Hanging Baskets

Hanging Baskets are used to view all plants suspended over other plants or landscape features. A hanging basket is a refreshing way of using common plant, but showing them so the look new and different then before. In growing hanging plants, you follow most of the basic techniques used in container gardening on the ground. The selection of different kinds of plants, containers, and hangers is also wide enough to create an arrangement will hold the viewers interest and imagination.

Almost any plant that can grow in a container will also grow in a hanging basket. A designer can use landscape and specimen trees, shrubs, perennials, succulents, tropicals, ferns, annuals, herbs, and vegetables. The most popular hanging baskets are those that are covered with long trailing vines. To add interest or color small bedding plants are planted on the sides of a sphagnum moss lined wire basket. Arrangement of many different plants and accessories in the same container will become a small landscape.

Outdoors Hanging Baskets

There are several factors that you should consider before constructing a hanging basket. Factors such as location, support structures, light intensity and duration, humidity, and wind should be examined before buying the plant material and basket.

The support structure must be strong enough to support both plant and container. The weight of the container full of soil, water, and plants can weight over 30 pounds. Home gardeners often choose an overhanging beam of their home, a support structure for a patio cover, or a tree limb that is sturdy enough to hold container and plants. Roof edge, entries, porches, and patio structures are the most common structures used to support a basket.

Because different species of plants require different growing conditions, environmental factors such as sun, shade, heat, and wind must be considered when choosing a location for a basket. Check to see if the basket will be exposed to reflected heat or strong winds. Light colors can reflect the sun’s rays and greatly increase the light intensity, even burning or wilting specimens that tolerate direct sunlight.

Baskets and Material

Metal basket are designed as an open frame so that their sides as well as their top can be planted to create a circle of plants. Wire baskets are the most traditional type and generally range from 8 to 18 inches in diameter. When selecting a size, be sure to allow for about 2 or 3 inches of moss lining around the sides as well as 2 inches of new soil around the plant’s roots. A 12 to 14-inch basket should be fine for a plant growing in a 1-gallon container.
Wire baskets are easy to hang from three or four wires or lengths of chain hooked through the spaces in the rim and joined together at the top. As with other baskets, you can buy baskets with one flat side designed for hanging against a wall from a nail or hanger. The moss lining provides an insulation layer between the air, soil and basket and is very porous. They also freely drain water from the sides and bottom.

Baskets come in several shapes – some are deep with fairly straight sides, other are shallow and wider at the rim than they are deep, and some have a rim that rolls inward. Low growing plants look best in shallow baskets that will not appear out of proportion or too tall. Deep baskets with deep straight sides are best suited for large spreading plants whose roots need a lot of room to grow.

Potting soil is loose enough to contain much air and will absorb enough moisture to supply the roots while still allowing excess water to drain from between soil particles. A recipe for gardener’s potting soil includes the following: 2-cubic feet of stabilized bark, redwood sawdust, peat moss, 8-gallons of sandy loam, 1-1/2 cups of 10-10-10 fertilizer, and 2 cups of dolomite limestone. Mixed in the given amounts, the recipe will provide about 3 cubic feet of soil.

**Constructing a moss basket**

The lip - Begin by constructing the top rim with wet sphagnum moss. Using a small handful of moss, squeeze out the excess water to form a ball the size of your fist. Spread the top wires apart and push the moss through the gap so it rests on the wire. Then slide the moss against one of the vertical support wires. Continue this process by pushing each moss ball against the previous moss ball until the entire rim is full. When the compressed moss springs back to fullness, it will naturally cover the wires.

The sides – Starting from the inside and just below the basket lip, push moist moss through the basket wires to form a one-inch thick layer. The finished lining should be thick enough so that there are no holes in the mass. If holes persist, fill them with small moss pieces.

Installing side plants – Poke holes in the moss with your fingers or shears. As with other flower containers, use small herbaceous plants that grow in pony packs. Their root ball will be smaller and easier to work with when installing them between the wires. Using a small, thin layer of moss, wrap the root ball in moss. Then insert the plant from the outside, gently pulling it from the inside until the root crown is flush with the wire. Once the plant is in place, squeeze the wires together so the plant is stable. If needed, place small pieces of moss around the root crown until the hole is completely covered.

Adding potting soil – After all the plants are in place, add potting mix so the roots are completely covered. Push down lightly on the soil.

Installing top plants – Use 4-, 6-, or 8- inch size plants for the top. Add soil after placing top plants, making sure that the soil level is approximately 2-inches from the rim.
Watering – Water the plants and hang the basket in a partial shady location for about 1 week. Then hang the basket in a permanent location. The frequency of watering will depend on the season, weather, and temperature. Full Sun Plants: water 3 times a week in warm or hot months. Shade Plants: Once or twice a week in warm or hot weather.

Fertilizer – Start fertilizing plants one month after planting. Apply plant food during the warm growing months of April through September.