

# FOOD GARDENING *in Containers*



[melindamyers.com](http://melindamyers.com)





# Benefits of Growing Food Plants in Containers

- Expand Your Garden Space and Planting Options with Container Gardens
- **Add planting Space**
  - Hanging baskets
  - Underutilized space, like along a walkway
  - Rooftop - check structural strength first
- **Convenience**
  - Garden is close for planting, maintenance and harvest
- Bring the garden to the table or event
  - Or the table is the garden
- **Portable garden**
  - Move out of the way when entertaining
  - Bring it to the party to share
- **Functional**
  - Screening and defining spaces
- **Accessible**
  - Raise the planting level
  - Place where plants can be reached
  - Demeter Planter with calendula, Romaine lettuce, pansies and Alaska nasturtium (shown)
  - Straw bale garden in DIY mobile structure
  - Elevated garden with various veggies
    - ✦ Set in place before filling with soil and plants
    - ✦ Or, purchase on wheels for easy moving
- **Extend the season for plants not suitable to the growing conditions**
  - Imperial Star artichoke and verbena in pot
- Make it pretty and edible
  - Red Sails and Freckles lettuce with pansies
  - Lettuce with Night Sky petunia
  - Fragrant heliotrope and curled parsley
  - Assorted greens in formal container
- Kale with dried materials
- **A few basic tips and tricks**
  - Selecting the container
    - ✦ Consider function and aesthetics
    - ✦ Drainage holes or weep holes on self-watering pots a must
    - ✦ Material influences maintenance
- Materials used
  - Terra cotta
    - ✦ Heavy and dries out quickly
    - ✦ Ti plant, basil, Swiss chard, ornamental kale and fennel
  - Plastic
    - ✦ Lightweight, doesn't dry out as quickly
    - ✦ Peppers, parsley, calibrachoa, lantana
  - Cocoa mat
    - ✦ Some, including me, find it hard to maintain needed moisture
    - ✦ Some line cocoa mats with garbage bags or disposable diapers
    - ✦ Aqualiners contain plastic and hold moisture longer
    - ✦ Set plastic pot inside the cocoa mat lined container
    - ✦ Lizzano tomato in hanging basket (shown)
- **Weather proof containers for perennials**
  - Grow pots, plastic, fiberglass, wood, concrete
- **Size of container influences maintenance**
  - The smaller the container, the less soil to hold moisture, so you water more often
  - Topsy Turvy tomato planter
  - Or DIY 5 gallon bucket upside down planter
  - Shoe caddy herb planter

## Wild Valley Farms

Healthy Garden, Healthy Life

Our family of products includes Wool Pellets, helping you grow beautiful, healthy and productive plants with less effort. Organic Wild Valley Farms' Wool Pellets increase the soil's moisture-holding ability by absorbing and retaining moisture then releasing it when needed by the plants. University research found these pellets promote healthier growth, increase soil aeration and reduce watering frequency by as much as 25% -- saving you time all year and easing your mind when you go away on vacation.

This long lasting, sustainable, water saving product is made from belly wool and tags that cannot be used for clothing. Use Wool Pellets when gardening indoors and out to improve soil health and help plants grow. Mix ½ cup of pellets into each gallon of soil for gardens, flowerbeds and containers. Or sprinkle pellets around existing plants and push or work it into the soil..

For more information, visit [wildvalleyfarms.com](http://wildvalleyfarms.com)





- Prefab vertical planters
- DIY green wall with sage, portulaca and thyme
  - ✦ 2X4 frame, plywood back
  - ✦ Cover planting surface with landscape fabric, wire mesh and/or lattice
  - ✦ Many plant garden when horizontal, allow plants to root for a week or two and then mount vertically
  - ✦ Make sure plants top to bottom receive needed water
- LiveWall Green Wall System
- **Self-watering pots**
  - Tomato with annual vinca
  - DIY self watering pot
    - ✦ Vacation Care for Plants
    - ✦ Homemade Wick Watering System
- **Double potting**
  - Place container with drainage holes inside pot without drainage holes
- **Budget wise**
  - Plant in nursery pots or 5-gallon buckets that did not contain chemicals
  - Hide with plants in decorative pots
- **Repurpose items**
  - Lettuce in gutters (shown)
  - Grow system using gutters
  - Colander of greens and herbs
  - Bucket with heliotrope and lettuce
- **Potting mix**
  - Should be light and fluffy
  - Retains moisture (peat moss, coir, compost)
  - Drains well (vermiculite, perlite, rice hulls)
  - Retains nutrients
  - Changing soil yearly reduces the risk of pest problems
- **Add Wild Valley Farms Wool Pellets**
  - Absorbs moisture and releases it as soil dries
  - Reduces watering by up to 25%
  - Adds air space for better plant growth
  - Lasts throughout the season
- **False bottoms reduce weight and amount of soil needed**
  - DIY solutions
    - ✦ Crushed water bottles, cell packs, etc...
      - Cover with landscape fabric to prevent soil from filtering out
    - ✦ Ups-A-Daisy and Better than Rocks commercial products
- **Fertilize**
  - Add Milorganite or another slow-release fertilizer at planting
    - ✦ Make second application about 6 to 8 weeks later if needed
  - Fast-release fertilizers are applied every week or two throughout the growing season
    - ✦ Follow label directions
- **Number of plants per pot**
  - General recommendation
    - ✦ 3-4 plants for 10-12" pot
    - ✦ 4-6 plants for 14-16" pot
    - ✦ 6-8 plants for 16-20" pot
  - Container garden shown at planting and end of season
    - ✦ Brussels sprouts, flat leaf parsley, marigolds, Red Rubin basil
  - Check plant tag or seed packet for mature size and adjust number of plants used as needed



## About Melinda

Nationally known gardening expert, TV/radio host, author & columnist Melinda Myers has over 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including Can't Miss Small Space Gardening, the Midwest Gardener's Handbook, and Jackson and Perkins' Beautiful Roses Made Easy. She hosts the nationally-syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" program airing on over 115 TV and radio stations throughout the U.S. Melinda also hosts the internationally distributed Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" DVD series, including the latest Food Gardening for Everyone DVD set. She is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine, writes the twice monthly "Gardeners' Questions" newspaper column and a nationally-distributed gardening column. She appears regularly as a guest expert on national and local television and radio shows.

Visit Melinda's website,  
[melindamyers.com](http://melindamyers.com)



- **Watering containers**

- Check daily
- Water thoroughly when top few inches are dry until excess water runs out drainage holes
- Mulch with leaves, evergreen needles or other organic mulch at planting
  - ♦ Helps conserve moisture until plants grow and cover soil surface
- Conserve water by using warm up water for containers
- Plant Nannies, glass globes, and others that supplement regular watering
- Irrigation for containers
- DIY self-watering pot
  - ♦ 5-gallon bucket (cover or add Mosquito Dunks) filled with water
  - ♦ Cotton fabric or similar materials to serve as a wick
    - Secure washer to end to keep wick in bucket
  - ♦ Place wick an inch or two into the soil through drainage holes
  - ♦ Water moves through capillary action from reservoir to planting mix
- Research for Using Rain Water for Containers

- **Combination plantings**

- Mixed flowers, vegetables and herbs in one container
  - ♦ Tomato, strawberry, marigold, lobelia, moneywort (shown)
  - ♦ Make sure all the plants require the same growing conditions and are equally assertive
  - ♦ Planters shown
    - Tomato with lantana and moss rose
    - Tomato, red cabbage, zinnia, basil, and curled parsley in washtub
  - ♦ One plant per pot is more productive

- ♦ Create a garden with a grouping of pots that contain just one plant each

- **Pot lifter, casters and other devices make moving pots easier**
- **Extend the season - providing frost protection**
  - Wall-o-Water
  - Floating row covers
- **Protecting planters from birds, squirrels and chipmunks**
  - Protect Plants and Containers from Squirrels
- **Overwintering perennial container planters in cold climates**
  - Sink pot of hardy plants in ground (plastic or nursery pots) to insulate roots
  - Group pots together in sheltered location
    - ♦ Insulate roots with wood chips, annual pots, bags of leaves
  - Store in unheated garage, barn or shed
    - ♦ Water whenever the soil is thawed and dry
  - Overwinter non hardy plants as houseplants
    - ♦ Sunny location, water as needed



## **UPCOMING**

## **APPEARANCES & WEBINARS**

*Check often as more appearances and webinars continue to be added.*

### **May 12<sup>th</sup> Webinar**

*How to Plant a Rain Garden*

### **May 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Roots & Branches  
Community Event**

*Food Gardening for Your Health  
and Well Being*

### **May 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Ebert's Greenhouse Village**  
*Rose Care 101*

### **June 1<sup>st</sup> Webinar**

*Creating a Pollinator Paradise*

### **June 15<sup>th</sup> Webinar**

*Supporting Native Bees*

### **June 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Ebert's Greenhouse Village**  
*The Wonderful World of  
Hydrangeas*



# You Can Grow Anything in a Pot - Here are a Few to Try

*For more detailed information on growing specific plants, see these handouts from past webinars.*

*Recordings of all these webinars are still available to watch on demand for free on my website.*

- Taking Your Veggie Garden to the Next Level
- Tomatoes: Tips & Tricks...
- Growing Nutritious Herbs & Vegetables in a Garden or Container
- Jump Start Your Season and Protect Your Plants
- Organic Pest Management for Vegetable & Flower Gardens
- Designing Your Small Space Garden
- Getting Started Growing Vegetable & Flower Gardens
- How to Plan a Vegetable Garden
- Helpful Ideas for New Plant Parents
  - Covers gardening terms, techniques and more

All-America Selections (AAS) are tested nationally and proven to perform well in home gardens and containers. Winners must offer some improvement over other varieties on the market. They may be more productive, compact, disease resistant, taste better or have other desirable traits.

- Nutritious Garden in a Pot
- Greens
  - Growing Lettuce in a Container
  - Greens and parsley in a pot
  - Braising greens
  - Mix of greens, Tuscan baby leaf kale in elevated planter
  - Lacinato kale in planter

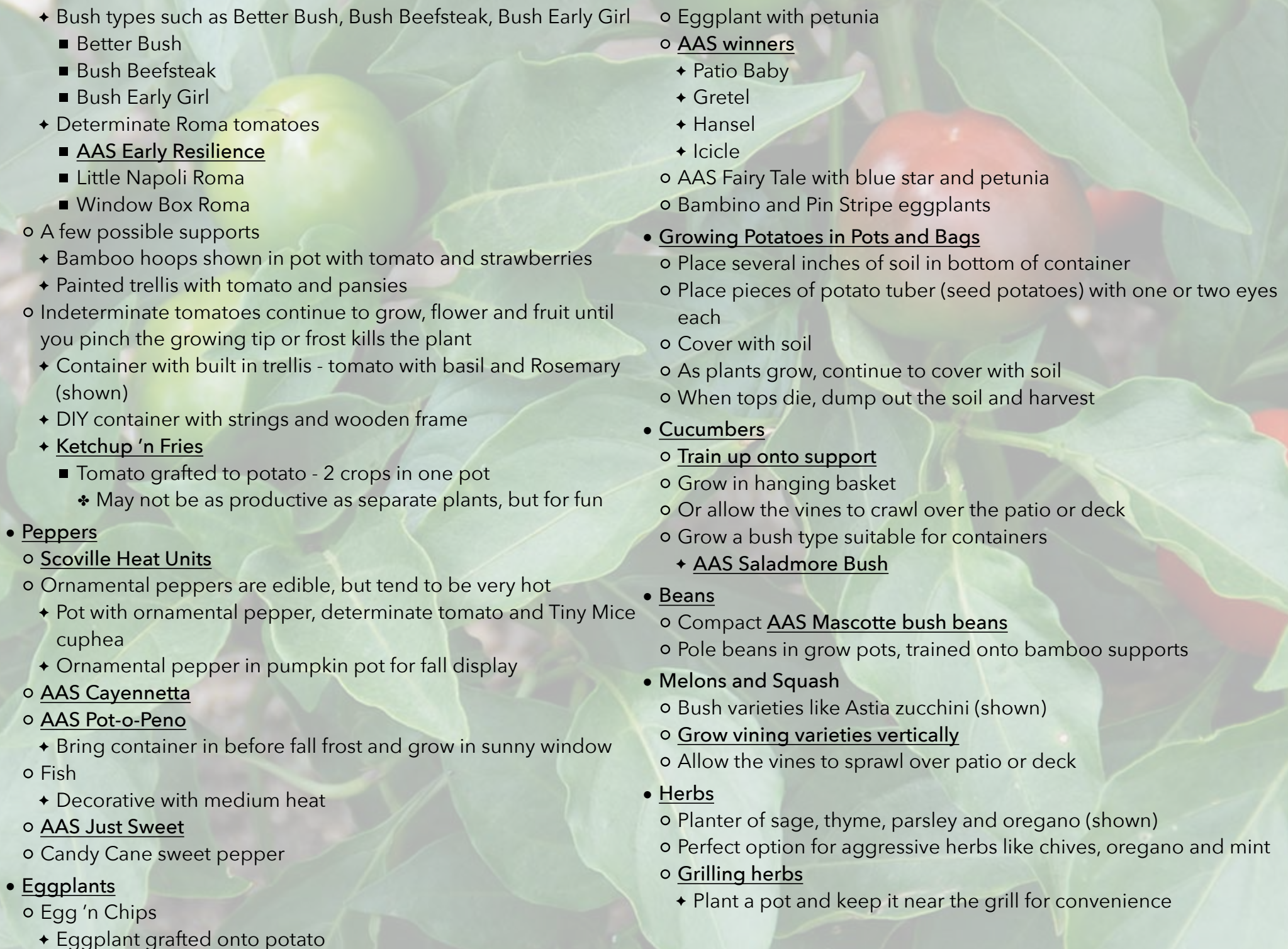
- Greens are shade tolerant and benefit from afternoon shade as temperatures rise
- Upright and trailing fuchsia with Swiss chard
- Mustard, celosia, Jade Princess millet
- Heat tolerant greens
  - ✦ Lettuce
    - Sandy, Red Sails, Black Seeded Simpson, Oakleaf
  - ✦ Malabar climbing spinach
    - Not a true spinach, but has a nutty, buttery spinach flavor
- Peas
  - Train on support
  - Grow compact varieties
    - ✦ Patio Pride, Sugar Ann, Snak Hero
- Root crops
  - Salad radishes
  - Beets
  - Short and half long carrots
- Cabbage adds bold texture to container gardens
  - Savoy in washtub set in garden
  - Red cabbage combined with pineapple sage and pansies
  - White cabbage with parsley and Swiss chard
- Broccoli with Swiss chard, verbena and Diamond Frost euphorbia
- Tomatoes
  - Determinate tomatoes grow a certain height and stop and produce fruit in a short period
    - ✦ They may or may not need staking
  - ✦ AAS Patio Choice
  - ✦ AAS Terenzo
  - ✦ Orange Robin

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- 
- ✦ Bush types such as Better Bush, Bush Beefsteak, Bush Early Girl
    - Better Bush
    - Bush Beefsteak
    - Bush Early Girl
  - ✦ Determinate Roma tomatoes
    - AAS Early Resilience
    - Little Napoli Roma
    - Window Box Roma
  - A few possible supports
    - ✦ Bamboo hoops shown in pot with tomato and strawberries
    - ✦ Painted trellis with tomato and pansies
  - Indeterminate tomatoes continue to grow, flower and fruit until you pinch the growing tip or frost kills the plant
    - ✦ Container with built in trellis - tomato with basil and Rosemary (shown)
    - ✦ DIY container with strings and wooden frame
    - ✦ Ketchup 'n Fries
      - Tomato grafted to potato - 2 crops in one pot
        - ❖ May not be as productive as separate plants, but for fun
  - Peppers
    - Scoville Heat Units
    - Ornamental peppers are edible, but tend to be very hot
      - ✦ Pot with ornamental pepper, determinate tomato and Tiny Mice cuphea
      - ✦ Ornamental pepper in pumpkin pot for fall display
    - AAS Cayennetta
    - AAS Pot-o-Peno
      - ✦ Bring container in before fall frost and grow in sunny window
    - Fish
      - ✦ Decorative with medium heat
    - AAS Just Sweet
    - Candy Cane sweet pepper
  - Eggplants
    - Egg 'n Chips
      - ✦ Eggplant grafted onto potato
    - Eggplant with petunia
    - AAS winners
      - ✦ Patio Baby
      - ✦ Gretel
      - ✦ Hansel
      - ✦ Icicle
    - AAS Fairy Tale with blue star and petunia
    - Bambino and Pin Stripe eggplants
  - Growing Potatoes in Pots and Bags
    - Place several inches of soil in bottom of container
    - Place pieces of potato tuber (seed potatoes) with one or two eyes each
    - Cover with soil
    - As plants grow, continue to cover with soil
    - When tops die, dump out the soil and harvest
  - Cucumbers
    - Train up onto support
    - Grow in hanging basket
    - Or allow the vines to crawl over the patio or deck
    - Grow a bush type suitable for containers
      - ✦ AAS Saladmore Bush
  - Beans
    - Compact AAS Mascotte bush beans
    - Pole beans in grow pots, trained onto bamboo supports
  - Melons and Squash
    - Bush varieties like Astia zucchini (shown)
    - Grow vining varieties vertically
    - Allow the vines to sprawl over patio or deck
  - Herbs
    - Planter of sage, thyme, parsley and oregano (shown)
    - Perfect option for aggressive herbs like chives, oregano and mint
    - Grilling herbs
      - ✦ Plant a pot and keep it near the grill for convenience



- o Tea herbs

- ✦ Grow your favorite for brewing tea
  - Roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*)
    - ❖ Sepals are brewed for Hibiscus tea

- o Pot of Red Rubin basil (more resistant to downy mildew), fennel, red cabbage and sweet potato vine

- o Pot of Green Dream parsley (finely dissected leaves), culantro (strong flavor of cilantro), Real Deal habanero pepper (purple leaves and orange peppers), Icicles helichrysum, wire vine, dahlia and Baby Tut papyrus

- o Cocktail herbs

- ✦ Lemon grass, nasturtium, Mojito and Kentucky Colonel mint, peppers, basil and lavender

- o Edible flowers

- ✦ Make sure plants have not been treated with a pesticide
- ✦ Remove reproductive parts to remove bitterness
- ✦ Nasturtium leaves and flowers
  - Alaska with variegated leaves
  - AAS Baby Rose - compact
- ✦ Calendula (pot marigold)
- ✦ Pansies
- ✦ Squash blossoms

- Fruit plants for containers

- o Strawberries

- ✦ Day neutral and everbearing produce fruit throughout the summer
- ✦ Strawberry pot - make sure water reaches all plants top to bottom
- ✦ Grow in hanging basket
- ✦ Strawberries in Grow Bags
- ✦ Strawberries in pot next to bed of Dragon Wing begonias

- o Raspberry Shortcake

- ✦ 2-3' tall and wide, thornless
- ✦ Produce fruit on new canes

- o Baby Cakes Blackberry

- ✦ 2-3' tall and wide, thornless

- o Compact blueberries

- ✦ Lots of varieties - Pink Icing shown
- ✦ One plant will produce fruit, 2 produce more than double
- ✦ Allows people with less-than-ideal soil to grow blueberries
- ✦ Midnight Cascade is new - good for hanging baskets

- o Compact or columnar apples

- ✦ Most apples require 2 trees for pollination

- Urban apple

- North Pole and Sentinel varieties

- ✦ Jon-a-Red compact and self fertile (only need one)

- o Figs

- ✦ Those in colder climates need to protect for winter

- o Pixie grape

- ✦ May be more for conversation than productivity

- o Citrus

- ✦ Those in colder climates need to bring them indoors for winter



*Thank You to Wild Valley Farms for  
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Melinda's Garden Moment AUDIO TIPS

Melinda's Garden Moment VIDEO TIPS

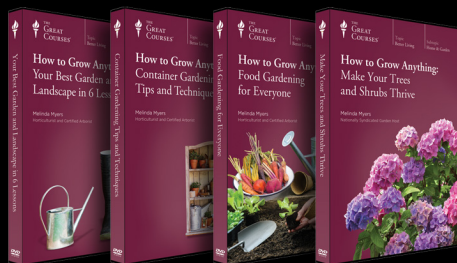
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MONTHLY GARDENING CHECKLISTS & MORE

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### DVD SERIES

Food Gardening for Everyone

Make Your Trees and Shrubs Thrive

Your Best Garden and Landscape

Container Tips and Techniques

## BOOKS

Midwest Gardener's Handbook

Small Space Gardening

Midwest Lawn Guides

Minnesota & Wisconsin Getting Started Garden Guide

Month-by-Month Gardening in Minnesota & Wisconsin

Michigan Getting Started Garden Guide

Month-by-Month Gardening in Michigan

Month-by-Month Gardening in Iowa



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