

Hanging Baskets & Window Boxes

Hanging baskets or window boxes full of flowers or foliage plants give a color boost to your house and garden. They can be used effectively even in a very small space. If you choose plants carefully, you can change the plantings to suit every season.



Window box with *Begonia*, *Coleus* and *Petunia*.
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Gardening in Containers

A lightweight potting mix is needed for container gardening. Soilless planting mixes provide excellent drainage, aeration and water-holding capacity that ordinary garden soil can not supply.

Be sure that your basket or window box has drainage holes. Drainage is essential so that the planting mix will not become water-logged. Do not place pebbles or other material at the bottom of the container. They will not provide better drainage.

Plastic or wire baskets are available. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Plastic is inexpensive, easy to plant and is slower to dry out. Wire baskets allow more choices in size and planting arrangements. Many people find them

more attractive. Window boxes are usually plastic, wood or long wire baskets called hayracks.

Liners are used in wire hanging baskets to hold the soil and plants in position. Liners can be made of dried sphagnum moss or coconut fiber known as coir.

Window boxes and baskets call for a strong support system. Remember that the containers will be much heavier when watered.

Choose small, healthy young plants for planting. They will adapt to new surroundings much faster than older plants.

Plant much closer in a box or basket than you would in a flowerbed. Include plants with a variety of colors, shapes and textures. Trailing plants should be planted at the edges and bushy or upright plants will go at the center or back. Be sure that the taller plants will not block your windows or interfere with hanging the basket.

Site selection is as important for baskets and boxes as it is for any other plant. Remember that most of the time the hanging basket will be viewed from below. Hang the basket so that it will be close to eye level so that it can be admired and watered easily. Window boxes should extend the entire width of the window for best appearance.

Planting a Moss-Lined Wire Basket

- Soak the sphagnum moss overnight in very warm water.
- Squeeze as much water out of the moss as you can. Pack the moss in between the wires tightly from the inside of the basket. Make

moss lining 1 inch thick, extending up 4 inches.

- Add soil mixture to basket, going up as far as the top of this first layer of moss.
- Water plants well before planting. Crumble peat pots away from plants grown in them so that it will not wick water away from the roots. Pinch off flowers on new transplants to promote sturdy growth.
- Fill the lowest tier with flowers or foliage plants, and then add enough potting soil mix to cover the roots of plants completely. Firm the soil.
- Continue to fill and plant the basket in 4-to 6-inch layers. Plant the last group on top.
- Hang the basket and water gently.

Plants for Containers

Use your imagination in selecting plants. Many types of plants will grow in containers including annuals, vines, tropical plants, herbs and even some vegetables. For hanging salads, grow leaf lettuce, parsley and miniature tomatoes. Herbs thrive in containers and require little care. Thyme, oregano and rosemary are good for containers because they like the soil to dry out between waterings. Many plants normally grown as houseplants will be great for foliage in outdoor containers also.

Caring for Container Gardens

Containers can dry out very quickly. Daily or even twice-daily watering may be necessary. Feel the soil to determine whether or not it is damp. If the potting mix feels dry 1 inch below the surface, it is time to water. Apply water until it runs out the drainage holes. If the pot dries out too much you should immerse it in water to resoak the soil mix. Containers will need frequent checking as the plants grow and temperatures become hotter. Watering wands are good tools for difficult-to-reach baskets and window boxes. They extend your reach and produce a gentle shower.

Frequent watering flushes nutrients from the soil quickly, so frequent fertilizing is also necessary. Liquid fertilizers or timed-release fertilizers are the easiest methods of application. Time-release fertilizer pellets can be mixed into the soil at planting or worked into the top inch later. The soil in the container should be moist when fertilizer is applied, even liquid fertilizer. Feed baskets and boxes every two weeks from spring through summer with a complete liquid fertilizer diluted to half-strength.

Remove flowers as they fade to keep flowering baskets blooming well. Many plants are rejuvenated by a trim in late summer.

Basket & Window Box Plants for Sun

Common Name/ Botanical Name	Height & Width	Ornamental Features	Bloom Season	Comment
Ornamental Kale (<i>Brassica oleracea</i>)	1 foot tall and wide	Green and white, pink, red or purple foliage.	Foliage color in winter	Plant in fall for color after frost.
Ornamental Pepper (<i>Capsicum annuum</i>)	1 to 2½ feet tall and wide	Fruit range in color from yellow to orange or red and purple to near black.	Midsummer to frost	The fruit of ornamental peppers are edible but extremely hot.
Annual Vinca (<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>)	6 to 24 inches tall	White, pink, rose, lavender, purple, red or salmon.	Early summer to frost	Very heat and drought tolerant.
Coleus (<i>Solenostemon scutellarioides</i>)	1 to 3 feet tall and wide	Colorful foliage often with lobed or cut margins.	Remove flowers for best foliage	Select sun-tolerant cultivars.
Creeping Zinnia (<i>Sanvitalia procumbens</i>)	6 inches tall and at least 2 feet wide	Tiny, golden, daisy-like flowers.	Summer to frost	Not suited for coastal climate. Great in hot, dry areas.

Cypress Vine (<i>Ipomoea quamoclit</i>)	Climbs or trails up to 10 feet.	Tiny brilliant red flowers above delicate fern-like foliage.	Summer to frost	Very tough despite delicate appearance.
Dusty Miller (<i>Senecio cineraria</i>)	6 to 12 inches tall and wide	Soft, finely cut whitish-silver leaves.	Foliage color from spring until frost	Excellent foliage contrast.
Wallflower (<i>Erysimum</i> or <i>Cheiranthus</i> species)	6 to 24 inches tall and wide	Cream, yellow, orange, purple and maroon.	Spring to early summer	Plant in the fall for spring flowering.
French Marigold (<i>Tagetes patula</i>)	6 to 18 inches tall and wide	Yellow, gold, orange and mahogany red.	Late spring to frost	Remove spent flowers for continued bloom.
Gazania (<i>Gazania rigens</i>)	6 to 12 inches tall and wide	Daisy-like yellow, orange, pink or red flowers.	All summer	Good choice for hot, dry locations.
Geranium (<i>Pelargonium x hortorum</i>)	12 to 36 inches tall and wide	White to pink, salmon or red flowers. Many cultivars have variegated leaves.	All summer	Remove spent flowers for continued bloom.
Heliotrope (<i>Heliotropum arborescens</i>)	12 to 36 inches tall and wide	Scented purple or lavender blooms in clusters.	All summer	The species is more sweetly scented and larger than modern cultivars.
Ivy-Leafed Geranium (<i>Pelargonium peltatum</i>)	1 foot tall by 3 to 4 feet wide	Colors range from white to pink, salmon and red. Branches trail like vines.	All summer	Best with some afternoon shade.
Sweet Pea (<i>Lathyrus odoratus</i>)	Vines up to 6 feet, bush types 1 to 2 feet tall	Fragrant, colorful flowers. Bush types are suitable for window boxes.	Spring	Sweet Peas grow best under cool conditions. Plant in late winter for early spring bloom. Plant at Christmas on the coast.
Licorice Plant (<i>Helichrysum petiolare</i>)	6 to 12 inches tall, 3 to 4 feet wide	Trailing plant with fuzzy round leaves that are silver gray, variegated or lime green.	Foliage color all summer	Used as contrasting foliage. Very tolerant of hot, dry weather.
Sweet Alyssum (<i>Lobularia maritima</i>)	4 to 8 inches tall by 1 foot wide	Honey-scented flowers are white, pink, rose or purple.	Late spring until frost	Alyssum may decline in midsummer. Shear, feed and water to rejuvenate.

Lotus Vine (<i>Lotus berthelotii</i>)	6 to 8 inches tall by 3 to 4 feet wide	Feathery foliage on gray trailing vines followed by bright red flowers	Late summer	Likes hot, dry weather.
Petunia (<i>Petunia hybrida</i>)	4 to 12 inches tall by 24 to 48 inches wide	Virtually all colors are available.	All summer	Require ample moisture and fertility to thrive. Trailing cultivars are excellent in baskets.
Moss Rose (<i>Portulaca grandiflora</i>)	6 to 9 inches tall by 12 to 18 inches wide	Wide variety of colors in single and double flowers.	All summer until frost	Thrives in hot, dry locations. New hybrid types stay open longer.
Fan Flower (<i>Scaveola aemula</i>)	6 inches tall by 4 feet wide	Blue or white flowers on long trailing branches.	Prolific from spring until frost	Very heat and drought tolerant.
Trailing Lantana (<i>Lantana montevidensis</i>)	6 to 12 inches tall by 3 to 4 feet wide	Lavender or white flowers on trailing stems	All summer	Tolerates hot, dry windy conditions.
Variegated Periwinkle (<i>Vinca major 'Variegata'</i>)	6 inches tall by 3 to 4 feet wide	White-edged or lime-centered green leaves on trailing stems.	Blue flowers, spring; grown for foliage	Excellent foliage contrast.
Verbena (<i>Verbena x hybrida</i>)	6 to 12 inches tall, 12 to 24 inches wide	Red, purple, pink and white flowers on bushy or spreading plants.	Mid spring until frost	Thrives in hot weather.

Basket & Window Box Plants for Part Shade or Shade

Common Name/ Botanical Name	Height & Width	Ornamental Features	Bloom Season	Comment
Pansy (<i>Viola x wittrockiana</i>)	6 to 8 inches tall and wide	Available in nearly all colors of the rainbow	Fall through spring	Plant in the fall. Blooms through winter. Peak bloom in spring.
Impatiens (<i>Impatiens wallerana</i>)	6 to 36 inches tall and wide	Almost all colors except blue are available.	Continuous flowering from spring until fall	Keep constantly moist.
Purple Shamrocks (<i>Oxalis purpurea</i>)	10 inches tall and wide	Large purple leaves and white or pink flowers.	Spring	Grown for its foliage.
Tuberous begonia (<i>Begonia x tuberhybrida</i>)	12 to 18 inches tall and wide	Large flowers in red, pink, orange, yellow, white and in bicolors.	Spring through summer	Lift tubers in fall and store; replant in spring.
Caladium (<i>Caladium x hortulanum</i>)	12 to 30 inches tall and wide	Arrow-shaped leaves patterned in red, pink, white and green.	Grown for colorful summer foliage	Keep evenly moist, fertilize frequently.

Coleus (<i>Solenostemon scutellarioides</i>)	1 to 3 feet tall and wide	Leaf color mixtures include magenta, red, copper, orange, yellow, chartreuse and green.	Pinch off flower spikes	Most cultivars grow best in shade or part shade.
Polka Dot Plant (<i>Hypoestes phyllostachya</i>)	12 to 18 inches tall and wide	Pink or white speckles on green leaves.	Grown for summer foliage	Beautiful foliage with white or pink flowers. Very tough.
Fuchsia (<i>Fuchsia cultivars</i>)	2 to 3 foot wide trailing	Drooping tear- shaped buds open to flouncy interiors Flowers in red, pink, purple, coral, white and combinations.	Spring through summer	Keep evenly moist. Flowering will slow in heat.

Image added by Joey Williamson, HGIC Horticulture Extension Agent, Clemson University, 06/13. Prepared by Karen Russ, HGIC Horticulture Specialist & Bob Polomski, Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Clemson University. (New 06/99.)

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