

Creating Hanging Baskets

A guide for designing, planting and caring for your own hanging baskets

There's more than one way to add vertical colour to your garden. Tall plants make an obvious choice, but so do hanging baskets. Whether you've got an expensive patio or a tiny apartment balcony, a hanging basket gets plants off the ground, to eye level or higher, and can add a burst of color where flower beds and patio containers can't.

Already-planted hanging baskets are easy to find in any garden centre, but so are the materials needed to plant up your own. Here's an easy guide to creating your own hanging basket, plus tips for long-term care.

Your supplies:

- A basket - There are many options, from wood to plastic to wire frames. Larger baskets allow for more types of plants and plastic types tend to hold more moisture, but many people prefer the aesthetic appeal of wood, wicker and wire baskets.
- A liner - Most do-it-yourself basket planters have a wire frame with some sort of liner, like coco fibre, compressed sphagnum peat or sheet moss. Most liners are sold separately.
- The compost - We always recommend using a good quality compost for baskets and containers. Mix in controlled release fertiliser granules and water retaining gel to help the basket retain water better.
- The plants - The most basic rule to remember is don't mix sun-loving and shade-loving plants in the same basket. You can look for a combination of mounding plants for the centre and trailing plants for the edge. Within these two categories, you can look for interesting or colourful foliage or plants that have striking blooms.



How many plants you actually put in the basket depends on a few factors. For a small 10-in. (25-cm) basket, three to four plants may do. But with a large, deep 16-in. (40-cm) moss basket, you could use as many as 10 plants - especially if you plant in holes along the sides and bottom.

If you're using a wire basket that didn't come pre-lined, line it with moss, coco fibre or other liner. If you plan on planting in the sides of the basket, you'll need to cut small slits in the lining at the compost level. Either push the root ball from the outside in or wrap the plant with a paper towel and push it through the hole from the inside out.

Fill the basket with compost until it's about two-thirds full. Plant at the top and sides, filling the rest of the basket with compost mix so that it covers the root balls of the plants. Water thoroughly.

Care Tips:

- Most hanging baskets need daily watering during the warm Summer months. You can improve water retention by placing an additional poly liner or plastic saucer in the base of the basket, on top of the moss or fibre liner. You can also add a water-absorbing gel to the soil to improve moisture retention.
- In addition to water, plants also need adequate nutrition. If your soil doesn't have fertilizer included, add a pellet form of slow-release fertilizer to the top of the basket after it's planted. You can also add fertiliser to the water daily or weekly. As always, please follow the directions on the label of every fertiliser.
- Depending on the plants you choose, you'll probably have to do a little routine maintenance to your basket to encourage continuous blooming. Deadheading or removing spent blooms will make your basket look better and allow the plants to grow and



bloom longer.

Ask your local garden center for assistance when choosing the plants that are right for you.