



Container
Gardening

how to plant up your...

hanging baskets

(based on a standard wire basket)

- Remove the chain and balance the basket on a plant pot or bucket.
- Fit your chosen liner and fill the basket with moist soil-less compost up to the point where you want to add the first layer of plants. A solid wall basket will need some broken crocks added for drainage before filling.
- Force or cut a hole in the liner (some already have pre-cut slits, or pre-formed pockets) and feed the roots of the trailing plants through from the outside so that the root ball lays firmly on the top of the compost and the leaves of the plant are on the outside of the basket.
- Build up the rest of the basket with compost, firming it down to prevent water loss. Add upright plants to the centre of the basket, leaving about a 2.5cm (1") space at the top to allow for watering. Water well and keep protected until the danger of frosts have passed.



tubs or pots

- Cover the base inside with broken pots or any other suitable material to add drainage. If you are not using a ready made container drill lots of drainage holes in the bottom.
- If your plants seem a little dry, stand them in a bucket of water to completely soak through the root ball.
 - Build up the compost in the tub. The compost should be moist but not wet, and should be firmed down gently. Make sure you do this near the spot where you intend to display the container, as some can be very heavy to move when full.
 - Keep filling the container like this until about 2.5cm (1") from the top. If you do not leave a gap water will drain over the side rather than down through the compost.
 - Plant up the container, either with a single type, or a mixture of varieties, and water well.
- Raise flat based containers from the ground by using specially made feet, stones, bricks etc. This helps to encourage drainage and stops the pot becoming waterlogged.
- Always water using a watering can with a rose.

watering & feeding

Attention to feeding and watering is the key to successful container gardening. Water your containers regularly, and feed throughout the growing season. The key rules to follow are:

- Water either early in the morning or in the evening, so that the plants can take in the water before they are in direct sunlight.
- If the plants are drooping in the midday sun check how wet the compost is about ½" beneath the compost surface, if it feels damp then the plants will pick up when the sun goes down, if dry then water directly to the roots - never get the leaves wet in the daytime as the sun will scorch them.
- The amount of water a container needs will depend on its position, in full sun it will need more water than in a shady area.
- Hanging baskets and smaller pots will need watering once or twice daily. Make sure that the pot is well soaked.
- Never let the compost dry out completely.

Feeding weekly is necessary throughout the growing season. Incorporating a controlled release fertiliser in with your compost at planting time will ensure that the feeding happens when you water the pot. Alternatively use a liquid or water in feed choosing a formula to suit the plants you are growing.

holiday watering

This is one of the perennial problems of gardening, all that work and nurturing, and then you need to go away and risk the plants keeling over from lack of water. Here are a few ideas to deal with the situation:

Remember shade is your friend, if you can move your pots into a place out of the sun they will not dry out so quickly. If you are away for a couple of days only this, and a good watering before you go, will usually be sufficient.

For longer periods away, a variety of products are available to assist such as water retentive slices to incorporate into the pot/basket at planting time. Absorbing astonishing amounts of water, they reduce the need for daily watering, and also help at holiday time. Adding water retaining gel in your compost at planting time is also useful. Looking for clever devices to water your plants during your absence?



There are lots on offer, they range from the simple and cheap drip bottles or water spikes, to expensive automated watering systems that are electronically controlled with variable programmes.

Alternatively, perhaps you have a reliable, helpful friend or neighbour who would volunteer to water them for you!

Contact details:

Samuel Dobie & Son, Long Road, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7SX
Tel: 01803 696411 www.dobies.co.uk

containers - it's your choice

Container gardening offers us a unique opportunity for expressing our individuality in the garden. There's a vast array of styles available these days, to suit all tastes; from traditional terracotta, to space-age metal - there really is something for everyone!

There are endless colours and designs, encompassing historical and rustic reproductions and ultra-modern clean lines, providing infinite possibilities. You can also create your own pots and baskets out of discarded materials like tin cans, or old boots and shoes. All you need is a little imagination.

baskets

The choice in hanging baskets has grown enormously in recent years. At one time the basic options were the traditional wire basket or the plastic solid sided version with pre-formed holes. Both are excellent and still widely available. However, the woven wicker and grass baskets that are now available, come in a multitude of materials and designs. This type of basket is ideal for an evocative, rustic and romantic feel. Also available are metal and ceramic hanging containers - it's a tough choice!

Some things to keep in mind for each type:

- Wire and metal hanging baskets need to be lined with moss, coir or other proprietary liners on the market. Inside a moss lined basket it's a good idea to place a plastic inner liner to aid water retention as this style of basket can dry out very quickly. Regular watering is essential. Placing a saucer at the bottom while planting, and adding water retentive gel crystals to the compost will help retain moisture for longer.
- Wicker hanging baskets need a sturdy plastic lining, and one should be added if not already included. As for all baskets the lighter the soil the better and a special basket soil - less compost is best, and adding controlled release fertiliser and water retentive crystals is helpful.
- The plastic models are very convenient and easy to use with their pre-formed plant holes, they are also better at moisture retention. However they can look a lot less appealing than other types until the plants are bushy enough to disguise them.
- Ceramic and terracotta can dry out quickly and, like wire, need frequent watering. This type require a very strong wall bracket as the weight of the container is already quite considerable. However, a terracotta bowl can look wonderful filled with sempervivums or other succulents, and these would obviously need less watering and attention.

- All baskets need a strong wall bracket or place to hang, remember that a watered basket is very heavy.
- Don't forget wall mounted containers of all shapes and sizes are also available, giving you another dimension for 'high-rise' planting.
- Old chip baskets or abandoned colanders can make cheap and interesting hanging baskets.

window boxes

These are just long, narrow containers, ideal for adding colour to your home. They are available in many materials and styles, so finding one to suit your home will not be a problem. Plant with seasonal flowers and bulbs or try an edible display; a box on the kitchen window can be a convenient source of herbs or salads. Safety is paramount, so if you have window boxes high up make sure they are well secured to prevent nasty accidents, and adding a drip tray will protect your sills and walls from water damage.



tubs and troughs

Large pots, tubs and troughs are invaluable whatever the amount of space you have. They can grace any garden from the largest formal grounds to the smallest yard or balcony. There are few species that will not grow in a suitable container, even some of the smaller fruit and ornamental trees. There are wide ranges in every conceivable material, colour and style; it's entirely up to you what you choose. Remember that recycling can come into its own here for individuality, and gardening on a shoestring.

What is important is that there is adequate drainage. If your pot does not have holes already then make them (be careful with ceramics). Raising the pot slightly off the ground helps too. Either sit the pots on stones or buy pot feet - these come in ranges as diverse as pots. Whatever you use, make sure you don't cover the drainage holes. Again controlled release fertiliser and water retentive gel can be added to the compost to aid in feeding and watering. Bear in mind that terracotta is going to

dry out quicker than plastic, so keep well watered, twice a day is best.



grow bags and flexible planters

Grow bags are an old favourite that have been a staple of tomato growing for years, but other vegetables can be grown in them too. They are simple, cheap, portable and ideal for small space growing. There are many new designs of patio growing containers, including flexible ones which pack flat for easy winter storage. They're ideal for growing many types of vegetable, including potatoes. Coming complete with drainage holes and carry handles, they are perfect for convenience and portability. Relatively cheap, they can be used for salads, tomatoes, herbs and strawberries to name just a few possibilities. Both make growing your own vegetables convenient and economical with the added advantage of being easy to care for and will provide instructions on what's suitable to grow in them.



unusual containers

What do wellington boots and old baths have in common? They can be used in the garden for planting. Chamber pots, tin cans, sinks and old water tanks; just a few potential and unusual planters.

what to grow?

spring bulbs

These bulbs (planted in the autumn) are a favourite for container growing, often mixed with later flowering plants such as wallflowers, pansies or primroses. Complimented by evergreens, they make a delightful movable feast in the early months of the year. These pots can then be removed, and replaced by others filled with later flowering varieties.

Also planting in a 'double-decker' fashion can give a long lasting display. A deep layer of daffodils with a layer of tulips above, mixed with crocus, snowdrop, eranthis or other early varieties. This mixture should provide colour for around three months. The dwarf varieties of daffodils and tulips are also ideal for containers, and being low growing will not be susceptible to wind damage. Baskets with bulbs, ivy and pansies are also a cheerful treat in early spring.

summer bulbs

These bulbs (planted in the spring) are great container plants too. Lilies are extremely well behaved in pots, and if looked after, can remain in the same one for a few years. They are perfect stood by doorways and windows for their scent to waft inside, or they can be moved in and out of the borders as gap fillers during the flowering season. Exotics are great in pots too, as you can use them as highlights on the patio, species like agapanthus, callas and cannas look spectacular in a suitably evocative container, and can be moved out of the way once they have passed their best.

Begonias make great container plants and trailing begonias are a perfect basket flower, their spectacular blooms and striking leaves can look good with other plants or as a single species display.

herbs

Herbs have been grown in pots for centuries. Available space has little bearing on whether or not you can grow herbs; they will grow anywhere and in any type of container. While it is possible to mix varieties in a pot, it is wise to plant separately. The mint family in particular are thugs who need to be contained; they will quickly run rampant and choke out any competitors. So, while it is lovely to have a lush, verdant pot of several herbs it can also be extremely attractive to have several containers each containing a single variety grouped together. If you are mixing herbs in a tub, ensure that you take their preference for sun or shade, feeding etc. into consideration, for

example rosemary and thyme appreciate full sun and a well drained soil; parsley and basil like a little shade and moister soil. Having your pots near the kitchen door makes sense for easy snippings for cooking, and having them where they can be brushed past or touched to release their scent is a good way of lifting the spirits.

N.B. Most herbs will grow happily in containers except long rooted varieties like horse radish, or the very tall, such as angelica.

vegetables

Create edible baskets with tomatoes and strawberries which are both ideal for this kind of culture. The small cherry type tomato, and the 'everbearer' strawberries provide an attractive display, and a crop of tasty treats too!

There are few types of vegetable that cannot be grown in a pot of some kind. Even potatoes and leeks can be grown in a deep container. And any kind of container will do - shallow ones can be used for salad crops; turn old wooden packing cases into a raised bed and it couldn't be easier to grow the latest salad leaves. There is a whole range of mixes available, runner beans, french beans, peas, all grow in pots; all ready for picking fresh for the kitchen - and tasting fantastic. Check out the specially designed containers and bags suitable for growing them, and you will always have fresh fruit and vegetables at your fingertips!

summer colour

There are endless possibilities for summer displays, apart from the usual geraniums (ivy-leaved and standard), begonias, marigolds and lobelia. Use sweet peas, mimulus, nasturtiums, petunias, pansies and fuchsias etc. Create cool or hot containers; classic or exotic mixtures.

There has been an increase in the amount of striking and unusual plants from hotter climates, that are hardy enough for British gardens becoming available in recent years. The Ilofos makes a beautiful climbing or trailing plant. Plus the striking curcuma (Flowering Ginger), nerines or hymenocallis (Peruvian Daffodil) bulbs are just 'drop-dead gorgeous' - place outdoors after danger of frost has passed and over winter in a frost-free place.

Using plants, bulbs or seed, you can achieve some amazing displays. Just check on height, and bear in mind the effect you want to achieve. Mix colours or have single varieties such as begonia, nasturtium, geraniums or rudbeckia.

A basket of nasturtiums can be a brilliant and cost effective display, either grow your own from seed, or buy plants of the latest brilliant new varieties. Keep dead headed and these wonderful little plants will flower all summer long.

Sweet Peas can be grown in baskets and patio planters, the trailing and shorter growing patio varieties are ideal. The delicate flowers with their delicious scent are a summer 'must-have'. Keep deadheading to keep the flowers coming.

handy hints and money saving tips

Try to plant too many rather than too little. A packed container will present a lush, full effect. Just make sure you fertilise and water thoroughly to compensate for the extra plants.



Check that terracotta planters are frost proof, otherwise they must be protected in the winter.

Deadhead regularly to prolong flowering, this will also keep containers looking tidy and prevent fungal diseases. Because plants are close together, the opportunity for disease is greater than in a normal garden plot.

Try to use the biggest size container that you can. This will prevent the pot drying out and give the plants plenty of room to put down roots.



Remember that clay pots are porous and will lose more moisture than ones made of other material.

Pots in an exposed position will lose more water than those in a sheltered spot and will need more water.

A week after planting up a basket, pinch out growing tips to make bushy plants.



Leave the top of a hanging basket slightly concave to encourage water to pool in the centre where it can sink through.

However warm it is during the day, pots and hanging baskets containing annual plants must not be left outside until the danger of frost has passed (normally about mid-May).

Try growing fruit and vegetables in hanging baskets and raised pots. Tomatoes work well as do Strawberries - the fruit is kept well out of the way of slugs.