

Success with Hanging Baskets

Hanging baskets are a gardener's treasure. Baskets and other containers allow virtually unlimited design creativity, and their small scale allows for huge impact anywhere. If you have poor soil in your garden-or even if you have no garden at all, you can create the perfect environment for your plants' needs.

When designing hanging baskets, consider some basic rules to guarantee success and lasting impact:

- Plant Needs
- Color
- Proportion

Plant Needs

The plants combined in one container should have similar water, fertilizer and light requirements. Hanging baskets can dry out more quickly than those planted in the landscape-be sure to check for water often. With each watering, fertilizer gets flushed from the soil, so try working a time-released granular fertilizer into the soil at planting time.

Color

Color is an important part of designing high-impact combinations. It's the color that catches the eye first and draws attention to the hanging basket.

The Color Wheel

Do you want to create contrast or harmony in your hanging basket? Which ever you choose, take a little guidance from the color wheel. Create striking color-contrast combinations by mixing colors like yellow and violet or orange and blue. These are the colors that are directly opposite each other on the color wheel. For contrasting combinations using three colors, mix the primary colors: red, blue, and yellow. White and silver combined with dark purples and blues create a striking contrast in cool colors.

In combination plantings, harmony is achieved by mixing related colors-those that are close to or next to each other on the color wheel. You can also create harmony by combining different shades and tones of a single color.

More Than Flowers

Don't forget to think about foliage when you're choosing colors for your hanging baskets. Create a combination of flowering plants and attractive foliage plants - the so called component plants - to create a "Living Bouquet." Add texture to any combination with attractive foliage color and structure. It is recommended to use a ratio of three-to-four flowering plants to each component plant to maintain an attractive balance.

Proportion

Another important ingredient for an impressive display is the right proportion. As a rule of thumb, the plant portion should be at least twice as big as the visible part of the container. A common mistake is to use too few plants in hanging baskets. Although the planting will fill in with time, the idea behind hanging baskets is to create instant sensation, so design your baskets to look beautiful right from the beginning.

Look From All Angles

Consider texture and vertical interest to create a well-proportioned basket. Texture will add spice to any design. Work with different flower and foliage textures to give your design the right definition. -And don't forget about vertical interest! Add height to your basket with upright plants, and use low growers for balance. Just don't go too high if your basket will be hanging close to an awning or roof. Design your hanging basket so that it offers eye appeal at every level.