

LOOKING AFTER YOUR PLANTS

- **Watering** – Pots and baskets are prone to drying out and should be watered frequently – perhaps twice daily in the height of summer. Avoid watering in the heat of the day.
- **Feeding** – If you didn't add fertiliser when planting, push a few plant food tablets between the plants into the soil to around finger depth. Give a weekly liquid feed to keep plants looking healthy and flowering longer.
- **Pest control** – Greenfly and blackfly can be controlled with sprays. Ask your local garden centre or nursery for advice. Snails often breed under ceramic pots. They can be controlled with one of the many slug and snail remedies available from your garden centre or nursery.
- **Deadheading** – Snip off dead flowers at regular intervals to promote new growth.
- **Time-saving tips:**
 - Sow seed of trailing nasturtiums direct into the compost.
 - Add water-retaining gel to general potting compost to help prevent plants from drying out, or use special hanging basket compost that contains fertiliser and water-retaining gel.
 - Place a pot underneath when watering to collect excess water.
 - Don't waste precious compost when planting deep containers such as chimney pots. Unless you're planting particularly deep-rooted plants, use the contents of last year's growbags to fill the bottom half or insert a large plastic pot in the top.

CONTAINERS IN WINTER

Create winter colours with hardy cyclamen, winter pansies, ornamental cabbages, primulas, ivy and small conifers. When temperatures drop, if you haven't room to put containers under cover, insulate plants and protect pots from cracking by surrounding with newspaper or bubble plastic and tying with string. Keep clay or ceramic pots raised off the ground.

Winter baskets benefit from a dense lining to protect their roots from freezing. A recycled circle of knitwear (cut up an old jumper), some old tights or a few sheets of newspaper are all ideal.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Trowel
- Watering can
- Bucket
- Containers
- Baskets
- Potting compost
- Slow-release fertiliser
- Water-retaining gel
- Moss, leaves or liner
- Plants of your choice

For more information:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice
www.plantforlife.info

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- HTA Specialist Group – British Bedding and Pot Plant Association (BBPA) www.thebbpa.org.uk
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THE EASY GUIDE TO HANGING BASKETS & CONTAINERS



Photography: Tim Sandall, GPL/Graham Strong, GPL/Stephen Hamilton
 Made from at least 50% recycled paper; the remainder is from certified forests



WHERE DO I START?

Whether you live in a town house, flat or a country cottage, anybody can try container gardening. From a couple of window boxes to a roof terrace or patio filled with pots and tubs, containers are a great way to brighten up your outside space and bring pleasure to passers-by. Because you can control the planting environment in a pot or basket, you can provide the best conditions and position for particular plants to flourish.

If you want to bring the garden right up to your door, hanging baskets are a simple solution! They can be fixed on a house or garden wall or suspended from the beams of a porch or the branches of a tree.

Colourful and satisfying, pots and hanging baskets don't take long to prepare and provide months of pleasure, so why not have a go at container gardening today?

CHOOSING POTS & PLANTS

Containers come in all shapes and sizes - for example pots, troughs, half barrels, window boxes and mangers in materials such as clay, stone, terracotta, wood, plastic and wire. When choosing a container consider the site - natural materials look good against traditional buildings and walls or among plants, while plastics and fiberglass suit more modern environments. And consider the size of your plant(s) - you don't want your container swamped or it will rapidly need repotting. Provide plenty of large drainage holes in the base and ensure ceramic pots are frost proof. Old chimney pots, sinks, buckets and chamber pots can all be used.

Dozens of plants do well in containers and hanging baskets. Here are just a few from which to choose:

CONTAINER PLANTS THAT GROW ON FROM YEAR TO YEAR: clematis, dwarf conifers, patio roses, shrubs such as choisya or hydrangea

NON-HARDY CONTAINER PLANTS (DAMAGED OR KILLED BY FROST): fuchsia, *Impatiens* (busy Lizzie), geranium

CONTAINER BULBS: crocus, hyacinths, low-growing tulips and daffodils

PLANTS FOR SUMMER HANGING BASKETS: begonia (trailing types), bidens, *Felicia amelloides* (blue daisy), fuchsia (trailing), *Helichrysum* (trailing), herbs, *Impatiens* (busy Lizzie), *Lobelia* (trailing), *Lotus berthelotii* (coral gem), pelargonium (ivy-leaved geranium), *Petunia*, *Plectranthus* (Swedish ivy), tomatoes, strawberries, viola or pansy.



CONTAINERS PLANTING CONTAINERS

PREPARATION & PLANTING TIME: 20-30 MINS PER CONTAINER

- Select a container 30-45cm in diameter. Add at least 3cm of drainage material - gravel, broken pots or crockery, pebbles or broken polystyrene plant trays.



- You can also line sides with bubble plastic to protect against frost and reduce water loss.



- Add good quality potting compost containing fertiliser just below the rim of the pot.
- Plant bulbs towards the bottom at three times their depth.



- Put a permanent plant in the centre of containers, or at either end of window boxes. Place trailing plants around the edges.

- Place small blocks underneath pots to help drainage.
- Consider how tall the plants will grow - you don't want window boxes blocking out the light!
- To create colour all year round, choose a selection of evergreens and flowers. Try growing shrubs, herbaceous perennials (plants that die back in winter and grow again the next year), climbers, heathers, rockery/alpine plants, miniature roses, herbs, strawberries and dwarf conifers. The choice is endless, but here's two examples to get you started:

STUNNING SUMMER: Planted in late spring/early summer, this display will flower until autumn and is ideal for a sunny site. Plant an *Osteospermum* (African daisy) in the centre, surrounded with verbenas in white and pink to purple and edged with trailing, silver-leaved *Helichrysum petiolare*.

PATIO PARADISE: Planted in autumn, the bright colours of this container will erupt in spring. At the front of the pot, plant blue hyacinth and white tulip bulbs at three times their own depth and cover with compost. At the back, plant some small daffodils, such as *Narcissus* 'Tête à Tête'.



HANGING BASKETS PLANTING HANGING BASKETS

Hanging baskets are mostly made from simple lightweight wire frames, plastic, wood or natural materials, but it really doesn't matter what they look like as before too long they should be covered with an abundance of flowers! Half-baskets or troughs are especially suited to garden walls and the extra protection may well mean that they bloom for longer.

When your hanging basket is full of compost and plants it can be quite heavy, particularly when wet. So your fitting needs to be secure. If you are fastening your basket with a bracket, the bracket itself will be on view, so an attractive-looking design will do much to complete the finished appearance. Whenever you hang up a basket, check that the fittings, the bracket and the chains are all safe and secure.

PREPARATION & PLANTING TIME: 20-30 MINS PER BASKET

- Take a basket about 45cm in diameter and rest it on a bucket so that the side plants hang down as you plant them.
- Place a basket liner inside or you could use moss or leaves for a more natural feel with a tray in the base to conserve water.
- Half-fill the basket with good-quality potting compost.
- Plant a mix of foliage and flowering plants or a mass of one variety for impact. With wire baskets, gently push small plants from the outside through the sides of the basket, taking care not to damage their roots.
- Top up with potting compost, add a central large plant then work outwards with smaller plants.
- Water well and keep out of full sun for a week before hanging up.

HOT COLOURS: Planted once frosts have finished, these clashing red, pink and orange flowers give a flavour of India and should bloom well into autumn in a sunny position. Plant three *Lotus* or *Nepeta* plants in the sides, then add three trailing ivy-leaved geranium and two red *Verbena* in the top of your basket. Water daily.

WINTER BLUES: Re-plant baskets in September or October with a mix of blue, yellow or white winter pansies, bulbs and evergreens. Plant three trailing ivy plants in the sides of each basket and add five or six plants of winter-flowering pansies at the top. Position five or six crocus and dwarf iris bulbs below the compost between the pansies. Hang in a sheltered, sunny spot and keep well watered.