

Gardening for Bats in Small Spaces



With natural habitats declining, bats need all of us to use available green spaces to give them the food, water and shelter they need. Small, city spaces with container plants can successfully attract the insects that bats eat. The bats will thank you and you will feel great knowing that you helped bats. In urban locations, plant short-statured native plants such as Black-eyed Susan, Palm Sedge or Zig-Zag Goldenrod in pots on your deck or window box. For a complete list of recommended plants, visit www.batconservation.org.

CONTAINER GARDENING TIPS:

- Use the largest containers that space allows, especially for perennials and/or if you plan to overwinter plants (12" diameter minimum). Small raised beds work well.
- Invest in self-watering planters to reduce summer watering.
- Make sure your containers have at least one drainage hole.
- If planning to over-winter plants (which can be difficult), use lightweight containers made of plastic (even tupperware works), wood or metal (clay or ceramic pots will break during the freeze/thaw cycle).
- Select native plants to match the available sunlight (>5 hours is full sun, 3-5 is partial and <3 is shade).
- Purchase quart or gallon-sized containers to ensure a more mature plant during the time of planting and promise of flowers during the first season. Three inch pots and plugs are fine for biennials and short-lived perennials.
- Select plants with a sturdy spine so they don't fall over.
- Use an even blend of early, midsummer and fall blooming plants to ensure consistent habitat for invertebrate "bait" to feed hungry bats.
- Don't be afraid to venture vertically, add a trellis to a pot for a vine. Hang baskets from your eaves.
- In general, plant one plant per square foot.
- Listed annuals may only be available as seed. Start seed indoors prior to spring planting if you want to get a jump start on the season.
- Water and fertilize as necessary. Plants living in containers are always more needy than plants living in the ground.
- If you're attempting to over-winter your plants, move pots to the soil surface or into an unheated garage or cold frame, huddling pots close together. Cover with a couple inches of leaves or evergreen boughs and water thoroughly just prior to the ground freezing. Plan on adding handfuls of snow to the tops of the plants periodically for moisture if temps promote melting.



For more information about bats, visit www.batconservation.org
and www.fs.fed.us/global



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