



WATER SAVING TIPS FOR CONTAINER GARDENS



1. **Choose pots wisely to minimize moisture loss.** Avoid porous planters like terracotta or coconut fibre liners in hanging baskets. These materials leach nutrients and moisture more rapidly than glazed ceramic pots and solid stone. They are unsuitable for high water needs plants like mint. Dark colours like black and metal containers heat up quickly. They provide little insulation, causing the potting soil to dry out faster and increase the possibility of root damage. White and pale colours reflect heat so may be a better choice.
2. **Use self-watering containers;** drip irrigation or upturned bottles to trickle water into your planter; or water spikes to direct moisture to the root zone.
3. **Use pot saucers.** Any water not absorbed immediately, can 'wick' back up into the pot as the plant needs it, rather than running out the bottom. Add a thin layer of gravel or sand to prevent mosquitoes breeding.
4. **Improve or make your own potting mix.** Add moisture-holding ingredients like worm castings, compost and coir peat (coconut fibre) that absorbs up to 70% of its own weight in water. [This guide](#) may help.
5. **Apply mulch.** Add a feeding [mulch](#) e.g. sugar cane or dry grass clippings to build organic matter, hold moisture, act as an insulation blanket and provide nutrients. Ensure soil is watered well before applying. You can also grow lemon grass or comfrey in a pot to provide you with your own free mulch source.
6. **Select short-season crops.** They mature faster and require less water and energy to grow. e.g. radish.
7. **Choose easy-to-maintain, low-water needs edibles** like sprouts, microgreens, rosemary, garlic chives, garlic, nasturtiums, chard, Malabar or New Zealand spinach, bush beans, pineapples, Italian flat leaf parsley, sage, oregano, marjoram and thyme. The mint family and fruiting crops are water hogs!
8. **Upsize your plants into bigger container gardens** and combine plants with similar water needs. It's much more efficient to water 5 large pots every 2-3 days than 15 small ones daily.
9. **Locate tall pots and leafy plants** so they shade shorter, smaller ones. Grouping plants together helps increase humidity and reduces transpiration, especially in full sun. Use microclimates wisely.
10. **Provide short-term shade protection** from the sun or drying winds to help minimise plant stress. e.g. temporary portable solutions like shade cloth stapled to stakes or A-frame trellises. Move them around to where they are needed most and fold up when not in use.
11. **Move plants into protected or semi-shaded conditions** to minimise moisture loss. e.g. under trees. Putting pots on portable castors makes it easier to move on a deck or balcony.
12. **Harvest on time.** Pick produce when young and tender, *before* fruits and vegetables go past their prime and become bitter. This helps reduce water use, minimises transpiration and conserves the plant's energy.
13. **Time your watering.** Water when the air is still, ideally early morning. Watering in windy weather = increased evaporation. Vegetables also tend to require more water on sunny days with low humidity.
14. **Apply seaweed/fish emulsion** as a foliar spray 'tonic' or 'rescue remedy' onto the leaves of your plants. This helps build resilience and healthy plant immune systems.

To compare pot plant containers more fully, [read this article with pros and cons before making your choice](#).