

Kathy Jentz, Garden Communicator

Kathy Jentz is editor and publisher of *Washington Gardener Magazine* and host of the **GardenDC** Podcast. She is the author of *Groundcover Revolution* and co-author of *The Urban Garden*. A life-long gardener, Kathy believes that growing plants should be stress-free and enjoyable. Her philosophy is inspiration over perspiration. Find her at @WDCGardener on Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, TikTok, BlueSky, and Instagram.

Teri Speight, Garden Communicator

Teri Speight is the author of *Black Flora: Inspiring Profiles of Floriculture's New Vanguard* (Timber Press) and co-author of *The Urban Garden* (Quarto). Teri has had her hands in the soil since childhood. My ancestor's hands have helped build and feed her family for generations. Ms. Speight brings a wealth of knowledge and common sense to conversations on drought-tolerant plants, small space gardens, shade gardens, as well as the African American experience in horticulture. Teri strongly feels the garden is a healer in so many ways. Healing begins when our hands touch the soil. Follow her at @cottageinthecourt.bsk.social, Pinterest, and @Cottageincourt on Instagram, and, of course, <http://cottageinthecourt.com>.



The Urban Garden: 101 Ways to Grow Food and Beauty in the City is available at book stores, Amazon, Bookshop.org, etc.

Squeezing It All In: Small Space Garden Design for Your Urban Garden

by Kathy Jentz

I recommend looking at it the same way you do dressing yourself or decorating an indoor space. First, evaluate the best features and then assess any flaws. Then, you'll know what you want to draw attention to and what to disguise or hide or play down.

Next create a focal point of your best feature – that can be something as simple as a terrific small specimen tree, a recirculating water feature, or an outdoor firepit. Then put in seating and planting around that best feature.

Finally, add on from there as your time, finances, and energy allow.

Whether you have a large property or small, we all have limited budgets and resources, so you can use the ideas and principles in the book to focus on just a few areas near your home. That is realistically where most people garden in any case as we all have only so many hours in the day. :-)

A lot of the ideas in this book come from both mine and Teri's gardens. I am on a very busy corner, so privacy is a big concern and several of the ideas for screening I have tried out and tested here.

A common mistake is to go too small in your paths. People either make them far too narrow or they buy pavers that are too small to even comfortably fit an adult foot on. We are all greedy for maximum growing space, but we should also make the paths wide enough to fit a wheelbarrow down and the pavers large enough to not feel like we are unsafe or precarious on them.

In many other countries, urban gardens are completely surrounded in a way that are not here in the US. For example, the interior courtyards of a Spanish villa or the tall, brick borders of an English walled garden. These make the spaces feel more protected, private and personal. They are more permanent and create a nice haven for a homeowner to escape the outside world. We should learn from them and use more enclosed/protected spaces in American gardens.



Using Containers without Drainage

When looking for the perfect pot for the garden, many will not have a drainage hole. This should not be a deterrent as there are a few options for including these pots in your garden.

An attractive container without drainage can be as a cache pot that is easily refreshed with new plantings seasonally. Many garden centers carry drop-in, pre-planted replacements to accommodate planters of many sizes. These drop-ins offer instant beauty without digging in the soil. These drop-in planters are also an alternative for between season or bridge plantings. Popping in a lush, pre-planted container is perfect for the planter without drainage.

A simple water-filled container adds unexpected value to any garden. Consider using a pot without drainage as a mini water garden. Adding a pond plant or two can add heightened interest to a wide pot without drainage. A simple container with a drop of pond ink and a floating solar fountain is sure to make an elegant addition in any garden. The sound of trickling water in the still of the garden adds a sense of calm. An unexpected water feature will certainly become a favored spot for lingering in the garden.

When strolling in the garden, gather petals, small branches, or even a simple bloom. Artfully tossed onto the water's surface, these garden snippets create a unique, memorable moment. A water-filled planter encourages collecting what is of interest in the garden daily. Remember to add a mosquito deterrent to the water, as well as to remove the finished garden gleanings regularly. Consider placing colorful planted containers around this water feature to add depth.

There are some plants like rice which can be grown in pots without drainage. Rice grown in a container adds height, volume, and movement— not to mention diversity to any setting. You will need to provide a soil that will hold moisture such as a good compost or any nutrient-rich soil blend. Fill the planter with the soil – no higher than 2 to 3 inches below the pots upper edge. Thoroughly add water to the pot. Choose a rice cultivar that is specific to your growing zone. Sow the rice on the surface of the moistened soil. Rice roots need to be always submerged in water so check it often to maintain the water level. Rice needs a weed-free environment to grow successfully.

Look for other plants like Proven Winners *Cyperus* 'Baby Tut'[®] that love damp feet. Keeping plant roots moist is easy in pots that offer no drainage.

