

Dear Monarch,

We have large containers in our community that are not maintained! The plants always look awful and they don't get the same care as the rest of the landscape.

Dear Concerned Resident,

CONTAINER CARE

Pottery and other containers can add a sophisticated element to a landscape, although their care is often underestimated. Plants in containers need special attention and often put on a rotation schedule outside of typical mowing or general maintenance. Here are some points to consider:

- **Choose the right plant.** Succulents are especially popular for containers, although not every species is well-suited. Many communities prefer to use existing material from the landscape, such as *Aloe attenuata* (foxtail aloe) but this species can easily outgrow a container. Choose plants that have a habit easy to maintain and will stay within your desired size and proportions in maturity. Avoid spikes, sharp tips, and sap.
- **Soil is key.** An advantage to container plants is choosing their soil. Unlike planting in native soil, you can be sure that pots have free-draining, ideal soil mixes specific for the plants you've selected. Anticipate that through natural settling, soil will compact and lower over time. Quarterly checks of soil levels will help catch sinkage and ensure roots are properly covered.
- **Balanced pruning.** Containers will typically include cascading material, plants that are intended to flow over the sides of pots. These can easily overwhelm upright plants and need to be kept neatly groomed. If trees are installed, make sure you can see the entire trunk where it meets the soil. Keeping these trimmed is also important for hardscape clearance. Avoid harsh lines and opt for hand-pruning as time allows.
- **Check that water!** Irrigation issues are magnified in a contained environment. Monitor soil regularly for poor drainage or insufficient irrigation.

MONARCH TIP

Even **trees** can thrive in containers! This is a great way to provide a **tailored environment** for citrus, guavas, pomegranates, and other edibles.