

Decorating your Patio for Fall / Winter

Fall and winter in the PNW can be a time where the skies get gray and rainy, the weather gets colder, and decorating becomes an afterthought. It doesn't have to be. A well-planned approach using fall and winter blooming plants, pumpkins, gourds, twigs, and branches will make your patios look beautiful and lift your spirits through the dark days of the season. As the fall season transitions into winter, winter hardy plants in your containers can easily be used along with holiday boughs, berries, pinecones, ornaments, and other non-living décor to liven up your space.

Container Choices

Pick a color palette that matches the colors of your house or compliments your existing pots and containers. Ensure you have proper drainage to keep your plants from drowning. You may want to group your containers to make a massive display or use a single container as a spotlight. If you group containers, try a single type of plant in one and another full of color and texture. The possibilities are endless!

Plant Choices

As you choose your plants consider how much time you plan to re-plant each season. Hardy perennials will come back year-after-year while annuals will need to be replaced at least each year, sometimes more often. Are you looking for spectacular color or is depth and texture more important? Consider the light conditions (sun or shade) of your container location and pair with the proper plants. Keeping in mind that container plants require more water than those planted in your garden, make sure your pots have access to a water source. If the spot is remote, drought tolerant plants are a great choice. Be creative and remember, containers can be easily changed and moved.

Planting Specifics

Choose a single plant, considered a **Thriller**, as the focal point of your container. This is usually placed in the center of the planting area and sets the tone. If your container is against a wall or in a corner, your focal plant can be planted in the back. Adjust placement to the configuration of your pots. You will work outward from here by adding other complimentary plants. Match colors and plant types to complete the look you want. This will give you a permanent starting point each time you decide to make changes throughout the year. Next, add some **Fillers** that mound to give your container some depth. Change these out with the seasons to keep a fresh look. Finish up with **Spillers**. They cascade outside the pot, add form, and tie everything together.

Planting your container

- Fill the container about 2/3 of the way with potting soil.
- Carefully remove plants from pots and loosen the roots.
- Add the plants to your container.
- Fill in the areas between with soil and gently pack. Do not compress the soil as this will remove the air pockets the roots need for survival.
- Water the container until water comes out the bottom. This means the soil is saturated.
- Check for any gaps caused by the water and fill soil as needed.

Maintenance & Care of your container

- After planting your container, water thoroughly and regularly as your plants have restricted areas for water access.
- During winter months, watering isn't as essential since days are shorter and temperatures are cooler. Containers that receive rain may not need additional watering, but pots in a covered area will need supplemental water occasionally.
- Deadheading, pinching, and pruning your plants will encourage new growth and blooms.
- Don't be afraid to pull out a non-performing plant and replace it with a similar one.
- Replace boughs that are used in your container/pot as they become dry and brittle.

Thrillers

Cordyline *
Chamaecyparis pisifera *
Cornus – Twig Dogwood
Cryptomeria japonica *
Ellwood Cypress *
Eunoymous japonica *
Fatsia – Spiderweb *
Ferns – Evergreen *
Grasses – Tall *
Holly – Sky Pencil *
Hinoki Cypress *
Kale – Curly - Edible *
Kale – Dino - Edible *
Lemon Cypress *
Mahonia – Arthur Menzies *
Mahonia – Charity *
New Zealand Flax *
Podocarpus *
Thuja * – Tall, Narrow
Yucca *

Fillers

Bergenia *
Choisyia – Aztec Pearl
Choisyia – Sundance *
Cyclamen
Dusty Miller *
Ferns – Hardy Evergreen *
Grasses *
Heath / Heather *
Hebe *
Helleborus *
Heuchera *
Heucherella *
Holly *
Leucothoe *
Ornamental Cabbage / Kale *
Osmanthus – Goshiki
Pansies *
Pinus Mugo *
Thyme – Shrub *
Violas *

Spillers

Ajuga *
Creeping Charlie *
Creeping Jenny *
Gaultheria – Wintergreen *
Grasses – Evergreen *
Heath / Heather *
Hedera – Ivy *
Iberis – Candy Tuft *
Lamium *
Leptinella squalida *
Mazus reptans *
Pansies *
Sedums – Evergreen *
Succulents – Evergreen *
Thyme – Creeping *
Vinca *
Violas *
Wire Vine *

Fall / Winter Plants for Container Grouping

(This selection of plants is great for planting solo)

Alberta Spruce – Dwarf	Conifers – Specialty *
Choisyia *	Heuchera *
Conifers – Dwarf *	Hinoki Cypress *
Cornus – Shrub	Lavender *
Cryptomeria *	Leucothoe *
Cypress *	Mahonia *
Grasses – Evergreen *	New Zealand Flax *
Heaths / Heathers *	Pines – Dwarf *
Hebe *	Rosemary *
Helleborus *	Sarcococca *
	Thuja *

Fall / Winter Non-living Décor

(These items can be used in containers as pops of interest)

Branches / Boughs

Cedar
Cryptomeria
Cupressus
Cypress
Eucalyptus
Fir
Giant Sequoia
Hinoki Cypress
Magnolia – Evergreen
Pine
Spruce

Twigs

Beautyberry
Curly Willow
Flame Willow
Red Twig Dogwood
Winterberry
Yellow Twig Dogwood

Other

Birch Poles
Birdhouses
Bows / Ribbons
Glass Orbs
Gourds
Hydrangea Flowers – Dried
Lights
Lotus Pods - Dried
Ornaments
Pinecones
Pumpkins
Squash

*Hardy Plants