

Homes & Gardens



Wed & Sat 8:00am-2:00pm, Fri 8:00am-4:00pm

Create a lush English garden planter using white on white

By Jane Muller

The magnificent gardens of England are the inspiration for many gardeners in this country. For Elaine Martin of Vintage Gardener, it is Sissinghurst, a garden created by Vita Sackville-West that coloured her vision of a planter featuring only two colours.

"She (Sackville-West) was the one who came up with all white plants and all variegated leaves," Martin explains.

Martin says that white on white is now a popular colour motif that a lot of

people, including herself, copy. Sackville-West was a romantic who favoured profusion and surprise and those qualities can also be found in this Sissinghurst garden planter design.

The miniature white garden Martin has designed includes a mass of spring blooms. As the year progresses, the potted plants should be exchanged for seasonal varieties, white in colour of course.

"It can be done so that you can move from one season to the next," suggests the owner of the shop in Toronto's historic Distillery District.

The white plants grow at the base of a towering obelisk - that surprise element Martin always likes to include in her creations and something Sackville-West favoured as well. A heavy, boxy planter serves as the base for this container garden. Since the plant's roots won't reach down to the bottom, Martin suggests recycling some plastic pots by using them as filler at the bottom where they'll also help with drainage.

She then adds soil, allowing space for the plants to be set on top. Once placed, she backfills around the plants, being sure to keep the soil height below the lip of the planter. This precaution will keep water from flowing over the edge when the container is watered.

Once the plants are in place, add the obelisk and begin to wind the ivy up the structure. Martin stresses that it's crucial to use a mature ivy plant so that it will actually reach up the tower. The container won't accommodate the entire plant so you'll have to cut it apart. Martin literally takes a saw to the hard mass of entwined roots. It won't hurt the ivy and neither will stomping



Photos by Shayda Omidvar

The "ingredients" needed to create a lovely miniature white garden.

on the roots to reshape them for replanting.

As the year goes on the ivy will continue to grow but you'll need to replace tired plants, being sure to choose white flowers. If the planter is indoors some great choices for winter include paper whites, gardenias, azaleas and white amaryllis, suggests Martin.

Elaine Martin brings her years of gardening expertise to the city with Vintage Gardener; her shop in Toronto's Historic Distillery District (www.vintagegardener.com). See Elaine in action creating her signature "vintage" containers and floral displays on DailyWebTV.com



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