

Landscape with unique containers, elevated gardens



Crates, recycled or purchased, can be painted and personalized to create a colorful, unique planter for flowers and edibles.

Photo/PersonalizedCrates.com

By Melinda Myers

Perk up your containers and add a bit of sparkle to your landscape with bright colors, unusual materials or a unique purpose.

Include an elevated garden to increase planting space and make planting, weeding and harvesting easier on the back and knees. Liven things up with a robin egg blue or washtubs elevated on a support for a bit of rustic charm.

Add wheels to make it easier to move planters around the patio or deck. This allows you to follow the sun or make room for company at summer gatherings.

Recycle items into containers or invest in some of the new planters made from galvanized metal, wooden apple crates and more. Look for new colors or personalize them to create a warm greeting for you and your guests.

Increase growing flexibility with lightweight grow bags. They now come in a variety of colors and sizes. These fabric containers fold flat for easy storage when not in use.

Save space with sleek designs and built in trellises. You'll be growing pole beans, tomatoes and flowering vines in a compact space. The colorful flowers and fruit will brighten a blank wall or screen a bad view.

Use containers and elevated gardens to increase the fun factor at your summer gatherings. Start your party with a trip to the outdoor bar. Weather-resistant butcher-block with built in planting space is sure to get the conversation going. Gardener's Supply Company is offering a new reclaimed wood outdoor bar with an integrated planter called "Plant A Bar." Fill the planting space with some favorite cocktail herbs. Then mix up your beverage and let your guests add a bit of homegrown flavor.

Include the next course by growing your own salad bar. Guests will enjoy harvesting and creating their own bed of greens to accompany the main course. Fill a pot or elevated garden with greens, radishes, onions, carrots, herbs and your other favorite salad fixings.

Keep your containers healthy and productive with proper care. Water thoroughly whenever the top inch of soil is dry. Check pots daily and water as needed. Extend the time between watering with self-watering pots. Look for features such as weep holes that allow excess water to drain, funnels for top watering, and moisture indicators that let you know when it is time to add more water.

Further reduce maintenance by adding a slow release fertilizer

to the potting mix at planting. Small amounts of nutrients are released over time, eliminating the need to mix and fertilize weekly. Give planters a mid-season boost or when making a second planting by sprinkling slow release fertilizer over the soil surface.

Harvest regularly to keep vegetables producing and looking their best. Replace early plantings as they fade with a second crop. You'll extend the harvest and your enjoyment.

So take a second look at your patio, deck or front steps and move in a bit of color, fun and flavor for this growing and outdoor entertaining season.

Gardening expert, TV/radio host, author and columnist Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening" and the "Midwest Gardener's Handbook".