



# Thrillers

# Spillers

# Fillers



## Container Plant Possibilities

### Thrillers

Angelonia (*Angelonia angustifolia*)  
 Cannas (*Canna x generalis*)  
 Celosia (*Celosia argentea*)  
 Cordyline (*Cordyline ssp.*)  
 Coreopsis (*Coreopsis gigantea*)  
 Cuphea (*Cuphea hyssopifolia*)  
 Dahlia (*Dahlia pinnata*)  
 Dianthus (*Dianthus caryophyllus*)  
 Geraniums (*Pelargonium X hertorum*)  
 Lavender (*Lavandula augustifolia*)  
 Pentas (*Pentas lanceolata*)  
 Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)

Astilbe (*Astilbe spp.*)  
 Begonia (Begonia Groups & Hybrids)  
 Bleeding Heart (*Lamprocapnos spectabilis*)  
 Caladium (*Caladium*)  
 Coleus (*Plectranthus scutellarioides*)  
 Coral Bells (*Heuchera*)  
 Ferns (*Fern spp.*)  
 Fuchsia species upright  
 Hosta (*Hosta spp.*)

### Fillers

Ageratum (*Ageratum houstonianum*)  
 Blue Daze (*Evolvulus glomerata*)  
 California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*)  
 Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*)  
 Dusty Miller (*Centavrea cineraria*)  
 Gerbera Daisy (*Gerbera jamesanii*)  
 Gomphrena (*Gomphrena globosa*)  
 Petunia (Petunia X hybrid)  
 Salvia (*Salvia officinalis*)

Begonia (Begonia Groups & Hybrids)  
 Bacopa (*Bacopa monnieri*)  
 Cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum*)  
 Fan Flower (*Scaevola*)  
 Impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*)  
 Lenten Rose (*Hellebore orientalis*)  
 Persian Shield (*Strobilanthes dyeranus*)  
 Torenia (*Torenia fournieri*)  
 Viola species

### Spillers

Bidens (*Bidens ferulifolia*)  
 Brachyscome (*Brachyscome Hybrid*)  
 Creeping Thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*)  
 Diascia (*Diascia spp*)  
 Lantana (*Lantana camara*)  
 Licorice Plant (*Helichrysum petioiare*)  
 Million Bells (*Calibrachoa*)  
 Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*)  
 Verbena (*Verbena officinalis*)

Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*)  
 Dichondra (*Dichondra argentea*)  
 Ivy Geranium (*Pelargonium peltatum*)  
 Lithodora (*Lithodora diffusa*)  
 Lobelia (*Lobelia erinus*)  
 Sweet Alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*)  
 Sweet Potato Vine (*Ipomoea species*)  
 Trailing Snapdragon (*Asarina procumbens*)

Most shade happy plants tolerate shade for most daylight hours but still need 2-4 hours of sunlight daily. Morning direct sunlight is the best. Always refer to the plant tag. *Full sun* to *partial shade* in our area means to protect the plant from our harsh afternoon sun.



## Container Gardening Basics

### UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

**Selecting a Container** – There are many types to consider – terra cotta, glazed clay and ceramic, plastic, fiberglass, wood, metal. Think about the proper size (generally 2” larger than the plant’s root ball), matching pot porosity to the plant’s needs, the effect of the pot material on soil and root temperature, the pot’s weight and portability, and personal tastes.

Say “YES” to a drain hole. DO NOT add gravel at the bottom of the pot; this lessens root space and shifts the saturation zone up. Use instead one to two pottery shards, a coffee filter, or piece of fine screen for drainage and soil retention.

**The Right Soil** – Soil impacts water retention and drainage, aeration, and nutrient uptake. Use commercial potting soil as is or amend it. Soil amendments for plants that prefer moist soil include sphagnum peat, coco (coconut) coir, and vermiculite. Pumice and perlite promote drainage and air movement in the soil.

**Choosing Nursery Stock** – Think about the plant’s water needs, light requirements, bloom time, space needs, growth rate/mature size, fertilizer needs, and cold hardiness. Give the plant a good eyeballing – look for healthy leaves, no pests or weeds, buds rather than open flowers, light roots at the pot holes. Gently remove the plant from its pot for an internal inspection – soil and roots should hold together, be small to medium sized, and white or light colored. Avoid plants with roots circling the bottom of the pot, a sign the plant might be root bound.

**Planting Guidelines** – Soil should be moist. Remove from container, gently separating roots; slightly loosen old soil. Fill the container with enough moist soil that the top of the plant’s root ball is a couple of inches below the rim of the pot. Fill in around the plant with more soil so the

crowns and stems are no deeper in the soil than they were in their nursery container. Press soil gently with fingers or tap pot to settle and water.

**Maintaining Potted Plants** – Water as needed (adjust for changing weather conditions), fertilize according to product directions, check weekly for pests and diseases; take quick action to address problems. Avoid using toxic pesticides that damage beneficial insects - many pest problems can be handled by handpicking, with a strong stream of water and cutting out the affected area, or with baits, insecticidal soaps or horticultural oils. Deadhead flowering plants frequently by removing faded flowers, pinch plant shoots to shape, and/or clip (removing more plant material) to shape and form as the plant grows.

**Repotting** – Consider moving to the next size pot every 2-3 years. Look for a plant that seems too large for its pot or is pot bound; sunken soil levels, discolored leaves, and frequent wilting are also signs it’s time to repot.

**Container Design 101 – Thriller, fillers, spillers**  
Make use of the **thriller** (the stunning vertical accent/focal plant), the **fillers** (plants that add mass in the pot), and the **spiller** (cascades over the side of the container) to create beautiful containers. Select plants with similar needs (light, water, soil, fertilization). Consider design elements such as color, texture, shape, size, and height. Fill the pot  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with moist soil and place the plants. Plant the larger thriller first in the center or towards the back of the pot. Work your way out with the fillers and end with the spiller(s) in the front. Fill in with potting soil and water.

Reach out to the Master Gardeners with questions at [mgeldorado@ucanr.edu](mailto:mgeldorado@ucanr.edu) or call 530-621-5512.