



A Kitchen Garden In Every Blue Mountains Home



Planter Box Instructions & Guide

This guide is for the first time (or first for a long time) gardeners. Some experienced gardeners continue to use planter boxes for certain situations, but for beginners they are a good way of simplifying the various tasks that have to be learned. Once you have gained confidence with the Planter Box, you can progress either to more planters, or into your Small Organic Garden.

What you need to build your planter box:

A large plant pot, box or planter, the simplest and cheapest being a polystyrene vegetable box. Make sure there is ample drainage (cut several 1cm holes in the base) and that the box is at least 20cm deep.

Quality potting mix, enough to fill the planter to within 5cm of the top.

Seedlings – in Spring (September-November) the easiest seedlings to grow in your planter are lettuce, bush beans, spring onions, broccoli, parsley and rocket. As the season passes into Summer try planting tomatoes, cucumbers and basil. The season also tends to be delayed the further up the mountains you live. There should be an appropriate selection of seedlings at your local nursery, supplied by Oasis as part of this project.

Organic liquid fertiliser – even better if it contains liquid seaweed, old water or soft drink bottle for watering and feeding.

Before you start to construct your planter box

Think about where you are going to place your box, as it will probably be too heavy to move after you have completed it and needs plenty of sunshine, as well as shelter from the hottest sun mid to late afternoon. Locating the planter on a deck or patio will help to keep it away from most slugs and snails. Exposure to rain is good, but protection from very heavy rain, hail and wind is also important. Raising the planter off the ground with wood or pot legs will help with drainage and snails.

Constructing the Planter Box

With the planter suitably located, fill it with potting mix to within about 5cm of the top. Gently pour some water over the top of the potting mix to help with settling and as preparation for planting.

Seedlings may be small now, but they need space to grow to full size, so aim to have at least 15cm between plants. Ease the seedlings out of the punnet. If the punnet has individual cells, squash the outside of each cell prior to pulling the seedling out. If the punnet is undivided, empty the whole punnet and gently pull apart each individual seedling. Look carefully at the seedling: There is a point at which the roots stop and the stem (green colour) begins. When you plant the seedling, this point should stay at the top level of the potting mix. Make a hole in the potting mix with your fingers, large enough for the root ball of the seedling to sit in to, and deep enough so that all of the roots are buried. Place the seedling in and gently press the potting mix back around the roots, filling the hole again. Pour some water around the seedling and check the depth of planting. Repeat this process until you have filled your planter box. You can plant all of the same type of seedling or mix them for variety.

Care of your Planter Box

Your seedlings will experience some shock from transplanting, but should look upright within a couple of days. They should look like they are starting to produce new leaves within a week or so. Watering is dependent on the weather – more in hot weather, less or none if the planter is getting rain. The first few days after planting are very important, so a little water every morning for the first week may be advisable. Once established, check the potting mix every couple of days to make sure it is not drying out and water appropriately. Once a week apply a mixture of organic liquid

fertiliser – it is important you dilute the fertiliser according to the instructions on the container. Small seedlings really don't like hot afternoon sun, so if you can, protect them with shade cloth or similar until after they are established.

Pests and Other Problems

Slugs and snails mostly come out at night – inspect your planter with a torch before going to bed and relocate any that you find. Repeating this for several days will reduce numbers significantly. Experiment with deterrents – coffee grounds regularly splashed over the leaves; crushed eggshells; garlic and chilli. If all else fails, use slug pellets that are safe for pets, native animals and children. Cabbage white butterflies can be a problem on some plants (eg rocket, broccoli) as the caterpillars eat the leaves. This can be prevented by covering your planter with a fine bird netting or net curtain. (Use bamboo canes to prop these up and move around as needed.) This will also help with birds who take an interest in your crop. If possums are a problem, a wire cage can be placed over the top of the planter.



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