



container gardening



As though reliving a childhood memory, the first scents of spring entice many northern Michigan residents to get out and get their hands dirty. Working the soil and nurturing flowers, herbs and vegetables is a natural instinct for most people. Yet for some, space or physical ability can be limiting. Though not new, container gardening is evolving as an ideal option for these, and other, less traditional gardeners.

Because of the portability of containers or planters, you can add color to a dark corner, add interest to an outdoor living space, or grow those plants - such as mint - that would otherwise take over a garden.

It is also a less expensive planting option. Revamp a wooden box, kettle, or bird bath and marvel at the natural beauty of the living bouquets you create. Of course, if you are about to move your household, container gardening also provides the option of bringing your hard work with you.

"Container gardening is perfect for everyone," says Tina VanThomme, third-generation owner of Plant Masters of Suttons Bay. "Whether you live in an apartment or house, are young or old, or have little or lots of time - it's a great way to create beautiful spaces without some of the limitations of flower beds or vegetable gardens."

VanThomme and son, Eric, owner of Plant Masters in Bellaire, encourage container gardening for many of their customers. "People come here after work, still dressed in a suit. They have limited time, but still want to enjoy the relaxation of gardening," observes VanThomme. "By setting them up with a simple, time-saving solution, they can enjoy bursts of color or fresh herbs all summer long, without the additional tasks associated with flower beds or large gardens."

Get your hands dirty

Because interest in container gardening is growing, the VanThomme's are offering the first "Plant Masters After Hours" course on the topic. Create your own 16" wire hanging basket with expert tips on spacing, watering, companion planting and more. From herbs or vegetables to flowers, the class is the ideal hands-on experience for novice or experienced gardeners. Classes will be held Thursday, May 6, from 7 - 8:30 p.m. at both Plant Masters locations. Registration is \$25 and includes basket, soil and woodland moss. For more information or to register call (231) 271-GROW (4769) in Suttons Bay or (231) 533-GROW in Bellaire.

