MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK•EASTERN SHORE

Fact Sheet

Fact Sheet 568

Growing Hanging Plants

Well-placed hanging plants can add interest to any porch, balcony, breezeway or patio. The large number of attractive containers designed for hanging plants is matched by the selection of annual and perennial plants suitable for hanging.

Choosing a Container

The type of hanging container you select will determine the amount of preparation needed before planting. Containers for hanging are available from most garden centers, craft outlets, and hardware and department stores. Whatever you do, make certain you purchase one with ample drainage holes in the bottom. If you do not wish to purchase a manufactured hanging container, you can make one by attaching three or four wires, chains or ropes to any 6-, 8-, or 10-inch azalea pan or pot.

Hanging containers with solid walls of plastic, metal, wood or clay generally require a bottom layer of coarse gravel or broken pottery before filling with growing media. Hanging containers made of wires and plastic or metal mesh must be lined with sphagnum moss, leaves, straw, hay, excelsior, paper or twigs before filling with growing media (Figure 1). Sphagnum moss is preferred because it absorbs water and is easy to handle.

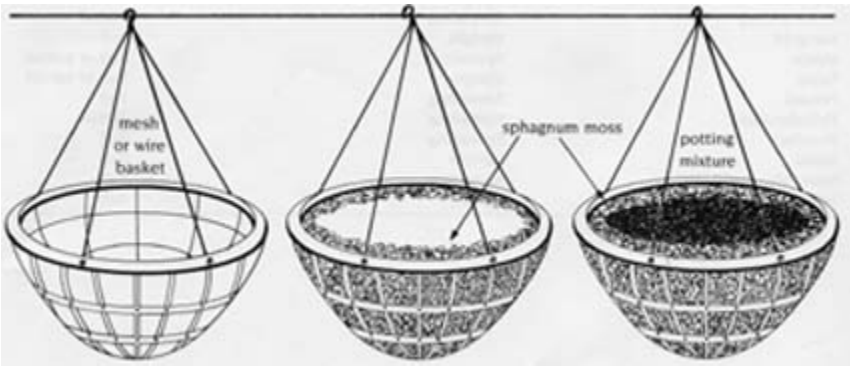

Figure 1. Line wire hanging containers with sphagnum moss.

Preparing the Growing Media

A potting mixture containing an abundance of organic matter is essential for growing plants in a hanging container. To any good garden soil moderately high in clay, add equal amounts of peat moss or compost and perlite or pine bark. To each gallon container of potting mixture, add 2 rounded teaspoons of ground limestone and 2 rounded teaspoons of 5-10-10 fertilizer. Mix the medium thoroughly; loosely fill the container.

Caring for Your Hanging Plants

After planting, water thoroughly until excess water drips from the bottom. Check the moisture content of the medium daily and water only when necessary. To determine if watering is necessary, touch the potting mixture with your finger. If the potting mixture feels cool and damp, then it has adequate moisture. If the potting mixture feels warm and dry, it needs water. Once the plants have established themselves, fertilize them periodically with any water-soluble or liquid fertilizer recommended for houseplants.

Choosing Hanging Plants

Many plants can effectively be grown in hanging containers. The type of plants you select will depend on the amount of shade in the area where the container is going to hang. Table 1 will help you to select the proper plants for each hanging container.

Arrange the plants in your hanging container by planting the upright growing plants in the center and the spreading or vine species at least 1 inch from the outer edge. Do not attempt to create immediate results by crowding too many plants into one container. Generally, three or four plants are all that are needed to fill even a 10-inch hanging container. If you are going to grow vigorous plants like fuchsia, use only one plant per hanging container.

Table 1. Varieties of hanging plants

Variety	Habit of growth	Amount of light
Ageratum	Upright	Full or partial
Begonia	Upright	Full or partial
Candytuft	Spreading	Full
Cockscomb	Upright	Full
Dianthus	Spreading	Full
Dusty-miller	Spreading	Partial
English ivy	Spreading	Full or partial
Fuchsia	Upright and spreading	Partial
Ivy-leaf geranium	Spreading	Full
Impatiens	Upright	Partial
Heart-leaf ivy	Spreading	Partial
Marigold	Upright	Full
Myrtle	Spreading	Full or partial
Pansy	Upright	Full or partial
Petunia	Spreading	Full
Philodendron	Spreading	Partial
Portulaca	Spreading	Full
Salvia	Upright	Full
Sweet alyssum	Spreading	Full
Verbena	Upright	Full

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