

Plants



Cool customer

Nip down to your local nursery, buy a few plants and create a container to brighten the dull January days

There are fewer gardening jobs to keep you busy in January, so make the most of the extra time and plant up a stylish container to add a bit of chic to your terrace or doorstep. This elegant cube is filled with a curly carex and *Helleborus niger*, the Christmas rose, which starts to flush pink in January and February. The plants cost less than £15 from a local nursery. Don't worry if you can't find the exact varieties we used, just choose something similar that's looking good right now.

WE USED

30cm satin zinc cube pot (£14.99, Woodlodge, from garden centres, www.woodlodge.co.uk)

Peat-free compost (around £6 for 60 litres from garden centres)

1 x *Carex buechananii* (garden centres or £6.99 for a plant in a 2-litre pot, Crocus, 0844 557 2333, www.crocus.co.uk)

3 x *Helleborus niger* (around £3 for a plant in a 10cm pot at garden centres, or £5.49 for a plant in a 2-litre pot, Crocus, as before)

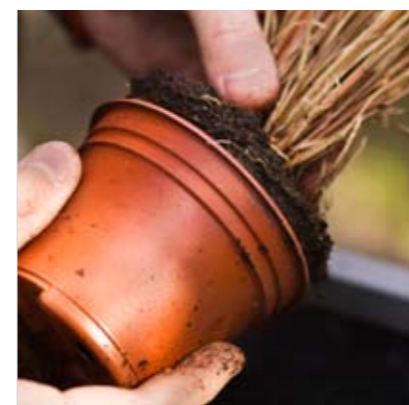
Electric drill, crocks, watering can



1 Turn the container upside down and drill four or five drainage holes in the bottom.



2 Place a few crocks in the base of the container then add compost until it's two-thirds full.



3 Plant the carex in one corner of the cube pot. This will form the 'back' of the finished display.




4 Fill the remaining corners with the three hellebores, and push more compost into any gaps.



5 Water the plants in well and stand in a sheltered spot. Make sure the compost doesn't dry out in winter winds.

PROJECT: KEVIN SMITH; PHOTOS: PAUL DEBOIS

 FIND MORE INSPIRING container ideas at www.gardenersworld.com



Maintenance tips

- For extra protection against the cold, line metal containers with bubblewrap. It will help prevent compost from freezing.
- Transplant the hellebores and carex to the garden when the container is past its best. They will grow for years to come.