

Project: How to Build “portable Gardens”/Grow Buckets

As of 25 January 2024

Project compliments of GreenGrace -Chattanooga

Grace Episcopal Church

20 Belvoir Ave

Chattanooga, TN 37411

Office Phone: 423.698-2433

General: We have conducted this project for several years. We fill 5 gallon buckets planted with small, mini vegetable gardens. We attach a waterproof information sheet (see p.3), and then deliver them to those who need and want them.

Note: Once planted, these buckets are quite heavy, so getting them distributed requires strong arms. We also strongly recommend transporting them in a covered truck or van.

Purpose: to give infirm or elderly persons a small, pre- planted porch or yard garden, to provide them with fresh herbs and vegetables all summer. We also add a packet of zinnia seeds to plant for late summer color.

What: we make around 20, planted buckets. We deliver them to Metropolitan Ministries, which in turn delivers them to their client households.

When: We make around 20 buckets in late April – usually around Earth Day--once summer vegetables are available. We have a build day and try to get volunteers to help. We do this in the parking lot during our Brainerd Farmers Market.

How: We assemble supplies in advance and have everything ready for about 2 hours of work drilling and filling buckets, planting, and then deeply watering the new plants. We then usually get them delivered within the next day or two, after coordination with MetMin. Finding the plants/seeds takes a fair amount of advance time to hunt down and stage the garden's components.

Resources: we take donations, but this is one of our most expensive projects. You can alleviate the costs by getting buckets, soil, and plants donated. Or, grow your own plants to use. What we use:

- 20 (or, as desired) 5 gallon 'dry wall' type plastic buckets. We get ours donated from a fast food franchise, which uses them to buy pickles.
- About 13- 14, 25 to 30 lb bags of topsoil. We spend as little money as possible.
- Work tables & chairs.
- A pop up tent.
- A sign explaining our project.
- Hand drills to drill drainage holes in the buckets.

- Chosen vegetables/seeds. Generally, we try to have the following:
 - One cherry tomato plant. These type tomatoes will generally bear within a 6-8 week period, and then be done. Bu, unlike indeterminate vines which will grow until frost, these determinate tomatoes will remain small enough for the bucket!
 - One set of some type of leafy vegetable, either lettuce or spinach. These will die back as the weather warms, leaving more room for the tomato and for--
 - One kind of kitchen herb, usually basil or whatever we can acquire. These have turned into our most expensive components due to the way nurseries are selling them as pricey, single, potted plants.
 - A packet of zinnia seeds to plant if all that dies.
 - A laminated information sheet.

Process: we set up in the morning and get everything together, then fill the buckets in the following order:

- Drill holes.
- Scoop soil and fill buckets'
- Plant.
- Tie the flower seeds to the handle with twine.
- Hole punch the info sheets and tie them to each bucket handle with twin.
- Deeply soak the buckets and set them in a sunny spot.
- Deliver them as soon as possible so you don't have to keep watering the tender new plants.

This is just how we did it, and of course there a many variations possible. This is a great youth or Sunday School project. Good luck!

-- Lisa Lemza & Kristina Shaneyfelt.

Information Sheet for “TOMATO BUCKETS” portable garden.

Brought to you by GreenGrace Environmental Action Team

“To love, protect, and defend the Earth”

&

Grace Episcopal Church

20 Belvoir Avenue

Chattanooga, TN 37411

Saygrace.net

1. This garden holds a combination of plants. It needs full sun—at least 6 hours a day. We recommend you put it outside and close to a water source—it will need watering two or three times a week in hot weather. Just touch the soil, and if it’s dry on top, soak the entire bucket till water comes out the drainage holes.

2. Cherry Tomato. This bucket’s biggest plant will be a type of determinate, cherry tomato. This type tomato will fruit mostly in roughly a 6-8 week period, mid to late summer. A few more tomatoes may appear after that, but when it stops bearing just pull it up and plant the attached zinnias for a full sun, late summer flower garden. This will help feed our bees and butterflies into the fall! Zinnia planting instructions are on the back of the seed packet.



3. Leafy greens. The bucket includes some a type of lettuce or leafy green plant. Harvest just a few leaves at a time, and leave the head to keep putting out more leaves. When it gets truly hot, the plant will fade away—turn yellow and ‘bolt’, growing tall. The leaves get bitter at this point, so just pull it up.



4. This bucket also holds a few herbs, variously available. Just snip them as you need them for fresh herb flavor! Enjoy God’s bounty!