

Small Space Gardening Styles  
*UC Master Gardeners of Amador County*  
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Small areas can provide big opportunities to create stunning garden spaces. Often overlooked, a tiny place such as a balcony, patio, window ledge, beside a walkway, or the area around a mailbox could be turned into a colorful, functional, and peaceful garden. Using a few key principles will help create a great impact in a small space:



First, assess your space The first step is to answer some questions to understand your space and your goals for the garden. Is the area in full sunlight all day or is it shady? Does it already have great soil or will you need containers? How do you want to use the garden? Will you grow food, create a space to sit and relax, or is color and fragrance your priority? Let the answers to these questions inform and direct your design and plant selection.



Second, Maximize your space. One of the most effective ways to maximize a small space is to go vertical. Many small spaces have a wall or a fence that can be used as a support for growing vines, espaliered trees or attaching individual wall hung containers. Even without a wall, there are endless creative ways to add height in the garden. Build a trellis or arbor for vines to grow on. Hang planters from eaves or decorative stakes. Planting in containers of different heights is also a good way to create visual layers in the garden. Use stairs, ladders, chairs, tables, or shelves as platforms for containers. What unique ideas can you use to grow vertically in your small garden space?

Third is plant selection. Another way to get the most from a small space is by choosing plants that pull double duty. Consider plants that are both attractive and edible, such as herbs, kale, artichokes, Swiss chard, sunflowers, and strawberries. Plants with an upright shape instead of ones that spread out horizontally also help to conserve space. Some edible examples are chives, shallots, leeks, aloe vera, rhubarb, and celery.

Next, think about planting for pollinators. Some plants with height and color which will also attract pollinators include clematis, jasmine, yarrow, and hollyhock. When choosing trees or shrubs, look for slow growers with a compact shape and interesting foliage or colorful blooms. Dwarf varieties of fruit trees are well suited for small gardens. These can be grown in containers and should be pruned regularly to maintain the desired shape and size.

Lastly, consider color scheme and a focal point. A random assortment of colors can look cluttered and make a small space seem even more confined. Instead, choose a few complimentary colors to use throughout the garden for a cohesive, streamlined look. Include a focal point to bring the design together and give the eye a place to focus. This could be a bench, a fountain, a statue, or a piece of artwork. It could also be a single eye-catching plant that makes a visual statement like a small Japanese maple or red twig dogwood. Use your imagination and include something you really enjoy as a focal point in your garden.

Want to learn more? UCCE Master Gardeners will be offering two free classes in March. On March 7; Small Space Gardening Styles and March 28 Growing Backyard Berries. Both classes will be held from 9 a.m. – noon at 12200-B Airport Rd. in Jackson CA. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County website at <http://ucanr.edu/mgamador>. UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (209) 223-6838. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 12200-B Airport Rd. in Jackson. You can also find us on Facebook.