



PLANT CARE
SERIES

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Designing Containers & Hanging Baskets

Practically every garden has at least one spot where one can effectively use a hanging basket or a container garden. There is no better way to add an instant pop of color. Pots of blooming flowers can make the most austere entrance or sparsely decorated balcony or deck feel warm and inviting. Containers allow you to enjoy plants in areas where traditional gardens are awkward or impossible. Even in limited space you can grow fruits, vegetables, flowers, trees and shrubs.

CONTAINERS

Select a container that fits the setting and will accent the plants beauty with out dominating them. A pot is anything that can hold soil and has drainage holes. Small pots will need to be watered more often. If you want easy maintenance then large pots are better. Large pots have larger soil volume so that plants won't need to be watered as often. More soil means your plants can grow a bigger root system. Plants with lots of roots tend to be healthy, happy plants.

Clay pots and cocoa fiber/ moss lined pots will dry out more quickly than plastic and glazed containers. Your container must have drainage holes (unless you are creating a water garden). Drainage is extremely important and may mean the success or failure of your container garden. Be sure your container has drainage holes in the bottom or sides of the container you choose. If the drainage holes are located on the bottom of the container the container should be slightly elevated off the ground to allow excess water to drain. We suggest using **Pot Pads, Down Under Plant Caddies, pot feet** or bricks.

WATER

Water when top of the soil is dry to the touch. Water until water comes out of the drainage hole in the bottom of the pot. Early morning is best so plants can take the water into their tissues before the heat of the day. Also helps to prevent disease problems.

SOIL

Use a good, light potting soil we recommend Blue Ribbon Potting Soil. Potting soil is formulated to have a good ratio of water holding capacity and air space (roots need air space to be happy). Fill pot completely with soil, leaving some space between the top of the soil and the top of the pot. In larger pots this is about 2 inches and in smaller pots this is about half an inch.

Do you need to replace the soil every year? It is best to replace all of the soil every year, but if last years plants were healthy and you have a very large pot you can replace the top half and leave the bottom half for another year. Be sure to replace your soil at least every other year. If your plants had disease problems the year before it is best to replace all your soil.

FERTILIZER

Fertilizer is essential for having the best possible container plants/ hanging baskets. The easiest way to provide fertilizer to your plants is to incorporate a slow release fertilizer, like **Osmocote** into soil when you fill your pot. If you purchased an already planted container or if you forgot to put fertilizer in when you planted you can top dress with a slow release fertilizer. Also, water once a week with a water soluble fertilizer that has some iron in it, like Tsugawa 20-20-20.

Please turn the page for more information. ➡

NUMBER OF PLANTS

Plants are often spaced closely in containers. In fact, twice as many plants can be used in a container compared to planting in the same amount of garden space. For example if alyssum requires 6" spacing in gardens, it can be planted 3 inches apart in containers.

MAINTENANCE

To keep your hanging basket beautiful some maintenance is necessary. Remove dried leaves and spent blooms (there are some flowers that do not require dead heading: Cascadia petunias, million bells, scaevola, etc) to promote continuous bloom and to keep the hanging baskets attractive.

PLACEMENT

Think of where you are going to place your pots, and select plants that will be happy living there. If your containers are going to have morning sun and afternoon shade then purchase shade loving plants (some examples: impatiens, lamium, violas, ferns, and coleus). If your containers are going to be in the sun for 6 hours plus then select plants for full sun (for example: geraniums, African daisy, verbena, sunbini etc).

DESIGNING YOUR CONTAINERS AND HANGING BASKETS

When deciding what to put into your containers there are a few things to consider. What kind of light is your container going to get? What colors do you want to use? What kind of impact do you want to create?

COLOR

First thing to consider is color. Do you want a mono-crop or mono culture container? Or do you want to create a mixed color container? What mood do you want your container to convey? With color you can set mood, attract attention or make a statement. You can use color to energize, or to cool down.

Mono Culture Plantings

These are great for highlighting a great piece of pottery or creating a solid pop of color. Be sure to choose a plant that has staying power and will fill your container well.

Mono Color Plantings

These use a range or shades of a single color. Different shades of pinks, purples, red, orange or yellow or blue. Mono color combinations utilize at least 2 different shades of a color, but because you are using the same color you don't have to worry about the colors clashing.

Colorful Plantings

Colorful plantings have several different ways of utilizing more than one color. There are many ways to combine color as there are gardeners putting together plants. If you are happy with the color you have used/chosen, then other opinions don't really matter.

Combining colors is a good way to determine what colors to use is to look at a color wheel.

Analogous Colors

Analogous colors are next to each other on the color wheel and mix easily together. Examples: yellow - orange, orange - red, violet - red and blue - green. They can be bright or muted, but they lie next to each other on the color wheel.

Complementary Colors

Colors that are opposite of each other on the color wheel. Example: red-green, orange-blue, yellow - violet. Complementary colors create a ton of contrast and cause both colors to pop. Don't forget that the pot and background around the pot can be part of the color scheme. Complementary colors are more daring and can create more drama in the garden.

Triad Colors

Using 3 colors that are spaced equidistantly on the color wheel as the points of an equilateral triangle. Can be hard to pull off because you are utilizing several different colors. Examples: red - yellow - blue or violet - orange - green.

Pastels

Soft colors are most effective in gentle light shade or morning only sun.

Vivid Bold Colors

Strong colors look best and will not wash out in bright sun.

Neutral Colors

White, black, gray, silver, shades of brown and garden greens that can be used with any color scheme and add dimension.

Hot Colors and Cool Colors

- Hot colors are red, orange, and yellow. They tend to draw attention. Use them to draw attention to areas. They are great to use in spaces where people gather
- Cool colors are blue, pink and purple. They tend to lend calm and tranquility. Use them in spaces where you want to relax.

FOLIAGE AND COLOR

Foliage color can also add a great color element in your containers/ hanging baskets.

- Dark foliage is a great way to highlight light colored flowers and a great way to create contrast in combinations. Dark foliage adds both drama and contrast.
- Silver and chartreuse foliage work as color elements to harmonize with flower color. Silver looks great with pinks, purples and with other soft colors, blending rather than creating drama or acting as a contrast to dark flowers and foliage.
- Chartreuse foliage blends well with hot colors like red, orange and yellow. They help to create a tropical feel or it can also work as a way to contrast against dark colors.
- Bronze foliage is great in fall combinations but also help to create combinations with a more natural feel.

TEXTURE, SIZE AND SHAPE

Using flowers and foliage of similar sizes and shapes will result in containers where everything blends together. Your eyes will have a tendency to take in the whole combination rather than stopping on any single element. Using plants with different sizes and shapes of flowers and foliage create more contrast. Your eyes will be more likely to focus on each element of the combo as both an individual plants and as an arrangement.

STRUCTURE

Structure is how to put your container together. Think about the plants eventual height, shape and growth habit. Most plants are either upright (thriller), broad (filler) or trailing (spiller). For patio pots a common way to start is to use the thriller, filler, spiller concept. The most successful container combinations usually include at least one of each form.

Thrillers

Big, attention-getting stars that are usually tall upright plants with outstanding qualities like colorful foliage, intriguing shapes or dramatic flowers. Examples: coleus, dracaena spikes, tall ornamental grasses, butterfly argyranthemums. Generally they are planted either in the center of a container or in the back, depending on how the container is being viewed. Some thrillers can become fillers depending on the thriller chosen. Make sure your thriller is in balance with your container. Try to make sure your tallest plants will not be more than twice the height of your container.

Fillers

More finely textured plants that surround and weave through the thrillers and spillers. They add mass to the overall composition of the container. They also add textural contrast. A mixture of fillers can/should be used. Fillers should be 1/3 to 2/3 the size of the thriller. Generally they are placed in front or around the thriller. They are planted midway between the edge of the pot and the thriller. Examples: Diamond Frost euphorbia, lantana, diascia, shorter coleus.

Spillers

Spillers anchor the pot. They sprawl over the sides of the container softening the edges and tumbling toward the ground. They usually echo or contrast with the other plants in the container. . Example: million bells, super petunias, sweet potato vines, lamiums. They are planted close to the edge of the pot. Many plants can fit 2 different categories depending on the other plants used in the combination.

HANGING BASKETS

Hanging baskets can be designed using a mixture of spillers and fillers or just spillers.