



Berry Show · Pot Plant Section Education Series

Designing with Thrill, Fill & Spill

A simple guide for creating balanced and beautiful container displays

What it is

The Thrill, Fill & Spill design principle creates beautiful, balanced pot displays by combining three types of plants: those that stand tall and capture attention (Thrillers), those that fill the middle ground (Fillers), and those that spill gracefully over the edge (Spillers). It's a simple idea that makes any container – from a hanging basket to a shallow bowl – look complete and professionally designed.

How it works

Role	Purpose	Position in the Pot
Thrill (Height & Focus)	Creates the visual centerpiece of the arrangement—usually, the tallest or most striking plant.	Centre or slightly off centre towards the back.
Fill (Body & Balance)	Adds mass, colour, and texture in the middle layer. Should contrast the thriller without overpowering it.	Around or in front of the 'thrill'.
Spill (Flow & Softness)	Softens the edge of the container and connects the arrangement to its surroundings.	Near the rim, flowing over the edge.

Example Combinations

Theme	Thrill	Fill	Spill
Succulent Collection	Echinopsis subdenudata,	Aloe juvenna, Echeveria 'Perle von Nürnberg', Crassula ovata 'Minima', Sedum morganianum,	Senecio rowleya
Herb Container	Lemongrass, Sage	Basil, Garlic Chives, Coriander	Mint, Thyme, Oregano

Theme	Thrill	Fill	Spill
Flowering Display	Dwarf Salvia, Geranium	Petunia, Verbena	Lobelia, Sweet Alyssum
Foliage Mix	Cordyline, Dracaena	Coleus, Heuchera	Dichondra, Creeping Jenny

How to Design Yours

1. Start with the pot – choose one with good drainage and suitable depth.
2. Pick your Thrill first – it sets the height and tone.
3. Add Fills to provide body and colour.
4. Finish with Spills that trail naturally over the edge.
5. Step back and adjust until the display looks balanced from all sides.

Quick Tips

- Use odd numbers of plants (1 Thrill, 3 Fills, 1–2 Spills) for a natural balance.
- Repeat one filler type to unify the design.
- Leave space for growth — avoid crowding.
- Stick to natural materials — no coloured stones or ornaments.
- For show entries: clean pots, natural gravel top dressing, and healthy plants.

This concept applies equally well to succulents, herbs, or flowering annuals. It's an easy framework to start designing for the Berry Show – experiment and enjoy the process!

Part of the Berry Show Pot Plant Education Series

See also: Cactus & Succulent Collections in One Pot · Herb Collections in One Pot. Watch the 8-second video: 'How to Arrange Thrill, Fill & Spill'.