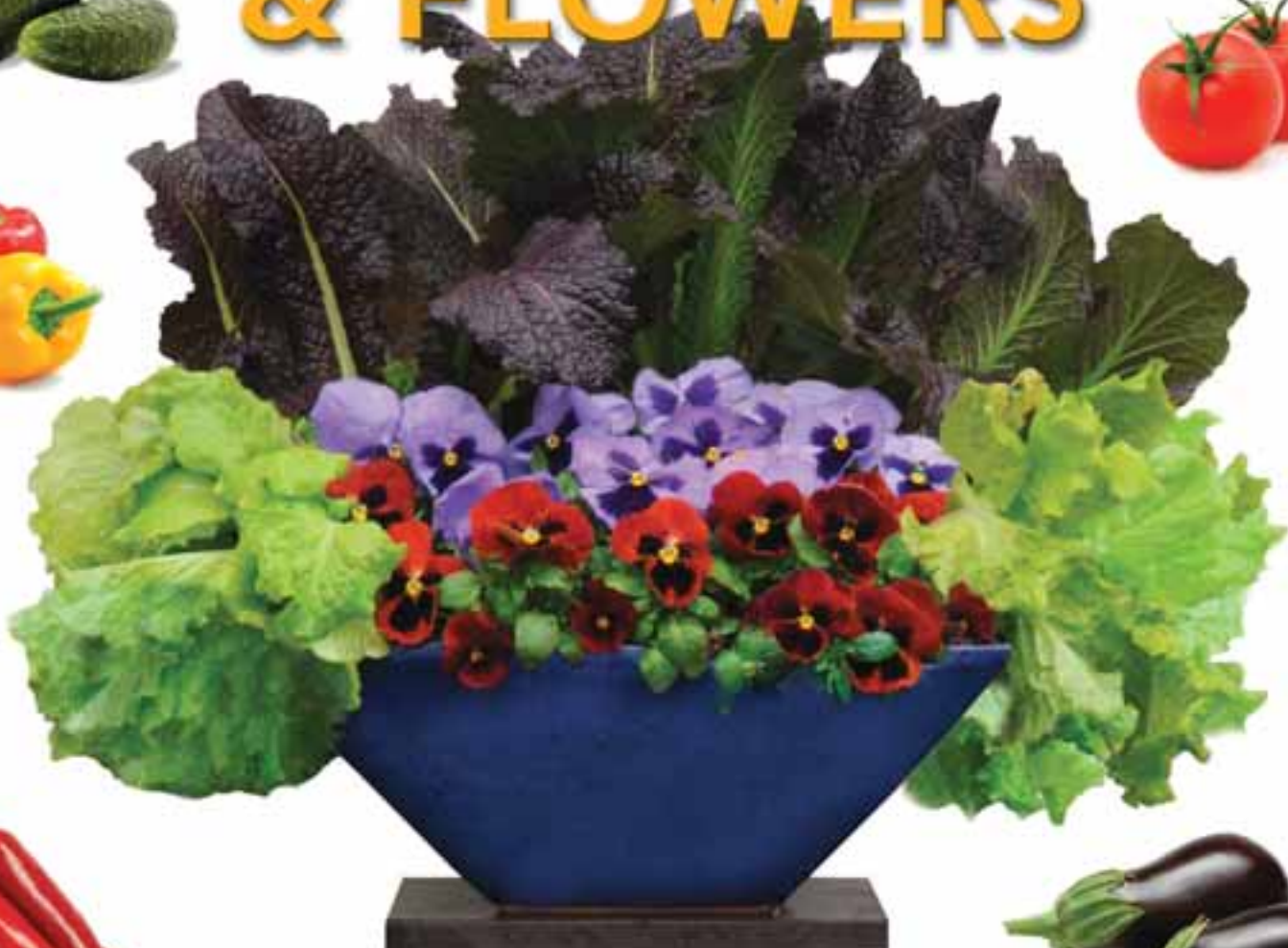
24 Sample Pages

Scroll down to see
pages.

EASY

CONTAINER COMBOS:

VEGETABLES & FLOWERS



Front Cover

Tasty Veggies & Gorgeous Flowers!

All plants were personally grown by the author, container guru, Pamela Crawford.



Pamela tested 1768 plants to find out:

- ✿ Which vegetables are easiest.
- ✿ How to make them look good in containers.

From the results of these trials, she will teach you:

- ✿ Foolproof growing methods for the 18 easiest vegetables.
- ✿ How to combine them with flowers for gorgeous container combos.

Reviews about Pamela Crawford's "Container Gardening Series:"

"This is the first time consumers have been able to do something special in a way that is easy and provides instant gratification."

*Charlyne Varkonyi-Schaub,
South Florida Sun-Sentinel*

"What puts her book head and shoulders above the rest is that the author planted the containers and kept them for an entire season, checking on them before putting the book."

*Susan Banks,
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Back Cover

COLOR GARDEN PUBLISHING \$19.95



Learn to Grow Easy Vegetables in Great-looking Container Combos!

Eight Easy Ways to Kill...

Vegetables and Flowers.

Buy the Wrong Plants.



Cauliflower tastes great but can be difficult to grow.

Most beginners buy plants that don't meet their expectations simply because they don't understand the plant's flowering habits - or the plant is an erratic performer.

Take this book with you to your garden center. Look up the flowers and vegetables in the index, and read about them prior to buying the plants. 'Easy Container Gardens' is a good choice to take with you as well. More flowers are referenced in that book.

You need to know how large a vegetable plant gets, how easy it is to grow in containers, when to plant it, and how many vegetables it will produce prior to buying it. The last chapter of this book includes this information.

Buy the Wrong Potting Mix.

Don't skimp on your potting mix. Good potting mix costs a little bit more, but makes all the difference. Plants grow larger and live longer with quality potting mix. Do not buy topsoil, garden soil, or potting soil for containers. It is too heavy, and the plants may rot and die quickly.

Look for a brand name you trust. Peters, Miracle Grow, Lambert's, and Fafard (along with many others) offer top-quality, potting mix.



Buy the Wrong Fertilizer.



I have killed plants with fertilizers several times. However, plants need nutrients, and fertilizer is an easy way to provide them. It hasn't been easy to choose the right one.

After years of mistakes and unhealthy plants, I discovered the fertilizer on page 36. It worked so well, without destroying anything in the process, that I put my name on it!

Plant in the Wrong Season.

Vegetables either like it warm or cool. Cabbages (right), for example, are cool-season vegetables, and if you plant them in the wrong season, they will not do well. I made this mistake several times and lost quite a few plants because of it.

See page 22 for listings of warm- and cool-season vegetables. The last chapter of this book gives much more detail about each vegetable.



Water Incorrectly.



Like people, plants need water to live. However, if you give them too much, they drown and die. If you give them too little, they die of thirst. Luckily, knowing when and how much to water is quite easy. See pages 38 to 40 for this information.

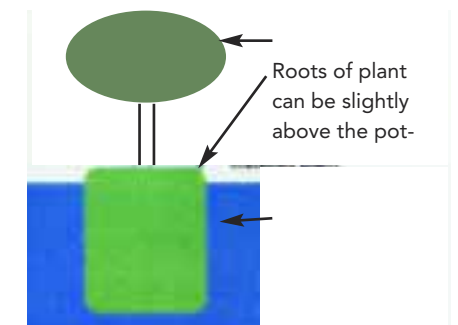
Most vegetables need a lot of water, but you can drown them just the same. Look for signs of wilting, or dry potting mix, before watering.

Left: See page 23 for more info on this combo.

Pile Potting Mix around the Stem of the Plant.

If potting mix or organic mulch comes into contact with the stem of many plants, the stem can rot, killing the plant (except for tomatoes). It is quite easy to avoid this plight by simply planting the plants a little a bit higher, as shown in the drawing.

To help retain water, some people like to put organic mulch on top of the potting mix after they have planted a container. This method works fine on large plants, like azaleas or ti plants, provided you don't pile the mulch up around the stem. However, on small plants, like impatiens or lettuce, it is quite difficult to mulch without harming the plant.



Proper planting method: Roots can be slightly above the potting mix to avoid stem rot.

Plant in a Pot without Holes in the Bottom.



If your pots don't have holes in the bottom for drainage, the plants will die (unless the pot is specially designed for self watering). See page 29 to learn how to drill holes in the bottom of pots.

Luckily, most pots come with holes in the bottom. If you see one you want to buy that doesn't have holes, ask the salesperson if he/she will drill them for you. Many garden centers offer that service.

Give the Plant the Wrong Amount of Light.

Different plants need different amounts of light. A tomato (shown) likes sun, while lettuce takes more shade. But, how much sun is enough for sun plants? The rule of thumb is a minimum of six hours of direct sun every day. In other words, if your tomato just gets two hours of sun, with shade the rest of the day, it will not do well.

Most vegetables need a full six hours of sun per day. If they get less than that, they will not perform well. However, some cool-season, leafy vegetables (arugula, kale, lettuce, mustard greens, spinach, and Swiss chard) can get by with partial shade. See pages 24 to 25 as well as the individual plant profiles in the last chapter of this book for more specifics.



Most Vegetables are Easier...

I had much more success in my vegetable trials than many of my neighbors who planted their vegetables in the ground. Potting mix (not potting soil, garden soil, or top soil) is almost always a superior, growing medium than the soil in your garden. Also, plants grown in container gardens attract fewer pests than those in the ground. Watering is harder, however, because containers dry out faster than the soil in your garden.

Only a few vegetables don't do as well in containers.

These Vegetables Don't Like Containers.



Asparagus isn't pretty in containers because the top is unwieldy.



Cantaloupe did well planted in the ground but didn't produce much fruit in my containers.



Corn grew decently but hardly produced any fruit in my containers. The corn it did produce was black!



Pumpkins are too large for containers.

In Containers than in the Ground.

Most Vegetables Did Extremely Well in Containers.

Luckily, most of my vegetables did well, once I figured out the basics that you are learning in this chapter. This hot pepper combo is an example. I did nothing to it after planting other than add water! And the production was quite high, as shown on the plates! Most of the peppers are hidden under the leaves.



Cool-and Warm-Season Veggies

I made lots of mistakes by planting vegetables during the wrong season. Some need cool weather to bear fruit, while others have to have hot weather. Unfortunately, some garden centers sell them at the wrong time of year, so take this book with you when you buy plants to lessen any disappointments. Look up a vegetable profile in the last chapter and look under 'Hardiness' to find out it's temperature tolerances. Although each vegetable is classified by either warm or cool season, each one has it's own specific preferences which you will find in the last chapter.

Cool-Season Vegetables Generally Prefer 32 to 80 Degrees.



Cool-season cabbage

Broccoli
Brussels Sprouts
Cabbages
Chards
Collards
Greens
Lettuce
Peas
Spinach

Warm-Season Vegetables Prefer Temperatures Over 80 Degrees.

Beans
Cucumbers
Eggplants
Okra
Peppers
Squash
Tomatoes
Watermelons



Above, right: Warm-season eggplant

Opposite: This combination thrives in the cool season. Side-planted window box with juncus grass, mustard greens, pansies, and lettuce. See pages 78 to 89 for more information about side-planting.



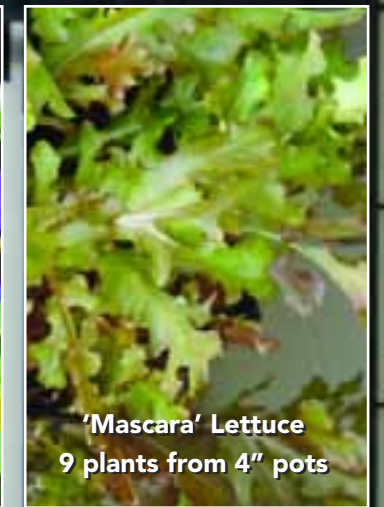
Juncus Grass
1 plant from a 1-gallon pot



Mustard Greens
1 plant from a 1-gallon pot



'Matrix Blotch' Pansies
12 plants from 4" pots



'Mascara' Lettuce
9 plants from 4" pots



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Cool-season cabbage

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- Cabbages
- Chards
- Collards
- Greens
- Lettuce
- Peas
- Spinach

Warm-Season Vegetables Prefer Temperatures Over 80 Degrees.

- Beans
- Cucumbers
- Eggplants
- Okra
- Peppers
- Squash
- Tomatoes
- Watermelons



Above, right: Warm-season eggplant

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1 plant from a 1-gallon pot



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How Many Veggies Does One Pot Produce?

Vegetable production varies considerably, based on type of vegetable and container size. For example, I planted many different types of peppers in side-planted containers. The 'Habanero' produced more than any of the other peppers. Had I known ahead of time that four plants would produce 236 peppers, I might have planted just one plant! Learn what you can about how much one plant will produce (shown throughout this book) so you don't plant more than you and all your friends can eat!

Our Record: 236 Habanero Peppers from One Container (Right)



I picked 236 peppers all at once from this container on a column (shown right) - when it was close to the end of the season. Had I been picking frequently, my overall harvest would have been even larger!

This container (shown right, buying info page 6) includes four 'Habanero' pepper plants located in the top of a side-planted container.

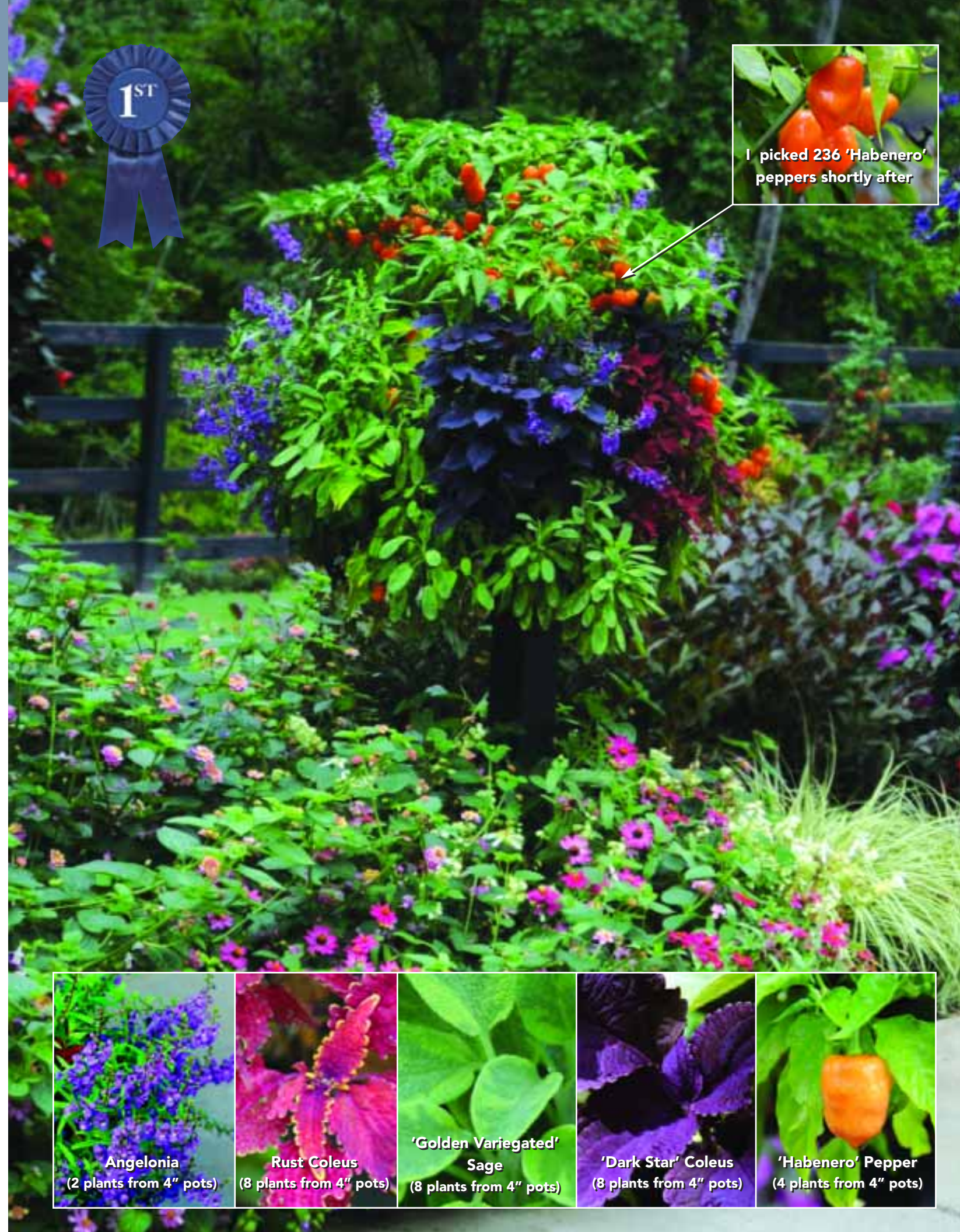
I planted the basket in June, and it lasted until mid-October with no care at all other than water!

Watermelon Only Bore Five Fruit.

Growing watermelon in containers might not be worth it, but it sure was a conversation piece! Visitors were amazed at the little watermelons sitting in the hot sun on the driveway.

As is the case with most container gardens, the watermelons didn't grow as large as they would have in the ground, only about one-third the size.

I made the mistake of picking them at the wrong time (see pages 55 to 56 for more info). But, the plant was so easy to grow, it was definitely worth the trouble.



I picked 236 'Habanero' peppers shortly after



Angelonia (2 plants from 4" pots)

Rust Coleus (8 plants from 4" pots)

'Golden Variegated' Sage (8 plants from 4" pots)

'Dark Star' Coleus (8 plants from 4" pots)

'Habanero' Pepper (4 plants from 4" pots)

Vegetables are Easier in Larger Pots.

Okra is a large plant that thrived in this large, cobalt blue container. It grew larger, produced more fruit, and required less water because of the large pot size. The okra plant is loaded with fruit, which are covered up by the leaves. [For more detailed okra information, see page 158.](#)

The fruit really hides behind the leaves, so much so that I didn't see it when it should have been harvested! Okra grows slowly in cooler weather but speeds up when it gets hot, so be sure to look for the fruit frequently. You can pick them when they are at their best - four to six inches long.

The flowers and other ornamental plants added more than just beauty. They extended the life of the whole container garden by three months. The okra and petunias died when they were three months old. Once the dead plants were cut off, the others lasted for an additional three months.



Once the okra died, I just cut the dead branches off, and the rest of the plants looked great for another three months.

Cultural Information

Light: Full sun, at least six hours per day

Season: Okra is one of the easiest vegetables for areas that have warm temperatures for at least 50 to 60 days. Many cooler areas of the world will not produce good okra. Okra prefers days of 85 degrees or warmer and nights at least in the 60's. The rest of the plants thrive in temperatures from 40 to 95 degrees.

Lifespan: The okra and petunias lasted about three months. The other plants kept going for an additional three months after the okra died.

Care: Fertilize on planting day with a slow-release mix described on page 36. Repeat if the leaves look yellowish or washed-out, although the fertilizer should last from six to nine months.

Trim the sweet potato vine as needed.

Water: Water thoroughly, if the plants show signs of wilt or the soil feels dry when you push your fingertip into the potting mix (see pages 38 to 40). I watered this one every day in mid summer (after it was about a month old) and every other day in cooler weather.

Troubleshooting: I missed the first harvest! Since the okra fruit were hidden by the leaves, I didn't see them when they were they ready to pick, about four to six inches long. It's as if they appeared overnight and grew as big as bananas! I also had a few holes in the leaves of the sweet potato, which I ignored.

Planting Plan: Easy. Simply plant the okra against the back of the pot, centering it with the sides. Tuck the other plants along the edges. Be sure to plant in good-quality potting mix, not garden soil, top soil, or potting soil, which can kill your plants. Other important planting tips are shown on pages 32 to 35.

Container: Anamese's *Tall Milan* in blue (36.5"H x 15.5"W). Shop for it at www.anamese.com.



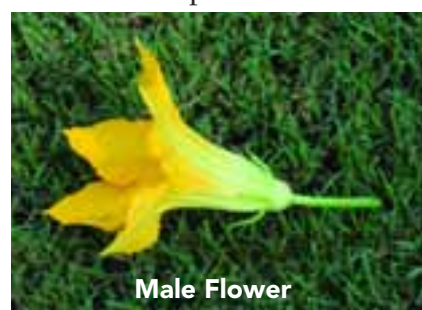
Squash Looks Good Alone in Great Pot.

Yellow squash (also called summer or crooked neck squash) looks fabulous all by itself in this huge, blue container. I was quite surprised at how fast it grew - from a seedling to the size shown in only six weeks! It was the first vegetable to bear fruit in my entire garden, but lasted only about two or three months. However, it produced quite a bit of squash. [For more detailed squash information, see page 163.](#)

I planted the same squash in mixed containers at the same time. It was much more crowded but bore fruit in about the same time period: six weeks. The fruit was smaller, and there wasn't as much of it, but it tasted good all the same.

Be sure to look under the leaves for the vegetables because they often hide!

This planting is a good example of how easy many vegetables are when planted in quite large containers. And, if you plant them in a fabulous container like this one, they are worthy of the nicest home or patio.



Male Flower



Female Flower

Cultural Information

Light: Full sun, at least six hours per day

Season: When temperatures range from 50 to 90 degrees. Optimum temperatures are 65 to 75 degrees.

Lifespan: Two to three months in this container

Care: Fertilize on planting day with a slow-release mix described on page 36. I trimmed it occasionally to keep it looking even.

Water: Water thoroughly, if the plants show signs of wilt or the soil feels dry when you push your fingertip into the potting mix (see pages 38 to 40). I watered this one every day (after it was about a month old) in mid summer and every other day in cooler weather.

Troubleshooting: Downy mildew is a problem that is hard to control (requires weekly spraying) in areas of the country that have it. It devastated this plant before I knew what had hit it. Once I understood how to control this pest, I didn't lose any more plants to it. See page 43 for more information. Squash are also sometimes bothered by squash vine borers, which bore into the stem and eat the stem from the inside out. If you see a small, black dot on the stem, cut open the stem and remove the bug.

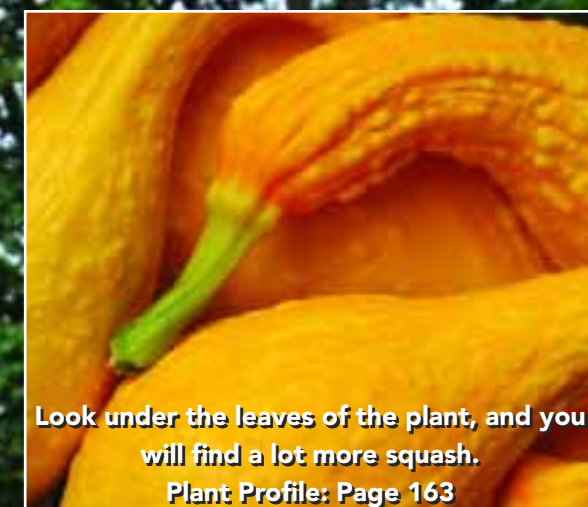
Planting Plan: Easy. Simply plant one plant in the middle of a large pot.

Container: This container is HUGE - I don't think the photo shows how big it is. It is one of my largest, weighing in at 150 pounds! I left it outside last winter, and it didn't crack at 15 degrees. It is Campania International's *Anduze Urn* (27"W X 31"H). For best results, stick to larger containers (at least 18-inch diameter) for this type of squash for best production.

Shop for it at www.campaniainternational.com.



Squash flowers bloom in the morning and are often covered by the leaves.



Look under the leaves of the plant, and you will find a lot more squash. Plant Profile: Page 163



Even Tomatoes Look Good...

This design demonstrates the easiest and most attractive way to grow tomatoes. The plant is a dwarf bush tomato (Husky Cherry Red) rather than a vine tomato, and bush tomatoes are easier to control. Planting bush tomatoes with a support, like this obelisk, means you won't have to do much fooling with them to get them to stay upright as they grow taller. Use an attractive obelisk, like this one, instead of an ugly tomato cage, if you want it to look good. Also, plant in a great looking pot for a container garden worthy of the nicest patio. This arrangement wins a red ribbon because of its ease of care. I did nothing but water it after it was planted. For more detailed information about tomatoes, see page 164.

Making tomatoes attractive was my biggest challenge in this book, and simplicity works best.

Tomatoes grown alone in large pots (more than 16-inch diameter) get a little larger than those grown in the same size pot but are surrounded with flowers.

I was extremely happy with 'Husky Cherry Red' tomato because it bore a lot of great-tasting tomatoes and exhibited a neat growth habit. These small tomatoes are called cherry tomatoes because their size resembles cherries.

Home-grown cherry tomatoes taste much better than those you find in the grocery store.

Cultural Information

Light: Full sun, at least six hours per day. Don't even attempt tomatoes in less light.

Season: Spring through fall for most warmer areas. Best night temperatures range from 59 to 68 degrees for setting. Daytime temperatures above 90 degrees and night temperatures about 70 degrees result in less flowers and tomatoes. I was pleasantly surprised to see this one produce fruit from July until September in my Georgia garden after it was planted in June.

Lifespan: The plant actually lives for about three to four months, but the leaves start looking a bit rough after it produces quite a bit of fruit, about two months after planting from a 4-inch pot. It bears fruit for quite a while, about two months.

Care: Fertilize on planting day with a slow-release mix described on page 36. Repeat, if the leaves look yellowish or washed-out, although the fertilizer should last from six to nine months.

Water: I watered this one every day (after it was about a month old) in mid summer and every other day in cooler weather. See pages 38 to 40 to learn more about watering.

Troubleshooting: No problems at all. The leaves looked a little rough after the plant had borne lots of fruit. I left it alone.

Planting Plan: Easy. Simply plant a tomato in the middle of a large pot in good quality potting mix, not potting soil. Place the obelisk over the plant at planting time. It's harder to get it over taller plants.

With Attractive Hardware and Pots.



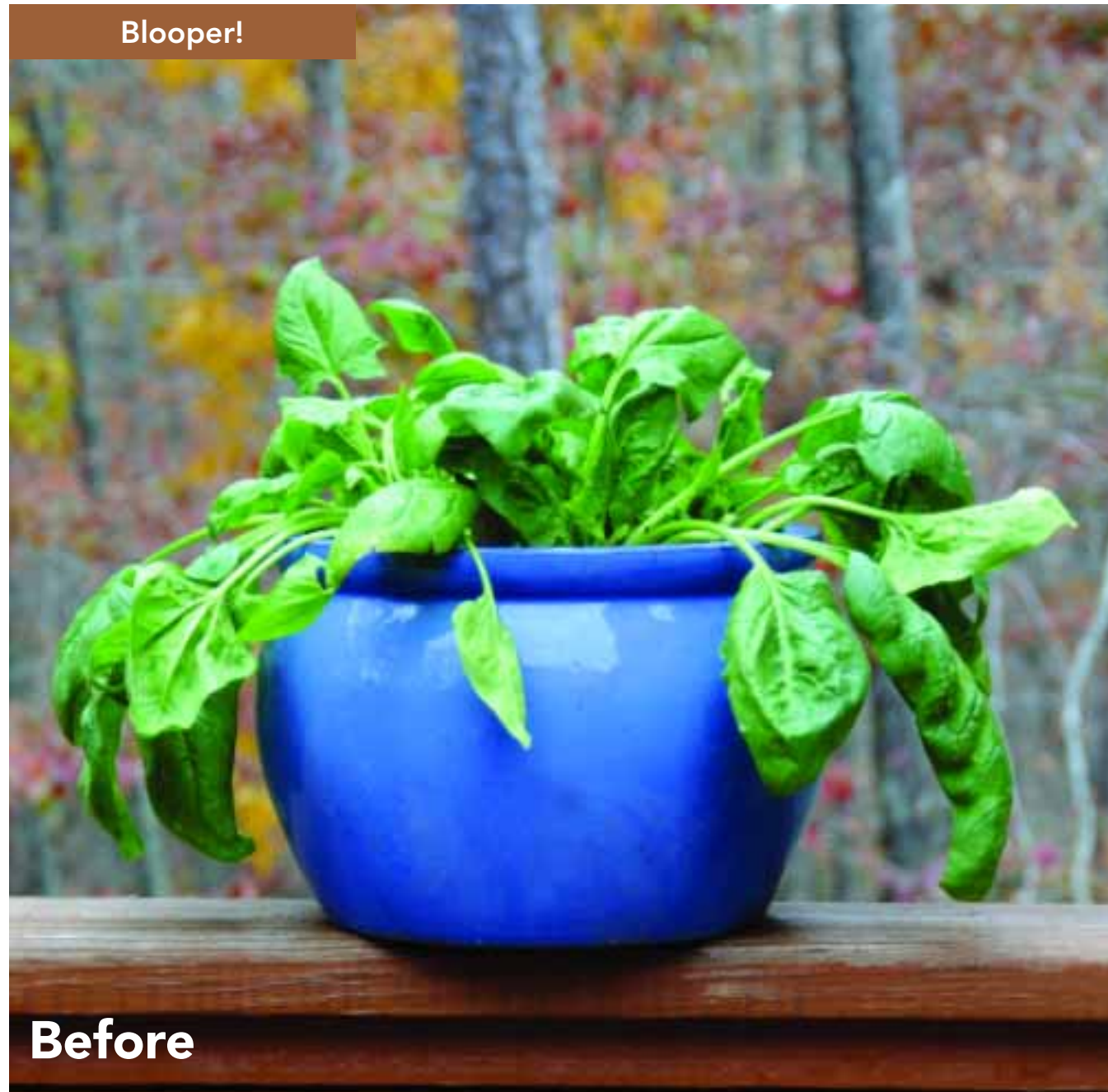
'Husky Cherry Red' Tomato
One plant from a 5" pot

Add Flowers to Vegetables To...

Some vegetables don't look very good by themselves and need flowers added to make the entire arrangement attractive. These include arugula, beans (large, vining types), cucumbers, peas, spinach, and huge, viney tomatoes.

This spinach is a good example. It looks rather non-descript alone in the container below, but looks beautiful when combined with chrysanthemums and violas (in a larger pot) - both edible flowers. The smaller pot on this page measures 8"H x 10"W, while the larger one (shown right) is 10"H x 16"W.

Blooper!



Before

Improve Their Appearance.



After



Easy Flowers That Look Good...

With Vegetables.

Just add water! That's all it takes to grow these vegetable companions if you follow the growing requirements shown below. Flowers (including annuals, herbs, tropicals, and perennials) that share the same growing conditions as your vegetables will thrive with them. Blue ribbon plants are the easiest. These flowers and more are covered in detail in the last chapter of this book.

More blue ribbon flowers are covered in this book's companion volume, "Easy Container Gardens."

Characteristics of Blue Ribbon Plants

- ✿ Dependable. Performs the same way every year.
- ✿ Requires little to no trimming.
- ✿ Adjusts to most climates.
- ✿ Lives a long life - at least the four to six months of your growing season.
- ✿ Fares well with little pest susceptibility.
- ✿ Established record - it's been around for enough years to fully understand it.
- ✿ Blooms continuously for a minimum of five to six months (except for plants used primarily for leaf color)

Growing Requirements for Blue Ribbon Plants



Dragon wing begonias and coleus, two blue ribbon plants.

- ✿ Use potting mix (not potting soil, top soil, or garden soil) with a brand name you trust.
- ✿ Use the fertilizer described on page 36.
- ✿ Be sure the pot has holes in the bottom, and don't bury the plant too deep (pages 13 and 29).
- ✿ Plant in the right amount of light and in the correct season, which varies per plant. Check the individual plant profiles in the last chapter of this book for specifics.
- ✿ Water correctly (pages 38 to 40).

Blue Ribbon Annuals, Perennials, and Herbs



Angelonia



Begonia, Dragon Wing



Begonia, Wax



Black-Eyed Susan 'Tiger Eye'



Coleus



Creeping Jenny



Crotons



Daisy, California Bush



Grass, 'Fireworks'



Grass, Fountain



Grass, Juncus



Impatiens 'Sunpatiens'



Lantana



Lavender



Melampodium



Pansies and Violas



Purple Queen



Rosemary



Sage, Golden Variegated



Salvia, Annual



Salvia, 'Mystic Spires'



Scaevola, Blue



Sedum



Ti Plant