



ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or
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Question of the Week: *Whenever I go to the nursery or look at an online plant catalog, I'm confused about plant container sizes. For example, I see plants sold in "1 gallon" pots, but the pots certainly don't look like they would hold "1 gallon." I also see pots labeled with numbers like #1. Can you help straighten this out for me? - Sarah*

Linda's Answer: Sarah - I don't blame you for being confused; you've asked a very good question. Hopefully, I can shed some light on it. The containerized plant industry has been around for more than 75 years, and there has been much variability in pots of a given size from manufacturer to manufacturer which leads to the confusion. Each manufacturer does it differently. Not only has there been variability in size, the descriptions also vary, i.e., some are described in "gallons," "quarts," etc., some are described by inches in pot diameter and some are described by numbers, like #1, #2, etc. If that wasn't confusing enough, the fact that "1 gallon" pots do not necessarily hold 1 gallon can have you pulling your hair out! Some help is on the way in the form of "The American Standard for Nursery Stock" (ANSI Z60.1), which was updated in 2014 by AmericanHort, the largest association for garden retailers in the world. This standard provides some consistency in terminology for both buyers and sellers of plant material by using what are called "trade sizes," but even so there is a range in container volumes for a given trade size. I've summarized below a very approximate relationship between these various descriptions to give you a general idea.



Common Reference	Trade Size	Approx. diameter of pot	Actual Gal capacity
"1 gallon"	#1	7"-8"	.7 to 1.1 gal
"2 gallon"	#2	8 1/2"	1.4 to 2.5 gal
"3 gallon"	#3	10"	2.7 to 3.2 gal
"5 gallon"	#5	12"	3.4 to 5.4 gal
"15 gallon"	#15	18"	12 to 16 gal

You will most often see the "1 gallon" containers (#1 pots), when you buy perennials; 3, 5 and 10 gallon pots for shrubs and 15 gallon pots for trees.

Thanks for a great question!

**"Ask the Landscape Professional" articles are all on our website;
if you missed any, go to www.SprigsandTwigs.net**

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The Landscape Professionals

Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

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