

DISH GARDENS

CONTAINER GARDENS are miniature scenes in which one or more blooming African violet plants, along with other plants, are actually planted and growing in the container. A **DISH GARDEN** is one type of Container Garden – the others are Terrariums, Bottle Gardens and Natural Gardens.

A **Dish Garden** is a planting in a shallow, dish-like container. The size of the container will depend on the rules in the show schedule. A plastic container may be preferable to a ceramic or glass-type container because of the weight. The container can be round, square, rectangular or octagonal. It could be a bonsai dish or a long-stemmed compote. The container should not dominate the plant material in size, color, or texture. A base is not permitted, nor is draping, and a cover is not permitted.

Dish Gardens are arranged so that plants and the container together complete an artistic design, a landscape in miniature. All parts of the design should be in proportion or scale. There should be one focal point or center of interest. All plants must be removed from their pots and planted in the container. No treated or cut plant material is permitted. Accessories may be used, but must not predominate and must be placed within the container, not outside.



There can be only one planting area -- no multiple or divided planting areas.

Prohibited items include: The American flag, state flags, flags from other nations, plants on the endangered list from any state or nation, artificial plant material and live creatures.

The garden should contain plants with similar culture requirements, as well as one or more blooming African violets. All of the plants must have similar needs as to soil, temperature and watering. Select plants of different heights, contrasting but harmonious colors, and some with interesting textures. Rule of thumb: Choose 5 different kinds of plants. If you use too many varieties, your garden may appear crowded and confusing.

Distinction and originality should be taken into consideration. If the exhibit is to be viewed from more than one side, the design should be effective from more than one side. All plants should be well grown, free of pests and diseases, clean and free of dust or dirt particles. African violets should have a reasonable amount of bloom.

The AVSA scale of points for Container Gardens is:

Landscape Plan.....	40 points
Suitability of Materials.....	20 points
Condition of Materials.....	20 points
Cultural Perfection.....	10 points.
Relation to Container.....	10 points

NOTE: The dish garden above was created by Therese Lynam of Tampa AVS and was chosen best in show/Design in 2013. Notice how her plant materials flow together and the violet predominates. The garden to the right had nice plant materials but it was much too open and there was no



“flow.” The rocks were too large and the tallest plant material was too tall. All the materials must be to scale or in proportion.

STEPS TO MAKING A DISH GARDEN

1. Read the Schedule – the Schedule is the law of the show (a) Does it require a theme? (b) Any size limitations?
2. Choose an appropriate Container – glass or plastic (clean)
3. Prepare a Landscape Plan. Doesn't have to be an “architect's drawing,” but it should be comprehensive enough to give you an idea of how your garden will look.
4. Drainage. First layer should be gravel, rocks or perlite, maybe even Styrofoam bits.
5. Cover with light layer of charcoal to absorb acids produced by soil bacteria.
6. Add moistened, porous soil in small amounts. Build up the soil at the back, make hills and valleys, and make it low in front. In one of the valleys you may want to create a lake using a small mirror.
7. Add the tallest plant at the back. If your plant isn't as tall as it should be, add an appropriate size piece of wood. Add remaining “filler” plants – ivy, mondo grass, fern, palms, aralias, etc. Then add your African violets and Sinningias. Make sure that all of your plant material is clean.
8. You can create a pebble path down the side of a hill or add colored sand. The path should lead the eyes of the viewer deeper into the scene.
9. Stand back and admire your garden. You may decide it is complete or you may wish to add some final touch such as an unusual small stone or a piece of wood.
10. Cover exposed soil with moss and/or gravel.
11. If you plant your garden 2 or 3 weeks before show, be sure to keep it in a well lighted area and mist it occasionally.