With all this wet weather we’ve been having, it has been a little difficult for many of us to get outside and enjoy our beautiful landscapes.

So why not extend the landscape to drier land? The patio can be one of the most pleasant areas of your home by the addition of a few potted plants. You can easily turn it into an attractive place where you and your family will enjoy hours of relaxation.

Container plants can be placed on the patio wherever an accent or screen is needed. They can range from large palms to small flowering annuals. The most important thing to remember is to choose plants for the location. Since patios typically are shady, shade-loving plants should be used.

Problems will persist if the right plants are not used in the right places. If your patio does receive some afternoon sun, you may be able to use plants that prefer partial sun or partly shaded areas.

It is important to plan the design of your patio as if you were designing your landscape. This will save you time and money by not buying plants on impulse that, when you get them home, do not complement the others or thrive on patios. You can use a variety of plants and place them as groupings of small potted plants, large potted plants, hanging baskets or a combination of all three.

However, be careful not to use too many types of plants, or your patio may become too crowded.

If you have a small patio, you can make it look larger by placing plants carefully. Avoid crowding plants into small areas. This will just make the area look even smaller. Keep the size of your patio in perspective when designing plant areas. Large palms probably will not fill a small space effectively.

Plants can also help a too-large area look smaller. Stepped plantings, in which plants gradually increase in size, can be used. Begin with lowgrowing plants, and gradually use taller ones as you go toward the edge of the patio. Three steps is probably the maximum before crowding becomes an issue. Not only do step plantings reduce the size of a large area, but they can also create a nice grouping of plants, with the smaller ones hiding containers of the larger ones. They can create the illusion of a "real" landscape on your patio.

After you assess your patio plant needs, it is time to choose containers. Be creative! Almost anything can be a planter. If it needs to do is hold soil and allow drainage. Have you thought of using an old shoe, a basket or kitchen pans? Whatever you choose, take into account the final weight. When filled with soil and plants, containers can become heavy.

Now it is time to choose the plants. When picking out plants, do research. How big will it grow? Will it grow on a patio? Plants typically used for houseplants usually serve well for patio plants. Shade-loving plants such as bromeliads can also be used to create beautiful arrangements on the patio. Take into account that tropical plants will need to be protected during cold weather.

Proper maintenance is needed to ensure plants’ health. Water as needed. Use the "finger test." If the soil is dry when you put your finger an inch or two into the soil, the plant needs water. Fertilize by directions on the fertilizer label, and monitor for pests. It is easier to control pests when they arrive than after they become established.

By creating a container landscape on your patio, you can enjoy your beautiful flowers and foliage when it is raining buckets just yards away.

For a list of plants that thrive on the patio or for more information on preparing your patio landscape, contact Osceola Master Gardeners at (321) 697-3000 Mondays to Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm. Reminder
about seminars: Low-Maintenance Landscapes will be Tuesday. Butterfly Gardening is Thursday. Both are at 6:30 p.m. in the Agricultural Center. Call to register.

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