

*Garden Sages/Marge Hols*  
**Switch to Seeds for  
Pricy Foliage Plants**

Creating imaginative container gardens is a great way to decorate your entryway or patio for summer. But, the standard formula of planting a thriller plus fillers and spillers can result in pricy pots if you purchase all the plants.

**One way to economize** is to grow your own plants from seed—not just the flowers, but the must-have foliage plants for contrasting color, form and texture. Instead of paying \$3.79 to \$5 per plant at a garden center, you can grow 10 plants for \$3.95.

Last year, I grew *Alternanthera dentata* ‘Purple Knight’, a sturdy, upright filler with glossy purple foliage for sun to light shade. Park Seed, 10/\$3.95. I got 9 plants, enough to dress up my own containers and a few for my kids, too. These plants are best for big containers; they were so vigorous we had to prune them a lot. This year, I’m switching to *Alternanthera* ‘Royal Tapestry’, which has narrow, trailing foliage in shades of red, copper, purple or burgundy. Summer Hill Seeds, 15/\$3.75.

**My favorite spiller is petite silver licorice** plant. Its diminutive, fuzzy silver leaves provide a delightful contrast to bright-colored zinnias and petunias in sunny spots. *Helichrysum petiolare minus* ‘Silver Mist.’ Park Seed, 10/\$3.95.

‘Black Pearl’ ornamental pepper is a regular in my pots. Its black glossy foliage and small green, black and red fruits provide a fabulous focal point. Park Seed, 10/\$3.95.



*Plectranthus* ‘Silver Shield’ (pictured above with ‘Primetime Light Blue’ petunia and *Angelonia*) is another foliage star. A vigorous, upright plant, its large, fuzzy bluish-silver foliage does for big containers what dusty miller does for small ones. Park Seed, 10/\$3.95.

**The best foliage color range comes from coleus**, which can take some sun, but thrives in part shade. The newer, larger-leaved hybrids shine in pots.

A favorite is Coleus Giant Exhibition ‘Rustic Red’, a statuesque plant with red leaves edged in lime. Park Seed, 40/\$2.95. Coleus ‘Chocolate Mint’ is a more compact beauty with burgundy leaves edged in lime. Park Seed, 10/\$4.95. ‘Kong Mosaic’ (shown below) is a great partner for ‘Dragon Wing Pink’ begonia). Stokes Seed, 10/\$4.25.

