

Fessler Nursery Growing Recommendations for Hanging Baskets

Plant needs:

- 1) Soil – Start with a high-quality, well draining growing media with starter fertilizer.
- 2) Temperature & Light - The plugs are coming out of a greenhouse with a temperature of 68 degrees and no shade cloth. After planting, keep the plants warm until new roots have developed and rooted nicely into the growing media. Allow the plants to receive as much light as possible. Maintain days at 68 degrees, nights at 60 degrees. After the plants are growing nicely reduce the day temperature to 65 and night temperatures to 55, but keep the light levels high.
- 3) Moisture – After planting, water in thoroughly. Allow the soil to dry down to slightly moist before watering again. You shouldn't need to water for at least 1 week. But, do NOT let the soil dry out or you will damage the roots and may not be able to bring all of the plants back. By allowing the soil to dry down to moist between waterings, you are promoting the roots to grow and seek out moisture. You are also preventing the roots from becoming over-saturated and getting a disease.
- 4) Fertilizer – Your media should have some starter fertilizer in it. There is no need to add additional fertilizer until the roots hit the sides of the pot. Start fertilizing with low levels of fertilizer at 150 ppm for the first feeding, then increase to 200-250 ppm as the plants get bigger. Use a well-balanced fertilizer with micro nutrients.

The 3 numbers in the fertilizer stand for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

Nitrogen – growth, leaf structure, root growth, color

Ammonium nitrogen (acidic) – promotes soft growth

Nitrate nitrogen – promotes hard growth, builds cell structure

Phosphorus - root growth, bud and flower growth

Potassium – cell structure growth

Fessler Nursery uses the following fertilizers:

Cal-Mag special 17-6-17 (Plant Marvel) – has more nitrate nitrogen, use for dark growing weather to limit stretch and for geraniums.

Mag-Iron special 18-6-18 (Plant Marvel) – use for calibrachoa and petunia to keep iron levels up.

20-10-20 (Plant Marvel) – has more ammonium nitrogen (acidic), use in the later spring when light levels are higher.

- 5) PH & EC – Most plants like a PH of around 5.8 (calibrachos 5.4-5.8, geraniums 5.8-6.2) and an EC of 1.8-2.0 (petunias & calibrachos 2.0-2.4). If the PH is off, then the plants will not be able to take up the nutrients/fertilizer in the soil.

When the PH is too high, it is very apparent in calibrachoa and petunias as the leaves become chlorotic and starts showing signs of yellowing. When this happens, you must first correct the PH, and then increase the fertilizer rate.

To lower the PH, you can inject citric acid into your water source and/or with your fertilizer stock. I suggest you consult with your fertilizer supplier to have your water tested and to get the proper amount of citric acid to inject based on the PH of your water source.

To raise the PH you can use a fertilizer high in alkalinity (nitrate nitrogen) or a basic fertilizer or in extreme cases you can add liquid limestone. The EC measures the soluble salts in your soil that are available for the plant to take up. You can find several different PH & EC tools available on-line for purchase to measure the PH & EC.

- 6) Soft pinch/trim after the plants reach the sides of the baskets to even up the plants. If you want to continue pinching/trimming, stop at least 4 weeks prior to your plant sale to allow the plants to bud up and bloom.

Crop timing (more details in the back of the Selecta catalog):

Ppp = plugs per pot

Vegetative bedding:

4" pots – 7-8 weeks with 1ppp

12" baskets – 9-12 weeks with 5ppp

Geranium:

4" pots – 8-10 weeks with 1ppp

12" baskets – 10-14 weeks with 5ppp

Trixi-Liner Production:

6" pots – use 1ppp and allow 5-6 weeks.

12" basket – use 3 Trixi's and allow 8-10 weeks