

## How to Create a Dish Garden

Dish gardens and terrariums have one thing in common they are collections or groups of plants, grown in a single container, that have similar growth requirements of light, water, soil.

Dish gardens can be simple or elaborate. For the first-time gardener, a simple one should provide success. Although they are considered low maintenance, all will need some attention with watering, pruning, transplanting and replacement.

### Materials You Need to Construct a Dish Garden

❖ **Containers** - come in a variety of sizes, shapes and composition. Your selection should be at least 4 inches deep but no deeper than 8-10 inches. Containers made of brass, clay and copper are available in a number of styles. When using a recycled container, be sure it is clean.

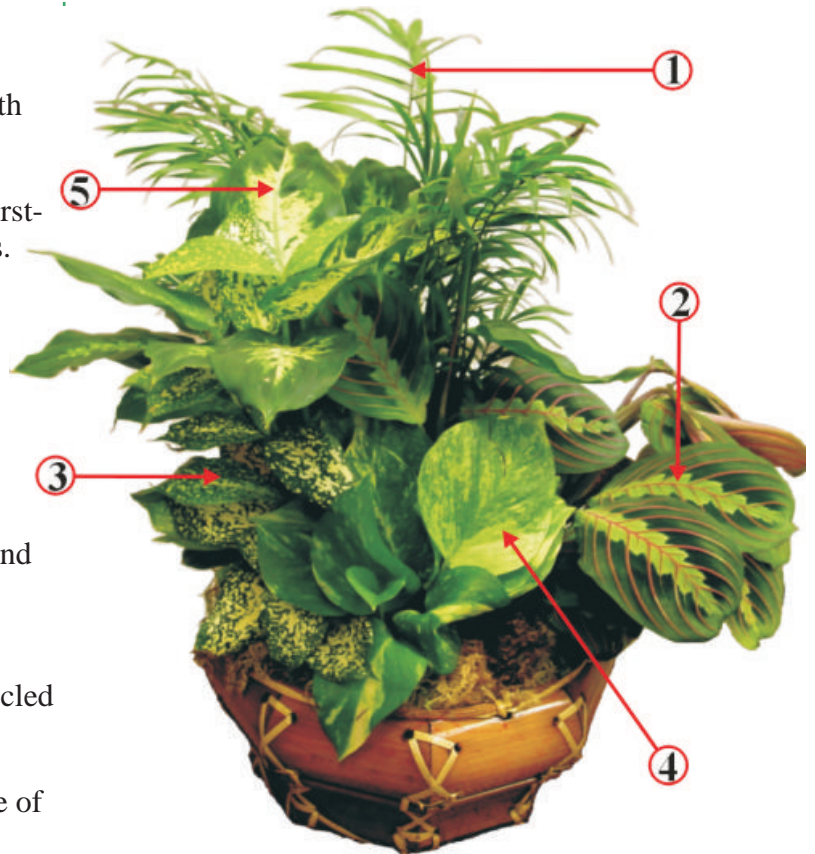
❖ **Soil** - If possible, try to match the soil to the type of plants that will be growing in the dish garden. For example, cacti and succulents prefer a well-drained growing medium.

❖ **Drainage** - Put a layer of gravel, sand, or broken clay pottery in the bottom of the container. This should be at least one inch in depth. For deeper containers, use more.

❖ **Plants** - Select those plants that share similar growing needs. For example, cacti and succulents are excellent companions because they require high light and minimum watering. Decide where you are going to put your dish garden before you select the plants.

### Arranging Plants

Plants may be arranged in various ways to give different effects. For a dish garden to be viewed from one side, a few taller plants should be placed toward



the back of the container with smaller plants in the foreground.

To make a dish garden which will be seen from all sides, a larger plant may be placed in the center of the container and smaller plants can be clustered around the sides.

After the plants are arranged, the dish garden should be watered to “set” the soil around the roots of the plants. Thereafter, watering should be done on an 'as needed' basis. With several plants in the container, water will be used up faster. Nevertheless, don't forget that if there is no drainage hole in the bottom of the container, there is the danger of over-watering.

1. Neanthe Bella Palm  
*Chamaedorea elegans*
2. Prayer Plant  
*Maranta Leuconeura 'Erythroneura'*
3. Gold-dust Plant  
*Dracaena surculosa*
4. Pothos  
*Epipremnum aureum*
5. Dumb Cane  
*Dieffenbachia species*

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For a desert garden, it is desirable to put a half-inch layer of sand, small pebbles or stone chips over the soil to prevent water from standing around the crowns of cacti or succulents.

### Suggested Plans for Dish Gardens

A visit to your local garden center should provide you with a palette of plants from which to choose. Seek out a knowledgeable staff person to assist you with selection. When selecting plants, arrange them at the garden center as you would when you get them home. Remember, these plants will not stay small forever. Depending on what you select, some plants will need pruning or perhaps relocating to a separate pot. Here's a list of plants for consideration:

#### Desert Gardens:

- ❖ **Crassula** - medium to taller plant
- ❖ **Kalanchoe** - medium to taller plant
- ❖ **Sedum** - depends on variety chosen for height
- ❖ **Haworthia** - lower foreground plant
- ❖ **Aloe** - medium to taller plant
- ❖ **Sansevieria** - medium to taller plant
- ❖ **Echeveria** - lower foreground plant
- ❖ **Lithops** - lower foreground plant
- ❖ **Graptopetalum** - lower foreground plant

#### About Your Expert

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PlantAmerica Horticulturist Donna Moramarco (a.k.a. “Donna in the Garden”) has been helping gardeners solve problems and achieve their dreams for over two decades. Donna has degrees in horticulture and education plus over 20 years as a Cornell University extension horticulturist.

#### Tropical Gardens

- ❖ **African violet** - good accent plant for color
- ❖ **Pothos** - lower growing plant to use in the foreground
- ❖ **Podocarpus** - taller plant
- ❖ **Pittosporum** - taller plant
- ❖ **Peperomia** - lower growing, depends on variety
- ❖ **Philodendron** - depending on selection, foreground or background
- ❖ **Syngonium** - medium to taller growing
- ❖ **Bromeliad** - depending on variety, some taller than others
- ❖ **Croton** - taller plant for background; needs bright light
- ❖ **Dracaena** - taller plant for background
- ❖ **Pteris fern** - medium to taller plant
- ❖ **Creeping fig** - ground cover
- ❖ **Neanthe Bella palm** - taller plant for background

#### Shopping List/Notes

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