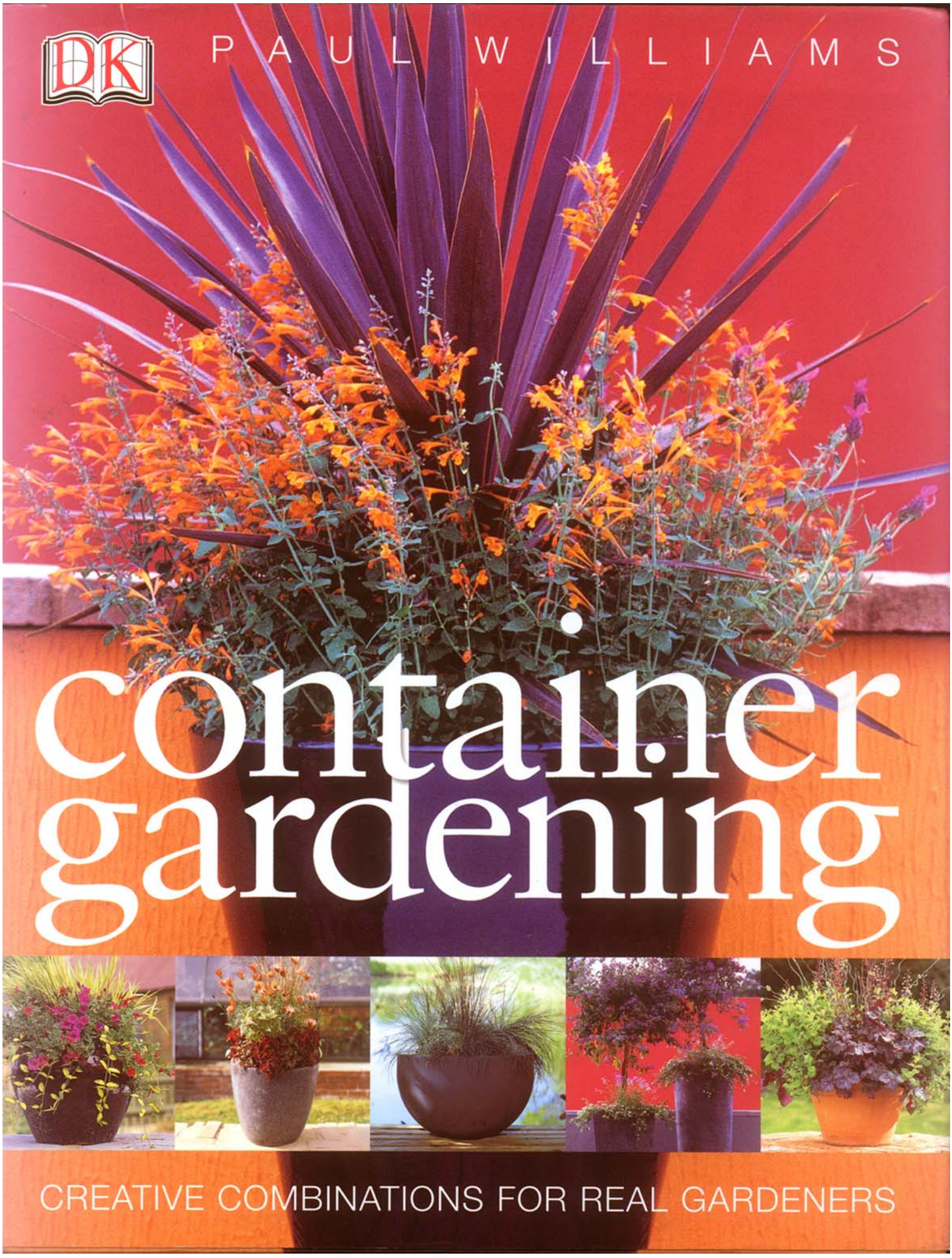
DK
PAUL WILLIAMS
container gardening
CREATIVE COMBINATIONS FOR REAL GARDENERS

Scale and proportion

Getting these two important design elements right is one of the greatest challenges of container gardening.

The proportions of every planting are constantly changing as plants grow and mature. This certainly presents a problem for container gardeners who must try to see the finished display in their mind's eye when planting: a difficult task when young plants, at this stage, may be less than a quarter of their eventual size.

When planning the scale and proportion of a display, it is important to consider the growth habit of the species you have chosen; this will help you work out how the planting will look over time.

For standard designs, which feature a tall central plant in a round pot, ideally the finished height should be between one and one-and-a-half times the height of the container, and the planting roughly triangular in shape. But this proportion of container to planting is not a rigid rule to be applied in every instance. When you look through the chapter on Container Portraits *(see pages 26-115)* you will see that it is a flexible guideline to be adapted according to the shape of the container. Generally, I try to avoid large plantings in pots with narrow bases as they upset the eye by appearing top-heavy, while the same plants in a wide-based pot look stable and pleasing.

Traditional container planting designs use a tall plant in the centre to balance the pot height and to create a focus for the display. With smaller, rounded pots, it is best to avoid height in the centre as it makes low arranegements look top heavy. Instead, create a dome-shaped design that can be enjoyed from all angles. Here, Tradescantia and Ageratum work to make a well-balanced, planting.

This low-level planting of Echeveria takes a significant but secondary role, allowing the pot's large size and rounded shape to dominate the design. It's smooth, curved shape is accentuated by this low surface planting of succulent leaves. This choice of planting helps to keep the whole display's centre of gravity low and creates an overall effect of stability, security and solidity.

These two very different pot sizes and shapes sit against their own wall but work well together. The choice of plants and clever play on scale, helps accentuate the shape of the pots, but I would prefer the grass to be shorter and the Agave bigger for balance.