

Five easy steps to turn your black thumb green



1.

Choose plants to fit the light conditions.

Where are you planning to plant? Check the location during the day to see if and when the sun shines directly on that area. Does your garden have full sun in the morning, at noon, or during the afternoon? If you can, determine how many hours the sun shines on the area. Eight hours or more is considered a *full sun* location. Six hours is considered *part sun* or *part shade*. No direct sun is a *shade* location. Check the plant label for information on the proper light conditions for the plant.



2.

Use high grade potting soil for containers.

Professional greenhouse potting mixes are blended to provide good moisture-holding properties along with air pockets that provide plant roots with needed oxygen. The proper conditions are reached with a mix that contains 55% peat, 35% composted bark chips, and 10% perlite.



3.

Water when surface becomes dry.

Water your plants immediately after planting. The average outdoor flower bed needs a good soaking (one inch of water) each week. If plants are in a container, allow the surface to dry before the next watering. In potting mixes, the soil will be light brown if your container needs water. You can also touch the surface to determine if it has dried. For hanging baskets, try this tip: lift the basket immediately after watering to get an idea of how much a fully-hydrated container weighs. Perform this check regularly and water completely when the basket's weight gets lighter.



4.

Important! Fertilize at least weekly.

Fertilizer is the difference-maker. Plants need three main nutrients, nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. The concentrations of these three are listed on most fertilizers. Numbers indicate the percentage concentration of each nutrient in the mixture. Concentrations like 19-12-16 or 24-8-16 are good for flowering plants or try a bloom-enhancing formula like 9-59-12. Follow the application directions on the fertilizer. Some plants ("heavy feeders") require more fertilizer. Ask an assistant for information on plants that are heavy feeders.



5.

Trim back vigorous plants once a month.

As plants grow, maintain a balance between roots and leafy parts. In a container, plants often reach a point where roots can't get larger, but the leafy parts tend to continue to grow. Sometimes plants grow to the point where they need water more than once a day. Reduce the amount of watering by cutting back or thinning out the plant's leaves and stems, being careful to not remove more than 1/3 of the plant.

