

MEL'S

where home and garden come together

HOW TO PLANT HANGING BASKETS

“Your baskets are so beautiful, how do you make them?” is a frequently asked question of Mel’s plant staff. We take great care in growing premium plants and then use the following steps to assemble our baskets.

MEL’S HANGING BASKET METHOD:

1. We use a basket that is at least 8 to 10 inches in diameter. Check to make certain that it has at least a half-inch drainage hole.
2. Mel’s first consideration in selecting plants for a hanging basket is the amount of sunlight the basket will receive:

SUNNY AREAS are those that receive direct sunlight for at least 4 hours (some afternoon sun preferred). The more direct sun that is received by sun-loving plants, the faster they grow, the stronger they become, the more abundantly they flower and the more frequently they require water.

SHADY AREAS are those which receive less than 4 hours of direct sunlight, or any spot which receives diffused or indirect bright light throughout the day. Even in a partially shady location, the brighter the light, the more abundant the flowers.

3. Soil must be porous and reliable in its nutrient content. We use Sunshine Professional Mix and recommend it for its reliability in nutrient availability and plant performance.

4. Color is a prime consideration in deciding which plants to choose. Our combination plantings have color themes of either contrasting or complimentary colors. An example for contrasting colors is red, blue, and yellow. An example of a complimentary color schemes would be pink, rose, and white.

In each contrasting color basket, we limit ourselves to 2-4 colors. When one of those colors is white, the basket stands out in shady areas or with night lighting.

5. Select plant varieties that provide continuous bloom throughout the summer. See Mel’s Hanging Basket Plant Suggestions information sheet for an up-to date listing of recommended varieties.

Single-Variety Baskets

We use 4 to 5 plants when planting a basket of a single variety, for example, a fuchsia basket. One plant is planted in the center and the rest around the edge of the container. Resist over-planting these single-variety baskets. Since the plants have the same growth habit, they need ample space to fill in.

Combination Baskets

Mel’s uses 7 to 13 plants in the combination baskets. The more similar the growth habit of the plants used, the fewer and farther apart they must be placed.

For placement within a combination basket, we categorize plants by four different growth habits. By using plants from each of these groupings, you will create a layering effect that results in a lush fullness as the plants mature. Mel’s hanging Basket Plant Suggestions information sheet lists plants by the following categories:

CENTER PLANTS are upright growing plants that we place in the center of the basket to create a rounded appearance.

FILLER PLANTS are compact and spreading. Placed around the center plant, they provide fullness at the top of the basket.

CORNER PLANTS have trailing or outward growth that spills over the side of the basket. Planted in the corners of a square basket or around the sides of a round one, these create fullness.

EDGE PLANTS mound or trail over the sides, filling in and complementing corner plants.

6. Water all plants thoroughly prior to planting. Add soil to the baskets, as you are planting, gently loosening each plant's root ball as you plant. After planting, the soil should be one inch below the basket's rim. When the basket is finished, water it throughout once more.
7. At planting time, fertilize with either a slow-release fertilizer (one application releases nutrients for up to 3 months) or a water-soluble 20-20-20 fertilizer applied every 2 to 3 weeks throughout the summer. The slow-release fertilizer may be mixed into the soil prior to planting; the 20-20-20 should be mixed with water and added after planting.

8. Choose a sturdy hook to hang your basket. Baskets are heavy when wet, and become heavier as the plants grow.
9. Check soil moisture daily. When the soil is dry to the touch, add water until it pours out of the drainage holes. As the plants mature, the basket will need to be watered with increasing frequency.

If water immediately runs out the drain hole, chances are that it is not soaking into the soil but running around the soil mass and out the drain hole. This commonly occurs when soil gets too dry and shrinks like a sponge, pulling away from the sides of the container. To re-saturate the soil, you must disturb the surface of the soil by scratching into it. Then, slowly run water into the basket. Repeat the watering again in 30 minutes. Repeat again. The next time the basket requires water, run the water slowly, saturating the soil.

10. Regular grooming keeps the basket looking picture-perfect. Remove faded blossoms and yellowing leaves. Consistently removing old flowers allows the plant to continue producing flowers instead of seeds.