



IN BLOOM: Amber Freda's colorful garden overflows with a variety of flowers and grasses. Freda likes to create interest with contrasting plants.

Flash in the pan — or pot

Container gardens create levels of sunny — and shady — delight

By ALYSSA ETINGER

URBAN dwellers, how do your gardens grow? In containers, it seems, and you don't need a lot of real estate to create one.

The key to successful container gardening is first determining whether your plot of land is sunny or shady — and then planting accordingly, says landscape designer Amber Freda (www.plantladyland.com).

No shrinking violets here: When you're dealing with a small space, choose plants that pack a big punch.

For sunny gardens, Freda suggests starting with something eye-catching, tall and large. Surround that with a trailing plant (petunias are one of her favorites) and one that's low to its ground.

Arranging a garden this way creates three levels. Freda also suggests creating interest with contrast — such as pairing a large leafed plant with a spiky grass.

The kind of pots you plant in should be determined by the amount of light your garden gets. Terracotta containers are your best bet for a



TREES LOUNGE: You can make a big impact with large plants and trees.

N.Y. Post: Jennifer Weisbord

shady space. They keep soil wetter for longer periods of time. Since they're porous, they'll dry too quickly in a sunny location. For sunnier gardens, choose ceramic, metal or plastic planters to hold moisture in longer.

For planting in shady spaces, we got advice from interior and garden designer Rebecca Cole (www.colecreates.com), co-host of the Discovery Channel's *Surprise by Design*.

Cole suggests large plants and blooming trees (stryax and dogwoods are favorites),

no matter how small the space.

For smaller plants, think drama: ferns, astilbe, purple coneflower or black-eyed Susans — and lots of them. Cole also likes crowding flowers together to create substantial plantings. Anything else, she says, looks, in her words, "dinky."

The key to any successful garden is two-fold: finding easy-to-care-for plants that thrive in their surroundings, and more important, creating a garden you'll want to spend time in.