

## Planting a hanging basket

Contributed by Bernie-woman

Quick, easy and a valuable source of extra space in the smaller garden. Hanging baskets are quick, easy to plant up and add height and colour to any garden. All you need is a basket, bracket, compost, liner and plants.

The first thing you need to do is decide on the size and shape of your basket. Most are made of plastic coated wire but you can get baskets made of wrought iron, plastic with water reservoirs and you can always be resourceful and recycle household items such as a tin bucket with drainage holes or a metal colander. A couple of things that need to be considered when choosing the size of your basket are weight and the frequency of watering. Large baskets look impressive but can be very heavy and the smaller the basket the more frequent the watering. In general, a 14 inch or 16inch basket is big enough for most peoples needs.

### Step 1

Once you have chosen your basket, unless it is self contained you will need to line the basket which will hold the compost in place and retain moisture. There are many types available including those made from: cardboard, cocoa-fibre, wool (old woolly jumpers can be used), polystyrene foam and cotton waste. The traditional liner for baskets used to be sphagnum moss, which is now not the most ethical choice unless it comes from a sustainable source. You are not allowed to go and harvest it from the wild but you can use moss from your own lawns and gardens.

### Step 2

Place the lined basket on top of a pot so that you have a level basket and some stability for planting.

Before filling with any compost cut a circle of plastic from an old carrier bag and place it in the bottom of the basket (this will help retain water).

### Step 3

Partially fill the basket to approx a third of its depth with a peat free compost. It is not advised to use garden soil as this will be too heavy when wet and may not have enough nutrients to sustain the plants for the growing season.

Start planting up the sides of the basket with plants. It is best to push the plants out 'head first' from the inside of the basket rather than pushing them in, to avoid damaging the roots.

### Step 4

Fill the top of the basket with more compost, leaving a small gap at the top for watering.

Plant the rest of the basket with plants, leaving a little room for them to fill out.

### Feeding & Watering

Hanging baskets are high maintenance. Baskets will need to be well watered at least once a day and in the height of a hot summer, twice a day.

You can buy slow release fertilizers that can be added to the basket at the end of step 3. Alternatively you can feed using a liquid feed (tomato feed is good) once a week when the plants have filled out a little and started flowering or fruiting.

### Which plants?

More commonly baskets are planted with summer bedding although baskets can be used to successfully further your herb, vegetable, fruit and salad growing and are ideal if growing space is limited.

If planting with summer bedding try to get a mix of plants that give

height to the basket and trail from the basket. However, the choice is yours as to which plants you want. Many can be grown from seed and once the basket is past its best in the autumn then cuttings can be made from many of the plants giving you free plants for the following years.

Some of the common bedding plants used in baskets are:

Geranium (standard and trailing)

Fushia (bush and trailing)

Lobelia

Impatiens

Petunia

Nepeta

Bidens

Ivy

Diascia

Nasturtium

Marigold

## Baskets for Vegetables and Herbs

These need a little more attention but can be both attractive and productive. They must never be allowed to dry out and for this reason wire baskets are best lined with polythene. Vegetables will certainly need more space than bedding plants and the amount of plants used will depend on the variety you choose. For example, a 14inch basket for tomatoes or peppers would hold approximately 3 plants whereas a bush cucumber basket would only need the one plant. Look at the plants growing habit and spread to determine how many plants to put into each basket. Some of the varieties, which are suited to basket planting, are:

Tomato &lsquo;Tumbler&rsquo;;

Yellow Tumbling Tom

Tomato &lsquo;Gartenperle&rsquo;;

Cucumber &ldquo;Prima Top&rsquo;;

Basil

Coriander

Parsley

Sage

Chives

Oregano

Marjoram

Rosemary (particularly the creeping variety)

Tarragon

Savory

Thyme

Mint (best to be used as an annual as can be a bit of a thug in a shared container)

Capsicum annum 'Patio Red';

Pepper 'Jingle Bells';

Chillis

Strawberry 'Temptation';

Cut and come again lettuce and salad leaves

Edible flowers such as nasturtium and pansy

Radish

Aubergine Mohican&rsquo;

Dwarf French and Runner Beans