



# SUCCESSFUL CONTAINER GARDENING IN THE DESERT

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Plants and flowers come in all shapes and sizes! While a large yard is great, it is not required for a successful garden. Whether you have a second-story balcony or a sprawling patio, containers allow you to maximize your growing space and customize the environment for almost any plant. Use this guide to unlock the beauty and bounty of desert container gardening.

## I. PREPARATION: The Foundation of Root Health

In our harsh desert climate, root health is the difference between a thriving plant and a struggling one.

- **Drainage is Mandatory:** Roots will suffocate in standing water. Always use a pot with a drainage hole. If your favorite pot lacks one, drill extra holes yourself. If you cannot drill, use the pot as a decorative outer shell with a well-drained plastic liner inside.
- **The Mesh Screen Secret:** Place a mesh screen over the drainage holes. This stops soil from washing away and prevents rocks or debris from clogging the opening. **Note:** *Adding rocks to the bottom of a pot is a misconception; it limits growing space and causes mud buildup.*
- **Elevate for Airflow:** Get your pots off the ground. Use pot feet, pavers, or heavy-duty rollers. This creates an air gap that keeps the container cool, protects roots from scorching pavement heat, and prevents stagnant water buildup.

## II. SOIL: Choose the Right Soil

**Never use native desert soil in a container.** 1. **Compaction:** Native soil is too dense and lacks aeration; it will compact overtime, strangling the roots. 2. **pH Levels:** Our native soil is naturally alkaline (high pH). This environment is not conducive to growing most herbs, vegetables, or ornamental flowers, as it prevents the plant from absorbing vital nutrients

- **For Flowers, Shrubs, and Citrus:** Use Dr. Q's Dr. Q's Filthy Rich Gold. It is a premium potting soil with Gold Dust Starter Fertilizer already incorporated to provide the perfect nitrogen levels for quick establishment.

- **For Edibles:** Dr. Q's Vegetable & Herb Mix is the ideal organic choice for veggies.
- **For Desert Favorites:** Dr. Q's Dr. Q's Cactus & Succulent Mix is formulated with volcanic cinders to provide drainage and aeration necessary for these plants to thrive.

### III. NUTRIENTS AND UPKEEP

Plants in containers have limited access to natural nutrient replenishment.

- **Fertilize Regularly:** Because water moving through the pot leaches nutrients, you must add them back. Research the needs of your specific plant and follow the instructions on the fertilizer label.
- **Avoid Girdling Roots:** If a pot is too small, roots will grow in a spiral (girdling), eventually strangling the plant. Match the plant to the right container size from the start.

### IV. LOCATION AND SUNLIGHT

The "Right Plant in the Right Place" rule is vital in the Southwest.

- **The Morning Sun Rule:** Most vegetables require 6 to 8 hours of sun to fruit properly. In the desert, aim for morning sun and provide afternoon shade to protect plants from the intense 2:00 PM heat.

### V. TOP PLANTS & RECOMMENDED SPECIFICATIONS

Plant Type	Container Size/Depth	Recommended Dr. Q's Soil	Key Success Tip
<b>Lettuce &amp; Greens</b>	6-8" Deep	Dr. Q's Vegetable & Herb Mix	Harvest leaf-by-leaf for "cut and come again" crops.
<b>Culinary Herbs</b>	6-10" Deep	Dr. Q's Vegetable & Herb Mix	Avoid overwatering; most herbs prefer to dry out slightly.
<b>Strawberries</b>	8-10" Deep	Dr. Q's Vegetable & Herb Mix	Use "ready to grow" terracotta pots for easy success.
<b>Cacti/Succulents</b>	Size to root ball + 2"	Dr. Q's Cactus & Succulent Mix	Ensure the container is heavy enough to prevent tipping.
<b>Flowers &amp; Small Flowering Shrubs</b>	10-14" Deep	Dr. Q's Filthy Rich Gold	Deadhead spent blooms to encourage new growth.

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<b>Peppers</b>	12" Deep	Dr. Q's Vegetable & Herb Mix	Benefit from afternoon shade during July and August.
<b>Tomatoes</b>	18" Deep	Dr. Q's Vegetable & Herb Mix	<b>Always</b> add a sturdy cage/trellis at planting time.
<b>Vines (Jasmine/Rose)</b>	18-24" Diameter	Dr. Q's Filthy Rich Gold	Install support at planting; mulch the soil surface to retain moisture against desert winds.
<b>Zucchini/Squash</b>	24" Diameter	Dr. Q's Vegetable & Herb Mix	Keep fruit off the ground to prevent rot and pests.
<b>Citrus Trees</b>	24-28" Diameter	Dr. Q's Filthy Rich Gold	Feed with Dr Q's Citrus Food for heavy fruit production when flowers or small fruit is NOT present.
<b>Tacoma Bells</b>	24"+ Diameter	Dr. Q's Filthy Rich Gold	Heat-loving; remove seed pods regularly to encourage continuous blooming.
<b>Texas Mountain Laurel</b>	24-28" Diameter	Dr. Q's Filthy Rich Gold	Slow grower: ensures the pot is heavy/stable to withstand high desert winds.
<b>Vitex (Chaste Tree)</b>	24-28" Diameter	Dr. Q's Filthy Rich Gold	Deadhead spent purple spikes to encourage a second flush of blooms in late summer.
<b>Dwarf Trees</b>	28"+ Diameter	Dr. Q's Filthy Rich Gold	Use heavy-duty rollers (up to 300 lbs) for easy mobility.