



KENTUCKY
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



Gardening As We Age



Why Gardening?

- Gardening is a simple, enjoyable activity with big impact.
- Gardening benefits
 - Physical Health
 - Mental and Cognitive Health
 - Social Health
- Seniors face challenges like isolation, reduced mobility, and cognitive decline.



Studies Show

- Participants who spent time gardening showed greater lifetime improvement in cognitive ability than those who never or rarely did.
- Reduced risk of primary cardiac arrest among subjects who performed gardening activities for more than 60 minutes per week.
- Yard work is a strong predictor of positive bone density.



More Studies

- Study at Texas A&M University
- 298 men and women over the age of 50
 - **84%** reported they planned for the future (only **68%** of the non-gardeners)
 - The non-gardeners were more likely to find life dull and less likely to feel energetic or satisfied with their goals.

"The older population especially should be encouraged to get out there and become involved with the natural world."



Evergreen (Banyule, AU)

- Potting up workshops
- Physical Exercise (garden walks)
- Intergenerational Classes (including animal, social connections)
- Wreath Making (to practice hand-eye coordination skills)
- Sensory Gardening



Impulssenter (Oslo, NORW)

- Care Farm for dementia patients to remain active, working, and social.



As We Age

Many of the changes involved in aging must be addressed by modifications in gardening practices, situations and tools.



Work Smarter Not Harder

- Repetition
 - Arthritis is particularly sensitive
 - Change hands; positions; shorten time
- Force
 - Exertion required to do a job
 - Leverage
 - Sharp tools; two-handed tools
- Posture
 - Lift with your legs
 - Hold weight close to your body
 - Select tools where wrists can stay straight



Work Smarter Not Harder

- Posture Training
 - Safe Lifting Techniques for Gardeners
 - Using the Pivot Technique When Gardening
 - Raking Safely When Gardening
 - Shoveling Safely When Gardening



Adapting the Tools





Adapting Garden Tools

- Lightweight tools are generally easier to use.
- Longer handles increase leverage and decrease stooping.
- Smaller blades and tool heads reduce the overall weight of the tool and require less force.
- Consider tool handles and grips.
- Two hands are better than one.
- Springs can save hand strength on repetitive tasks.
- Specific-purpose tools work best for their intended purpose.
- Use your hands.

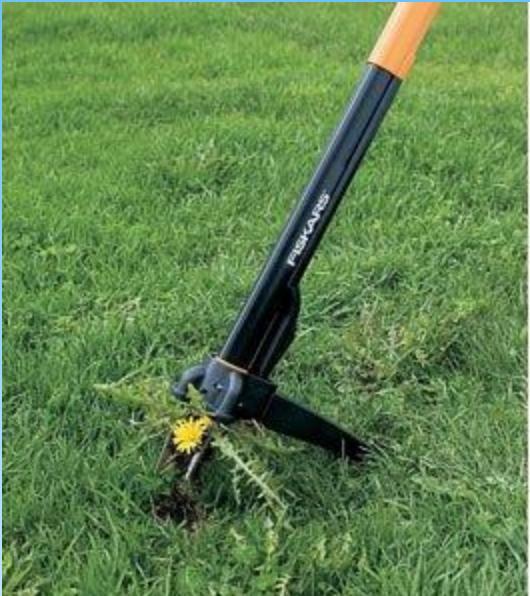
Reaching Aids

- Extend your normal ability to reach with longer handles on handtools.
- **Seated, using 1 hand:** Add a 24" handle
- **Seated, using 2 hands:** Add a 48" handle
- **Standing:** Add a 72" handle



Reaching Aids

- Cut-and-hold Pruners
- Weed Puller



Gripping Aids

- Large diameter and padded handles
 - Add foam rubber, rubber tape, or grip tapes
- Gloves
- Molded Handles
- Utensil Holders



Leverage Aids

- Accessory Handles
 - Place the extra handle where it is most comfortable to you.
- Handle-mounted Straps



Protect Your Knees

- Knees Need Help



Adapting the Garden



Raised Bed Garden

- A garden in which the soil level is higher than the surrounding soil
- Generally one can work either side of bed to the middle
- May be surrounded by some type of material but does not have to be





- **Size Restrictions**

- 18" – comfortable to sit on the edge of the bed; good height for children
- 24" – best height for seated position
- 30" – best for standing gardener who cannot bend easily



Tabletop Gardens



Container Gardening

- Excellent for a small area
- Gardens can be grown inside or outside.
- Offers creative opportunities.
- Provides you with options that are unavailable with permanent plantings.

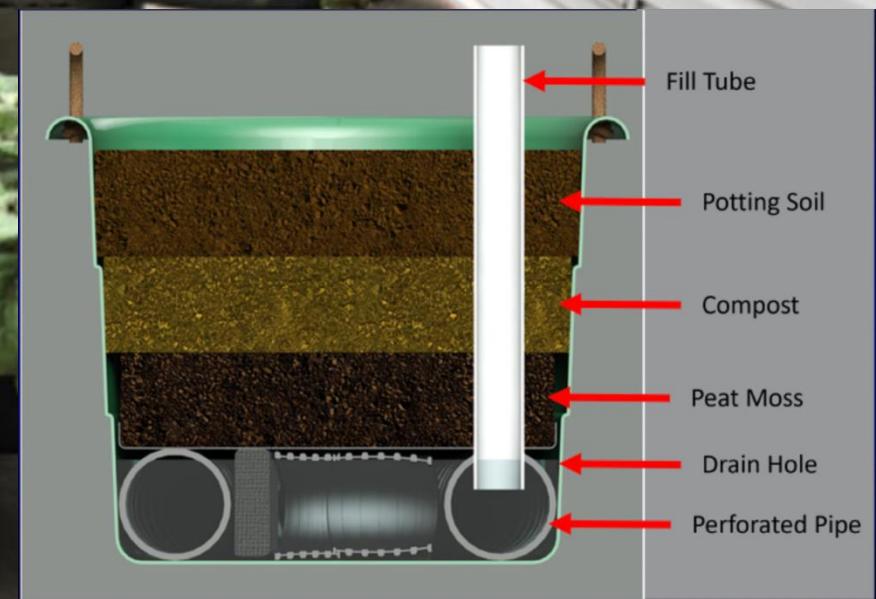
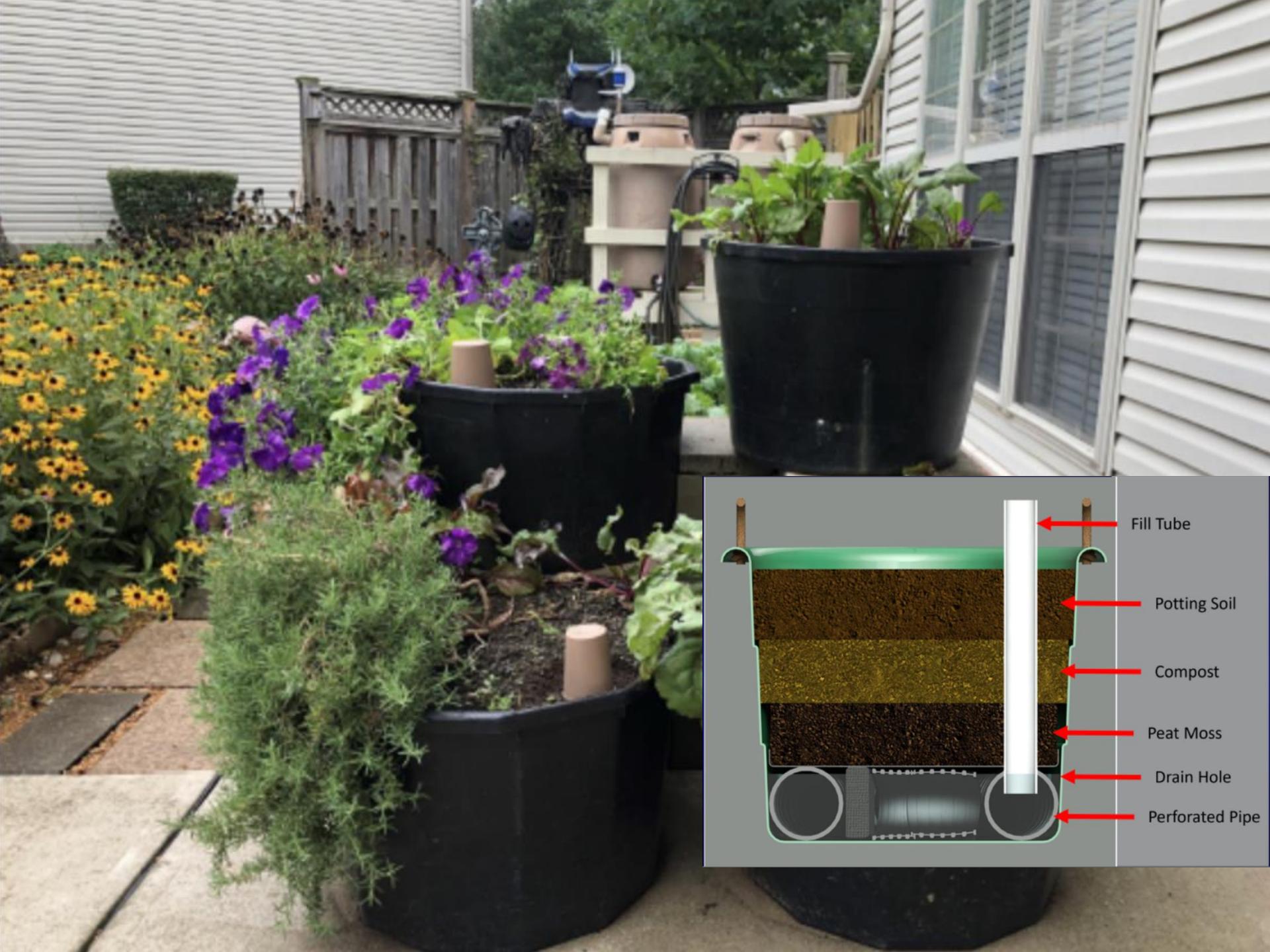


Soil for Containers

- Growing media is extremely important. It must have the capability of holding water, but drain easily.
- Ordinary garden soil is generally a poor choice.
- Garden soil increases the risk of insect infestations and soil borne diseases.

Watering

- Plants in containers need watering more often.
- Under-watering major problem in the summer.
- Over-watering is the most common reason for container plants dying.
 - Finger test
 - Check bottom
- Best time to water plants is in the morning.
 - Allows leaves and soil surface to dry.



Container-Grown Vegetables

Vegetable	Container Size (gallon)	Varieties
Beans, snap	3 to 5	Derby, Bush, Blue Lanke, Green Crop
Beets	2 to 3	Asgrow Wonder, Detroit Red
Broccoli	5	Green Comet, Green Duke
Cabbage	5	Round Dutch, Chinese: Michihli, Bok choi
Carrots	3	Thumbelina , Lady Fingers
Swiss chard	3	Bright Lights, Rhubarb
Cucumbers	3 to 5	Fanfare , Salad Bush
Eggplant	5	Ichiban, Ghost Buster
Kale, turnip or mustard greens	3 to 5	Dwarf Scotch, Shogoin, Purpletop, Red Giant Mustard
Lettuce/salad greens	1 to 3	Salad Bowl, Red Sails, Bibb, Blackseeded Simpson, Arugula, Radicchio
Onions, green	1 to 3	Evergreen
Pepper	3 to 5	Many varieties
Radishes	1	Cherry Belle, Easter Egg
Squash, summer	5	Dixie, Sundrops, Elite
Tomatoes	5	Many varieties
Tomatoes, cherry	5	Sweet Chelsea, Husky Cherry



Adapting Our Expectations





The New Normal

- Gardening is exercise, so treat it like it
- Alternate tasks frequently
- Frequent breaks, especially overhead
- Limit gardening time to less than 2 hours
- Cover up from the summer sun
- Two Words - Stretch breaks





Engaging “Outside the Garden” Activities

- Horticultural crafts
- Flower designing
- Sensory gardening
- Cooking classes
- Birding
- iNaturalist challenges
- Garden tours
- Master Naturalists program

How To Reach Me

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