

Pleasant Valley

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HANGING BASKET CARE

Our Olean, New York weather permits us to start thinking about putting hanging baskets outside around Mothers' Day, which is near May 10th every year.

However, the chance for cold injury and frost kill on the hanging baskets is still great until approximately June 5th.

The best way to treat a hanging basket purchased in May is to hang it outside on the nice days, and bring it inside at night when it will be below 45°. Flowering hanging baskets will not survive in the house for a month; they need to go outside on the nice days. Be careful not to over water in cold, rainy periods.

WATER GUIDELINES

Hanging baskets are similar to people in their water requirements. On the hot, sunny, dry days they need a lot of water; in cool, wet weather they need less. **We suggest most of the summer when the weather is hot & dry that most hanging baskets get watered once a day – until the water starts to come out the bottom of the basket.** If it has been cold and rainy, check to see if the plant is dry before watering. If the soil is quite wet leave it until it starts to dry out. Another good way to check a hanging basket for dryness is to lift it up. If it is heavy it's probably wet, if it's light it's dry.

Watering first thing in the morning is best. If watering in the evening fits your schedule better, use care not to get water on the foliage. Be careful, only water the soil because foliage diseases can develop if the foliage stays wet all night.

FERTILIZATION GUIDELINES

In order to keep your hanging basket lush and growing all summer it will need fertilizer. Constant watering leeches out fertilizer in hanging baskets. Miracle Gro is an excellent fertilizer, but many people don't have time to mix it up and apply it once or twice a week. An easier way is to use the small Miracle Gro fertilizer spikes that you push into the soil, since they last about three weeks to a month. Another good product is Osmocote, a time-release fertilizer. This can be applied to the soil and will last about a month in the summer.

Begonias and Impatiens are lighter feeders; they don't need as much fertilizer. Geraniums and petunias are heavy feeders; they need more fertilizer to do well.

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SUN or SHADE?

Hanging baskets exposed to full, hot sun all day need extra attention to watering and lots of fertilizer. Zonal geraniums and petunias are the best choices for full hot all-day sun. Portulaca is also good. Mixed hanging baskets with geraniums and petunias as the primary flowers should also do well. Moss baskets will do better if they get ½ day of shade or filtered sun. They tend to dry out quickly in full sun.

We have made up the following list of hanging baskets and grouped them from full sun to shade.

Full Sun

- Geraniums – The standard zonal geraniums can take full sun if you give them enough water and fertilizer on a daily basis.
- Petunias – Trailing petunia hanging baskets can take full sun if you give them enough water and fertilizer on a daily basis
- Portulaca – This does well in full hot sun and may not need water every day.
- Hibiscus – This does well in full hot sun and it needs water and lots of fertilizer on a daily basis.

Half Day of Full Sun

- Verbena – The new purple and pink Topian Verbenas do great in ½ day of full sun. However, be careful because they are not forgiving. If they get very dry even once and wilt they will not come back.
- Black Eyed Susan Vine – This does great in ½ day sun, but be careful with this one because they are not forgiving. If they dry out bad even once and wilt they will not come back.
- Lantana - This does great in ½ day sun, but be careful with this one because they are not forgiving. If they dry out bad even once and wilt they will not come back.
- New Guinea “Sunshine” Impatiens – These are called “Sunshine Impatiens,” although they do best in ½ day of full, hot sun. These are a great hanging basket because they are quite forgiving and if they wilt you can water them and they will come right back. Be careful not to over water these in cool, wet weather.
- Ivy Geranium – A beautiful hanging basket that does great in ½ day of full sun. It uses a lot of water and fertilizer in hot weather. Keep the soil moist; don’t let it dry out.

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Half Day of Full Sun Cont.

- Mini Cascade Ivy Geranium – These do great in ½ day of hot sun. Keep them watered and fertilized in hot weather. They are quite forgiving if you forget to water them. We recommend removing the old flower stalks very two weeks.
- “Million Bells” Miniature Petunia – A super new hanging basket! It likes ½ day of full sun. It keeps growing and getting a fuller globe shape as the summer continues. They are very forgiving if you forget to water them once in a while. They don’t make a mess below and they like a lot of water and fertilizer.
- Scavolia, Fan Flower / “Blue Wonder” - A super new hanging basket! It likes ½ day of full sun. It keeps growing and getting a fuller globe shape as the summer continues. They are very forgiving if you forget to water them once in a while. They don’t make a mess below and they like a lot of water and fertilizer.
- Snowflake “Bacopa” – Tiny white flowers cover this newer variety. Does great in ½ day of sun. It is very popular. Be careful not to let them dry out, they are not super forgiving and do not come back well after they dry out bad enough. They don’t make a mess below.
- Chenille “Foxtail” – Red, fuzzy bottlebrush type flowers hang from this plant. It needs ½ day of sun to do well. Keep the soil moist; they do not tolerate drying out well.
- Lobelia – Small, blue flowers cover this trailing vine. They do well with ½ day of full sun. Be careful because this plant does not tolerate drying out. If it dries out badly once, it will not come back.
- Argyranthemum – These super newer varieties of white or yellow daisy-type flowers are beautiful and flower all summer until fall. They are well suited to planting in the ground, also. The yellow variety gets quite tall for a hanging basket.
- Torenia – These medium-size blue flower plants do well with ½ day of full sun.

Less than Half Day of Full Sun

- Shade Impatiens – A classic hanging basket. This variety of impatiens does best if it gets ½ day of morning or late afternoon sun. Too much hot mid-day sun is not good. It is a beautiful plant that will last all summer with proper care. Fertilize it every two weeks with Miracle Gro. It does not do well in very dense shade.
- Reiger Begonia – One of the most beautiful and easiest to care for hanging baskets. It likes ½ day of sun or less. It is one of the few plants that flowers very well all summer long even in shade.

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Less than Half Day of Full Sun Cont.

- Non-Stop Begonia – Large leaves and colorful flowers make this a popular choice. It likes morning sun or late afternoon sun. Too much hot mid-day sun is not good. Keep the leaves dry. In cool, damp late summer conditions it may need to be treated with a fungicide to prevent powdery mildew on leaves.
- Fuschia – A beautiful sight but they need special care! Fuschias like morning or late afternoon sun. Too much hot, direct mid-day sun will ruin a fuschia. They also need a good watering every day, all summer long. They are not very forgiving if they get too much sun or dries out a few too many times. They are just beautiful with the right care.
- Boston Fern – A beautiful hanging basket and easy to care for. It likes $\frac{1}{2}$ day of sun or less. Give it lots of fertilizer and water and it will grow bigger and lush as the summer goes on. If you bring it in the house for the winter, keep it in a bright window and continue to water it daily. The biggest mistake people make with Boston Ferns is not watering them enough. Misting is not really helpful.
- Double “Rosebud Impatiens” – This is a shade impatiens with “double” flowers that resemble small roses. It likes morning or late afternoon sun. Too much hot mid-day sun is not good. Be careful not to over fertilize, once every two weeks is enough.
- Streptocarpella – Small blue violet flowers and fuzzy leaves are the main characteristics of this plant. Likes $\frac{1}{2}$ day of sun or less. They cannot tolerate cold temperatures; keep in the house in bright window until early June.

“Full Shade” Porches

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These houseplants make good porch hanging baskets:

- Ivy
- Spider Plants
- Pothos
- Philodendrons