

THE PLANT KINGDOM GREENHOUSE & NURSERY, INC.
620 FIDELER ROAD
FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99712
907-45-PLANT (907-457-5268)
OPEN 10AM-7PM EVERYDAY OF THE SUMMER!

HOW TO KEEP YOUR HANGING FLOWER BASKET LOOKING GREAT ALL SUMMER

- A.** Hardening Off - These baskets have been hanging in a greenhouse, which is a very protected and constant environment, so you do need to acclimate them to the outside world. If the location that you have chosen for your basket is in the hot sun, hang it there for only an hour or two at a time for the first few days, keeping it in a partially shaded spot the rest of the hours (think of it as if you were to go lie in the hot sun in Hawaii after months of being in Alaska with not much sun...instant sunburn!). Even if your basket will not be in direct sun, you may be best to hang it outside for a few hours per day for the first few days. For the first several days with any basket, hang it in a protected spot at night (your house, garage, porch, or greenhouse). Plan also to bring it in if there is a strong wind or a sudden cold spell. After a few days of this routine, your basket should be ready to live hanging outside day and night. However, don't hang it outside permanently until danger of frost is past (roughly May 20 to June 1 depending on the year) no matter how long you have hardened it off.
- B.** Watering and Fertilizing - Check your basket for moisture daily and maybe twice daily if you hang it in a very sunny, exposed spot. A general rule is to soak your basket well when you water it so that water is reaching down into the root zone. Don't water it again until the top 1" to 2" of soil is dry to the touch. Most baskets will require daily watering on warm days. Check daily until you are familiar with your basket's requirements. Over watering and keeping the roots constantly soggy is just as damaging as letting your basket parch and wilt. Always check for moisture with your finger before watering. You may also familiarize yourself with the weight of the basket when it is saturated and when it is dry and then use this information as a gage as to whether it needs watering.

It is also important that you fertilize your basket regularly. You may use a water-soluble fertilizer such as 10-52-10, 9-45-15, 15-30-15. Do not use the granular garden fertilizer (like 8-32-16) in your containers. One method is to water once each day with 1 tsp. water soluble fertilizer per gallon of water (so on hot days when you water twice a day, one of these times would be with clear water and one time would be with the fertilizer solution). Another method is to water with a

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solution of 1 TBS. soluble fertilizer per gallon of water every second or third day. A third method is to water once every week or ten days with 2 TBS. of soluble fertilizer per gallon of water. Baskets of vegetative petunias (“Supertunias”) require heavier feeding than any other baskets, and for these we recommend a heavier feeding program such as the second method outlined above.

An alternative fertilizing regime is to use an organic fertilizer source. Recommendations would be a soluble organic such as the Neptune’s Harvest formulations or Daniels fertilizer (analysis is 10-4-3). Daniels is what these containers were fed with here at The Plant Kingdom where they receive a very dilute solution of Daniels every time they are watered. For on-going feeding throughout the summer, the recommended rate for Daniels is 1 tablespoon per gallon once a week. For an actively growing mixed combination 14” to 16” hanging basket requiring water every day, this recommendation could be increased to twice a week or even three times a week if watered with clear water the other days of the week.

All of our baskets have some slow-release fertilizer in the soil (four times as much in the vegetative petunia baskets as in others), but it is not adequate to keep them blooming at their fullest all summer.

- C. Light - Hang your basket in a spot that has the amount of light suitable for the plants it contains. Baskets that contain begonias, fuchsias, or impatiens for example prefer shade-the north, east, or northeast exposure or an area that is shaded by roof overhang, trees or nearby buildings. Geraniums, petunias, and fillers such as verbena, calibrachoa, scaveola, and others are able to tolerate the most sun and heat. Cascading lobelia grown from seed such as Sapphire and the Fountains series are really shade plants but diligently watered and trimmed, they can survive Interior Alaska’s sunny exposures reasonably well. The more upright varieties of seed grown lobelia, such as the Palace and Riviera series and White Lady, seem to survive sunny locations better than the more cascading varieties. The Laguna and Techno series as well as other vegetatively propagated lobelia are bred to be sun loving and thrive in hot, sunny locations unlike the seed grown types.
- D. Some Other General Hints

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1. **Don't** hang your basket near a heat register in your house when you bring it in at night during the hardening off period. That is too dry and warm (these plants are accustomed to the high humidity of a greenhouse) and you can kill your basket by leaving it too close to a heat vent for just a few hours (or near the heater outlet in your car just carrying it home).
2. **Don't** hang your basket in a spot where it will be constantly battered by the wind. Plan to bring it into a protected spot if possible during strong wind (begonia branches heavily loaded with blooms will snap very easily, for example).
3. Remove all dead flowers on a regular basis to keep plants blooming. In addition, most flowering plants benefit from constant trimming and pinching throughout the gardening season to keep the form compact and balanced and the growth fresh and new. If certain plants are starting to dominate in a combination planter, pinch them back to prevent them from crowding out other component plants.
4. Watch your plants for outdoor insect pests. Early detection of pests allows you to address the problem before pest populations are out of control and difficult to reign in. Aphids in particular are easily spread from nearby birch trees or weeds. If aphids or other pests do appear, you can spray them off daily with a jet of water from your garden hose or use some of the organic controls now available including beneficial insects such as ladybugs, lacewing larvae, and *Aphidius* wasps. Remember that healthy, well cared for plants are more resistant to pest infestations than those that are weakened by improper watering and fertilizing. Plants that are allowed to wilt severely and often or that are kept constantly soggy are more susceptible to pest infestations. Over-fertilizing with high nitrogen fertilizers can produce nitrogen-rich young growth that is inviting to pests such as aphids. Keeping plants deadheaded and constantly pinched back is also important in maintaining a healthy, pest resistant basket.
5. Begonias, fuchsias, and geraniums can all be saved from year to year if they are brought in before the first killing frost. For the first few weeks after bringing them in, watch for pests such as aphids, spider mites, and white flies that were kept in check by natural predators outdoors but which may multiply rapidly indoors in the absence of predators.
6. Do not get water on the leaves of begonias in the direct sun, as sun magnified by water will produce brown, burned spots on the leaves.

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7. If we get a lot of rain, make sure your hanging basket, especially if it has begonias in it, isn't hung in a place where the rain is keeping it constantly soaked. Move it if need be.

Follow these simple guidelines and your basket will look beautiful all season. Lots of time and energy have gone into these plants in our greenhouses early this spring, and we hope you will continue this care when you take your baskets home. We cannot stress enough that these plants are living things - a lot of them in a very small space - and they do require constant care and attention to maximize beauty and flower production all summer long. Good luck, and feel free to call on us if you have any questions about your plants!