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planting perfect pots for spring

Posted in *All Gardening Advice, For Beginners*, April on 1st April 2019

If you are planting up pots you'll want to follow these tips to create the most beautiful pot displays in your garden this summer.

1 First, with any kind of spring bedding - polyanthus, pansies or bellis - choose a limited range of colours, not a general razzmatazz of yellow, pink, purple, blue, red and orange. Narrow it down to one close family of colours, not perfectly matched, but in a harmonious range.

2 Once you've chosen a good range, pot them on into pretty [terracotta pots](#) - the more weather beaten the pot the better. Or, for polyanthus which likes a moist soil, plant them in any small salad or serving bowl filled with multi-purpose potting compost.

Most plants you come across need good drainage so you have to fill the bottom of a bowl like this with plenty of crocks to keep their roots free of standing water, but with polyanthus - closely related to the primrose - a degree of dampness at the roots is fine.

3 I like to plant in Moroccan bowls, using a colour which compliments the plants you've chosen . To dress the bowl up to the maximum, cover the compost with nice buns of fresh green moss or handfuls of dry, intact oak, sweet chestnut, cherry or birch leaves.

These all have interesting and contrasting shapes and sizes, but any still-intact dry leaf looks good threaded through the plant stems.

4 Dead-head each individual flower from the group as they go over and, more importantly, the whole stem once it's past its best, right through their long flowering season. If you dead head and keep the plants well watered, more and more flowers will appear.

5 Once you've tired of these flowers in the house, or they are starting to look a bit past it after a month or so in the warm, plant them out in the garden.

Choose a spot in partial shade and add plenty of organic matter to the planting position (leaf mould is ideal, but any will do). Mulch deeply and keep plants moist until they are well established.

6 You could always dig them up and give them a second run next year, then they'll need dividing (in their second year) to keep the clumps growing well.



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