

## Fantastic ideas for fall and winter containers

Are your window boxes and hanging baskets looking tired? Do you want a little something by the door to greet your guests for Thanksgiving? Weather you are refreshing your containers or starting fresh, there are many choices to fit a variety of styles. Everything from colorful mums and pansies to statuesque conifers can help spice up your container for fall and winter.

In designing containers for the fall and winter season, we can still use the “thriller, filler, spiller” guidelines, with an evergreen, textural and architectural emphasis. Many of this season’s elegant containers depend more on great foliage and structure than on the bright flowers of summer, but don’t give up on that colorful sparkle either – some blooming options will perform straight into or even through winter. See the end of this article for some of our favorite components for fall and winter containers.

Fertilizing is still important for maintaining fall and winter interest containers. Use liquid fertilizer if your container is already potted up. If you are building a container from scratch, mix in a good organic starter fertilizer like E.B. Stone *Sure Start*. In addition, add new potting soil when putting new plants into old holes in your container. Think of it as a refresh. New potting soil has fertilizer in it that is quickly available to your plants. Further, a quick top dressing of potting soil on top of your updated container is also beneficial as a long summer has likely compacted what is already there. Also, don’t be scared about making new plants fit into holes where old plants have been removed. A new plant in a four inch pot can be nicely tucked into an old hole with some adjustment and be fine. Just be sure to water the new plant and the rest of the pot well after it is potted-up.

- *Tips for refreshing existing containers:* A fall container doesn’t have to be a brand-new composition. Keep what’s still performing, prune and deadhead, and replace the rest with complimentary plants that will take it up to the first frost or beyond. Though there’s no need to fully replace everything, it’s a good opportunity to refresh the potting soil with a bit of a top-dressing.
- *Tips for window boxes & long planters:* Repetition! You don’t have to have one of everything. Some of the best looking designs only have three plants in them repeated in a pattern. Remember here too, odd numbers.
- *Tips for hanging baskets:* Evergreen spillers can be really tough to find. We often use ground covers such as *Vinca*. A full basket arrangement that doesn’t spill can also look great, so get creative with the fillers. In colder climates many folks arrange cut evergreen branches and berries to create full green baskets for winter.
- *Tips for a year round container:* Sometimes it is worth it to choose a stunning, more expensive, evergreen center piece that you can use for the focal point all year by just changing out some of the other components seasonally.

And finally: don’t be afraid to accessorize! Sticks and stones, feathers, baubles, reclaimed architectural elements and more can work with your plants to make your containers remarkable in a weather-defying way.

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Sun	Shade
Thrillers	
<p><b><u>Conifers</u></b>  Hinoki Cypress such as  <i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> ‘Chirimen’  Japanese Red Cedar such as  <i>Cryptomeria</i> ‘Black Dragon’  Golden Monterey Cypress  <i>Cupressus macrocarpa</i> ‘Wilma Goldcrest’  Dwarf Alberta Spruce  <i>Picea glauca</i> ‘Pixie Dust’  Dwarf Pine <i>Pinus contorta</i> ‘Spaan’s Dwarf’</p> <p><b><u>Evergreen Grasses:</u></b>  <i>Carex</i> ‘Red Rooster’  <i>Carex</i> ‘Rekoku Sunrise’  <i>Carex testacea</i>  <i>Juncus</i> ‘Twister’  <i>Juncus</i> ‘Elk’s Blue’</p> <p><b><u>Broad leaf evergreens</u></b>  <i>Corydaline</i> and <i>Dracena</i>  <i>Euonymus japonica</i> ‘Green Spire’  <i>Euphorbia</i> ‘Blackbird’  <i>Nandina</i> ‘Plum Pasion’  Rosemary ‘Arp’</p>	<p><b><u>Conifers:</u></b>  <i>Cephalotaxus heterophylla</i> ‘Fastigiata’  Hinoki Cypress:  <i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i> ‘Gold Fern’  Columnar Yew: <i>Taxus bacata</i> ‘Standeshi’  Hemlock, <i>Tsuga canadensis</i> ‘Pendula’</p> <p><b><u>Shrubs:</u></b>  Cast Iron plant <i>Aspidistra elatior</i>  Winter blooming camellias:  <i>Camellia sasanqua</i> ‘Yuletide’  Gold leafed Mexican orange:  <i>Choisya ternata</i> ‘Sundance’  Brilliant colored twig dogwoods such as  <i>Cornus sanguineum</i> ‘Midwinter Fire’  Japanese Holly: <i>Ilex crenata</i> ‘Sky Pencil’  Japanese Aralia, <i>Fatsia japonica</i>  Snowberry, <i>Symplocarpus alba</i>  Lily of the Valley shrub, <i>Pieris sp.</i></p>

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Sun	Fillers	Shade
<p><b><u>5 great evergreen ideas</u></b></p> <p>Dwarf mounding conifers such as <i>Cryptomeria japonica</i> ‘Little Champion’  <i>Hebe</i>  Heather, <i>Calluna</i> &amp; <i>Erica</i>  Short grasses such as <i>Carex</i> ‘Evergold’  Herbs such as <i>Thyme</i> ‘Silver Posie’ or  <i>Santolina</i> ‘Lemon Fizz’</p> <p><b><u>Colorful bursts</u></b></p> <p>Cyclamen  Mums  Pansies  Ornamental Cabbage and Kale  <i>Coprosma</i> such as ‘Fireburst’  <i>Libertia</i> ‘Goldfinger’</p>		<p>Evergreen ferns such as Alaska, Autumn, Himalayan Maiden hair, Korean Rock, Sword, Tassel  Hellebores Ivory Prince, Pink Marble, and ‘Winter Moonbeam’ have interesting leaves  <i>Heuchera</i>, Coralbells  Evergreen grasses: <i>Acorus</i>, <i>Carex</i> ‘Ice Dance’ &amp; ‘Sparkler’  Lily turf, <i>Liriope</i>  Black Mondo grass, <i>Ophiopogon plan.</i> ‘Nigrescens’  Sweet box, <i>Sarcococca</i>  Dwarf Rhododendrons  Evergreen huckleberry, <i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>  Violas and Pansies</p>

Sun	Spillers	Shade
<p>Conifers such as <i>Juniperus</i> ‘Gold Strike’  <i>Cotoneaster</i> ‘Streib’s Findling’  <i>Euonymus fortunei</i> ‘Emerald N Gold’ or ‘Harlequin’  <i>Vinca</i> ‘Wojo’s Gem’  Evergreen <i>Sedum</i> such as ‘Angelina’ or <i>album</i>  Groundcover thymes such as Woolly thyme  <i>Rubus calcynoides</i>  Cranberry, <i>Vaccinium macrocarpon</i></p>		<p><i>Vinca</i> ‘Illumination’  Wintergreen <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i>  Creeping Jenny, <i>Lysmachia numularia</i>, not evergreen but perennial  Kinnickinick for part shade  <i>Sedum</i> ‘Ogon’, <i>oreganum</i> and <i>spathifolium</i></p>