

Classic Clay

It's a common material for planters, and runs the gamut of prices and styles. The most popular is terra-cotta, which has an elegant, old-world quality, but you can also find shades of brown, gray, and white. Clay is porous, so you'll need to water often to keep plants hydrated (less-thirsty succulents make great occupants). Keep in mind that large pots can be very heavy.



Bergs Potter Gray Castle pots and saucers, from \$18 for 4½" high, 5" diameter, whiteflowerfarm.com.



Seibert & Rice Artisan rolled-rim pot, in frost-resistant Impruneta clay, from \$65 for 6" high, 8" diameter, seibert-rice.com.



Campo de' Fiori Berkshire planters, from \$24 for 3" high, 6" diameter, campodefiori.com.

Sleek Ceramic

These glazed-clay containers are sealed, so they hold in moisture better than their brethren above. They come in every color under the sun, from cool cobalt to vibrant yellow to fiery red, and have a more modern feel. Handle them with care: Like clay, they can chip or crack if knocked over or left outside in freezing temps.



West Elm Bishop ceramic pedestal planter, in Alabaster, from \$29 for 5.9" high, 5.5" diameter, westelm.com.



Bauer Pottery Biltmore pot, in Bauer Yellow, from \$90 for 6.5" high, 8" diameter, bauerpottery.com.



Campania International Sem glazed planter, in Riviera Blue, from \$110 for 12.2" high, 11" diameter, wayfair.com.

Clever Composite

This blend of materials—typically concrete or clay mixed with resin or fiber—can look totally natural. But the designs are lightweight, sturdy (you don't need to worry about them cracking or chipping), and often all-weather, meaning you can leave them outside in winter. These qualities make them ideal candidates for large shrubs and trees.



Martha Stewart Faux Bois planter, from \$39 for 9" high, 7.25" diameter, martha.com.



Terrain Fiber Concrete Barrel pot, in Brown, from \$38 for 6.75" high, 6.75" diameter, shopterrain.com.



Penroyer Newman Roped Edge cylinder planter, from \$300 for 12" high, 11" diameter, penroyernewman.com.

Modern Metal

Constructed from stainless, galvanized, or Corten steel, plus aluminum or zinc, these styles are durable and do well outdoors year-round. One caveat is that metal pots can heat up in warm temperatures, causing the soil inside to dry out quickly and scorch plants. If you live in a hot zone, position them in the shade.



Veradek Corten-steel square bowl planter, 9.5" high, 32" wide, \$180, veradek.com.



Detroit Garden Works cast-aluminum urn, from \$178 for 17.75" high, 12.5" diameter, detroitgardenworks.com.



Galvanized ring planter, from \$198 for 18.5" high, 17" diameter, shopterrain.com.

» The Scoop on Soil

Always make sure your containers have drainage holes. (To prevent soil from pouring out, loosely cover each hole with pottery shards or a square of screening material, and clear out any debris annually so it doesn't get clogged.) Then choose an organic potting blend geared to what you're growing. If you're planting cacti, for instance, use a well-draining mix designed for succulents so the roots don't get soggy and rot. Post-planting, water thoroughly and regularly, typically when the top one to two inches of soil are dry. Since container-grown plants don't get nutrients from the ground, feed them every few weeks with organic fertilizer, like fish emulsion. And at least once a year, replenish containers with more potting soil and top-dress them with nourishing compost.

SPECIAL ORDER

Martha is also a fan of the exquisite hand-thrown clay pots of father and son artisans Guy Wolff and Ben Wolff. See them at guywolff.com and benwolffpottery.com.