Flowering hanging baskets provide long-lasting beauty both indoors and out. Brighten up a porch, patio or deck. Create a hanging garden under your favorite tree. Or, create your own little oasis in your sunroom. They also make great gifts!

Whether you buy already planted hanging baskets or plant them yourself, consider the following first:

- **What size do you need?**
  Small pots dry out faster, but very large baskets with more soil may become too heavy to handle. A 12-inch diameter, deep hanging basket is a good place to start until you get a feel for what you like.

- **Baskets come in a variety of materials.**
  Plastic retains moisture well, is inexpensive and easy to find. Coco-fiber/moss baskets are more decorative but dry out faster and liners need to be replaced periodically. Ceramic pots are similar to plastic and can be more decorative, but they also add weight to your basket. Wood and terra cotta dry out faster than plastic, but not as quickly as a fiber-lined basket.

- **Choose plants that fit your environment and lifestyle.**
  Will your baskets be hanging in sun or shade? Do you have enough time to meet your plants' water needs? Do they require deadheading? How much fertilizer will be needed? How much time you have to devote to your hanging flower garden should help determine the plants you get.

- **Use a good, light potting soil and replace the soil in your baskets every year.**
  There are several good commercial mixes available – some even come with fertilizer.

**WATER**

Strike a happy medium between “too wet” and “too dry.” In cooler weather, you may need to water less frequently. As plants grow bigger and summer heat arrives, prepare to water as much as once a day (maybe even twice a day, depending on the plant and where you live). Windy days tend to dry the soil out faster, as well.

1. Make sure your pot has drainage holes
2. Water only when the top of the soil is dry to the touch
3. Water until it comes out of the drainage holes
4. Don’t allow your pot to sit in standing water

**FERTILIZER**

Add a slow or controlled-release fertilizer to your hanging basket right after you buy or plant it. By midsummer, you can start using a water-soluble fertilizer once a week. If your plants are exposed to heavy rains, you may want to give them a dose of water-soluble fertilizer after the rain stops, as much of the existing fertilizer may have gotten washed out with the rain.
MAINTENANCE

Some plants may need deadheading or even a midsummer “haircut”. Hanging baskets that have become spindly and ungainly over time can benefit from a trim. Using sharp scissors or clippers, trim an inch or more off the entire basket. If you have long trailing pieces that you don’t like, cut them off. You may be temporarily robbed of flowers, but trimming the plant will help it branch out and look better long-term. And, the flowers should return within a few days to a week and, given enough fertilizer, your plant is likely to start growing more strongly again.

MORE TIPS & IDEAS FROM GARDENERS LIKE YOU!

- To help retain moisture in a coco-fiber/moss basket, line it with plastic prior to planting.

- Need to help retain moisture in the soil? Line your basket with a clean, disposable diaper which retains water with special built-in crystals. You might even experiment by tearing the diaper apart and mixing the crystals into the soil, as well. Just remember to cut a drainage hole in the bottom of the plastic.

- Consider trying a drip-irrigation system made especially for potted plants. Proven Winners® offers “WaterWise,” a system of drip irrigators that deliver water directly to the plant while eliminating waste.

- Plants really only need about a foot of earth to grow in a container, so in larger containers, place a plastic pot saucer upside down in the lower part of the pot. Then, fill the rest with soil. You’ve not only saved soil, but made your pot lighter and easier to move!

- When using Terracotta containers, soak them first in water to help them retain moisture better when you first plant your flowers.

- Many Proven Winners® plants have been selected to not need deadheading. Milmont Garden Center carries a large selection of Proven Winners® flowering plants.

- Potting soil should be light and fluffy, allowing plants to breathe. Look for a potting soil made up of peat moss, pine bark and perlite or vermiculite. If your potting soil uses a moisture-retaining compound, adjust watering patterns accordingly.

- Have to leave home for 2 or 3 days and wondering how to keep your plants watered? A short-term fix may be to water them before you leave and stick them in your bathroom – the bathtub will do nicely. They may not get the light they’re used to, but having them indoors in a room with higher humidity will help them retain moisture.

- Want to keep soil from draining out of the pot’s drain hole? Use a coffee filter in the bottom of the pot!

Information for this care sheet was supplied, in part, by Proven Winners® at www.provenwinners.com, “Hope for Hanging Baskets” by Kerry Meyer. Milmont Garden Center is pleased to offer a variety of Proven Winners plants.