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Water and Fertilizer for Plants in Pots

When you plant in your garden, the root systems have space to spread out. They have a lot of access to any water and fertilizer that is in your soil. Occasional fertilizing for plants in gardens is usually all they need.

When these same plants are in a container, they have a lot less root space. They can only pick up water and nutrients from the confined space of the pot.

We've found the best way to grow plants in pots is by mixing water soluble fertilizer into the water, at a low rate, and use that fertilizer water almost every time you irrigate.

Water soluble fertilizer is fertilizer that easily dissolves in water. Sometimes this is called liquid fertilizer.

Garden fertilizers that are granular dissolve slowly in water and shouldn't be used for plants in containers.

You can add slow release fertilizer, like Osmocote, to your potting soil. If you do that, you'll still need *some* water soluble fertilizer. If you use Osmocote, also use liquid fertilizer two times per week.

Here is an easy way to fertilize your plants:

In a gallon container of water (like a milk jug), put 1 or 2 teaspoons of Miracle Grow or Daniels or other water soluble fertilizer. You can make several up ahead of time—there isn't any chance of them going bad.

Use this to water your potted plants every time you water.

If you use a 5 gallon bucket for mixing, use 5-10 teaspoons of water soluble fertilizer.

Use the higher rate for containers that have Petunia or Geranium, even if they are mixed with other varieties. The lower rate can be used for pots with other annuals.

How much water to use for different sized pots:

For 10" diameter pots or baskets, use ½ gallon.

For 12" diameter pots or baskets, use ½ to ¾ gallon.

For 14 diameter pots or baskets, use 1 gallon.

For 16"-18" diameter pots or baskets, use up to 2 gallons.

Rain doesn't do a good job of watering plants in pots. Even a ½" or 1" rain doesn't get the soil wet to the bottom of the pot. **Most of the time, you should water every day.**

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