

Switch to Seeds for Pricy Foliage Plants

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Creating imaginative container gardens is a great way to decorate your entryway or patio for summer. But, the standard formula of planting a thriller plus fillers and spillers can result in pricy pots if you purchase all the plants.

One way to economize is to grow your own plants from seed—not just the flowers, but the must-have foliage plants for contrasting color, form and texture. Instead of paying \$3.79 to \$5 per plant at a garden center, you can grow 10 plants for \$3.95.

Last year, I grew *Alternanthera dentata* ‘Purple Knight’, a sturdy, upright filler with glossy purple foliage for sun to light shade. Park Seed, 10/\$3.95. I got 9 plants, enough to dress up my own containers and a few for my kids, too. These plants are best for big containers; they were so vigorous we had to prune them a lot. This year, I’m switching to *Alternanthera* ‘Royal Tapestry’, which has narrow, trailing foliage in shades of red, copper, purple or burgundy. Summer Hill Seeds, 15/\$3.75.

My favorite spiller is petite silver licorice plant. Its diminutive, fuzzy silver leaves provide a delightful contrast to bright-colored zinnias and petunias in sunny spots. *Helichrysum petiolare minus* ‘Silver Mist.’ Park Seed, 10/\$3.95.

‘Black Pearl’ ornamental pepper is a regular in my pots. Its black glossy foliage and small green, black and red fruits provide a fabulous focal point. Park Seed, 10/\$3.95.



Plectranthus ‘Silver Shield’ (pictured above with ‘Primetime Light Blue’ petunia and *Angelonia*) is another foliage star. A vigorous, upright plant, its large, fuzzy bluish-silver foliage does for big containers what dusty miller does for small ones. Park Seed, 10/\$3.95.

The best foliage color range comes from coleus, which can take some sun, but thrives in part shade. The newer, larger-leaved hybrids shine in pots.

A favorite is Coleus Giant Exhibition ‘Rustic Red’, a statuesque plant with red leaves edged in lime. Park Seed, 40/\$2.95. Coleus ‘Chocolate Mint’ is a more compact beauty with burgundy leaves edged in lime. Park Seed, 10/\$4.95. ‘Kong Mosaic’ (shown below) is a great partner for ‘Dragon Wing Pink’ begonia). Stokes Seed, 10/\$4.25.

