

Contain Yourself



by **Melanie Palmrose**

1960s Arlington was a wild place. My first scorpion sting came weeks after our arrival. Finding out I wasn't allergic took away the drama of future encounters. At the end of the front walkway, Mother permanently placed her prized black iron footed washpot, and planted it with red geraniums. And under it, also permanent, lived a large black snake, whose daily schedule included stretching out across the walk in the sun. While Mother simply shooed it, Tinky the Chihuahua and I jumped over. A live and let live attitude prevailed unless creatures came into the house or near the clothesline. If they startled Mother, causing her to drop the laundry basket, death was eminent.

Modern Arlington finds me startled by only lizards and frogs under my many planters. Container gardening is great for multiple reasons. Often plants bloom more when not endlessly increasing their root system. If you like to move things around, it's easier, and you don't need to crawl about on your knees to weed or prune. If you don't know where to place a new plant sun/shade wise, a container lets you find the right spot. Bringing plants up off our damp ground helps with our intense humidity. Some bugs persevere and fly or climb in, but often there is less bug damage. And, when you need to protect from the heat or cold, you are able to move to a warmer or cooler part of the yard. The drama of the planter itself adds an architectural element to the garden.

Tips? Buy the best potting mix you can afford. In the case of potting mixes, price does matter, and, buy from a store that keeps the bags dry. Dry bags are lighter weight and easier to carry. The mix is easier to work with, doesn't smell funky and has no little

creatures living in it. Watch your water and fertilizer until you find the correct amount for the plant. Watch for overgrowth. When transplanting, most plants like about an inch or two diameter larger home. Carefully remove the plant, loosen the roots a bit, and add it to its new home in fresh potting mix. Consider some perlite, broken pot pieces or pebbles in the bottom of the pot to keep the drain hole open.

Arlington is no longer wild, but you can add excitement to your garden with dramatic planters!

I'm Melanie Palmrose and I garden year-round in Arlington, and make my own planters and pots. Tour my little garden online at www.AlmostAncientPots.com. Thanks to those of you who came by on November 12th - don't be strangers - visit again soon!

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