

A lush garden scene with a gravel path leading through various plants and flowers. In the foreground, a large black pot sits on a stone slab, containing a green plant. The path is flanked by purple flowers and green shrubs. In the background, there are more trees and a stone wall.

MARTHA STEWART Living

Sharing the 'Good Things' for 15 Years

Special Gardening Issue

INVITING LANDSCAPES BEST OF THE HOT PEPPERS
BRILLIANT, BOUNTIFUL DAHLIAS SOOTHING WATER FEATURES
COOKING WITH HERBS

surprising pots from unexpected places

TEXT BY STACEY HIRVELA PHOTOGRAPHS BY HELEN NORMAN



YOU MIGHT NOT GUESS IT, but alternatives to traditional terra-cotta garden planters are lurking in some unconventional spots. The electrical-supply section of the hardware store, masonry yards, farm-supply stores, perhaps even your basement—they all harbor items that, with a little imagination, can be transformed into attractive vessels for plants. Some are already well-equipped: A steel electrical box (more often used to shield circuit connections) has holes on one

side that can provide drainage. All you have to do is add soil and a plant. And a vintage milk pail is an ideal container for pre-potted greenery. Others, including clay chimney flue liners, which are open on both ends, require some modifications. As the examples on these pages show, such unpredictable shapes and materials can enhance your plants and their surroundings. Best of all, once you begin thinking outside the typical pot or planter, you'll see possibilities everywhere you turn.

electrical boxes

Steel utility boxes from the hardware store make sleek, modern pots. Choose a range of shapes and sizes. Turn so that the side with holes is at the bottom, and plant with low-growing succulents, such as *Echeveria* 'Black Prince' (right) and *Sempervivum*; top with gravel. (We used no. 2 grade grit.) For an exotic centerpiece (left), arrange several in a tray filled with grit.