

¡Olé! Olla!

Karen Woodring, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer

6/29/2026

The drought is no doubt taking a toll on our gardens. One way to save water (and your garden bounty) is to use Olla (pronounced OY-ya) pots. Any unglazed clay vessel that doesn't have a drain hole will work. You can buy Olla pots online (which is what I did). Or use some old clean unglazed pots with the drain hole sealed. The saucer works well to cover the top and prevent mosquitoes from breeding in the water.

I have experimented with Ollas made of plastic water bottles and inverted glass wine bottles (isn't that a good enough reason to stay hydrated and to enjoy a good crisp Chardonnay on a hot summer day?). Plastic bottles clog with soil and I am not a fan of broken glass in my yard and garden.

I am using Ollas in Whiskey barrels holding Blackberry, Raspberry and Blueberry plants. They are providing a consistent moisture level buried under the pine mulch. I always make sure the containers are watered well when I am refilling the Olla pots. I've included a picture before burying the Olla up to the neck of the pot.

Just remember to remove the Ollas at the end of the season to store for next year. The clay will shatter (as everyone knows who has left an unglazed pot outdoors during the VA winter). I've included some Olla pot references if you want to read more about them.

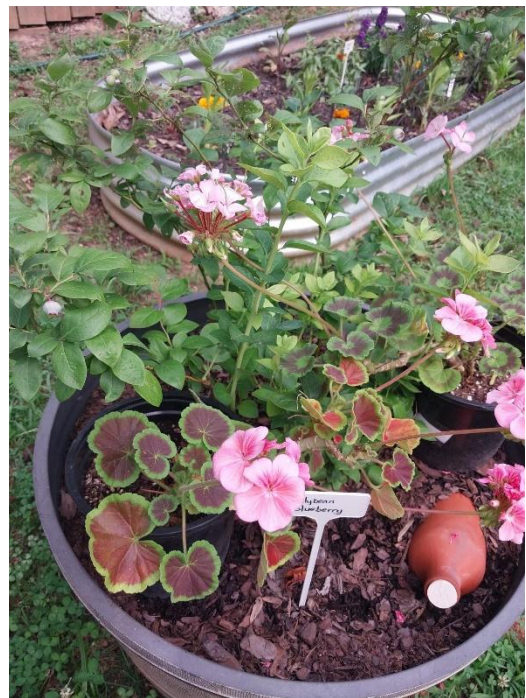


Photo by Karen Woodring

RESOURCES:

<https://www.riley.k-state.edu/docs/lawnandgardenandother/olla.pdf>

<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/news/columns/dakota-gardener/dakota-gardener-olla-watering>

<https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1911-2021.pdf>

<https://planttalk.colostate.edu/topics/vegetables/1826-water-related-problems-vegetable-gardens/>