



Roof Garden Gal – An Experiment Five Floors Up!

Ups and downs of container gardening on an Arlington condo
building rooftop

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About Emily...

- No formal garden training
- Always enjoyed vegetable gardening – took over garden in my parent's yard
- It's in my blood!

2011 -2012

Square foot gardening



2011 -2012

Square foot gardening



2013 – Tank time!

100 gallon galvanized troughs - 2x2x4, 8 sq ft
-punch out existing drainage hole



2013 – Tank time!

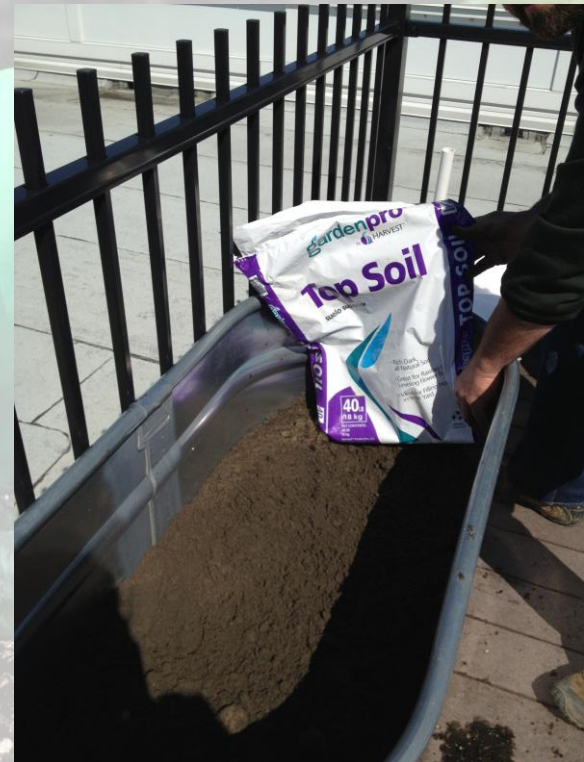
- 100 gallon galvanized troughs - 2x2x4, 8 sq ft
- punch out existing drainage hole
- base layer of lava rock for drainage
- layer of recycled Styrofoam for drainage, weight consideration



2013 – Tank time!

Next layers:

- potting mix from old planters
- top soil



2013 – Tank time!

Next layers:

- Pro-Mix
- Humus/manure blend



2013 – Tank time!

Next layers:

- oyster shell for calcium
- final layer of top soil



2013 – Tank time!

Layers will compact and then settle on their own, and the plants will have no problem breaking through. No mixing needed!

Gloves optional, but recommended!



2013 – Tank time!

Complete!



Tank figures

- Tanks should weigh 160-200 pounds when assembled.
- When watered, 225-250 pounds, using 1 gallon = 8 lbs.
 - This is overestimating a bit, higher end is after a few days of a good, heavy rain.



Tank figures

- 250/8 square feet = 31.25 pounds PSF
- About the size of a large person
- Again, overestimating, but better than underestimating
- Most roof decks are built to hold 40-50 lbs PSF



Tank figures

- Tanks cost \$90-\$120 new, depending on where you can find them
 - Southern States, Tractor Supply, etc
- Planting mix (for two) costs between \$50 - \$75, depending on where/when you buy, organic or not



What to grow in tanks?

- Cucumbers
- Peppers
- Herbs
- Tomatoes*
- Beets
- Carrots
- Squash
- Beans
- Asparagus
- Parsnip
- Snap Peas
- Radishes
- Onion



What to grow in tanks?

- Anything that likes full sun
- Herbs are great!
- Avoid delicate greens, but kale and collards are good



Issues

- HOT HOT HOT!
- Decking reflects heat, tank gets warm
- Good for veggies that like heat



Issues

-Water



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Issues

-Water

- Prefer to collect water when it rains, but that can be hard to do
- Can't touch the gutters because they are a "common element"
- Collect from the bottom of the drains and store in 5 gallon buckets, 20 gallon trash cans (with cover!)

-Watering cans

- Thoughts and prayers for rain ☁️



Issues

- Condo board
 - Shared space.
 - Neighbors were very supportive and excited by garden from early on
 - Enjoy greenery, veggies, atmosphere
 - Checked with original building supervisor/maintenance staff before addition of tanks in 2013, reviewed weight. Got approval.
 - When building units have sold, realtors added photos of garden to listings
 - “Lovely rooftop garden!”

Issues

- Condo board
 - Current board has decided that the garden is
 - too heavy
 - takes up too much space
 - No discussion, poor communication, but not worth the fight
 - Will be donating tanks to AFAC for Plot Against Hunger this month.
 - Will maintain fewer, smaller spaces on the roof for herbs

Garden accounts to follow on Instagram

In addition to seed companies, garden magazines, large farm accounts. Advice, pretty pictures, friendly comments!

- @FarmerRussell
 - Richmond area realtor, then farmer, then realtor. Helped with initial tank set up and advice.
- @BigCityGardener
 - Houston area urban gardener and coach
- @VeggiePile
 - DC container gardener
- @HighriseHorticulture
 - UK container gardener
- @Rachel_Grows
 - UK rooftop gardener
- @GroenePassies
 - Dutch father-daughter container gardener team
- @ClimaPod
 - Greenhouses to dream about

Thanks!

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