



• SINCE 1923 •

# CREATE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL FLOWER BASKETS AND PLANTERS

Everyone has that one friend or family member that maintains the most beautiful flower baskets and planters. They're tall, full and colorful, and you always wonder, "How do they do it?"

The goal of every basket and planter is to attract the eye, and each plant plays a role. Most plants are either upright, broad or trailing, and the most successful combinations usually include at least one of each.

To create the most beautiful flower baskets and planters, plan to mix and match shapes, heights and colors. Consider a basic recipe integrating a combination of the following types of plants:

## 1. THRILLERS: MAKE A STATEMENT

Thrillers are tall, upright plants. They're the attention-getting star and make the perfect centerpiece for your flower baskets and planters. *Great thrillers: Cordyline, Dracaena Spikes (Green Cordyline), Carex (Ice Cream Grass), Juncus, Pennisetum Rubrum (Purple Fountain Grass), and Geraniums (upright).*

## 2. FILLERS: GROW BOLD

Fillers are colorful and tend to add volume by growing up and out. They're naturally the most flowery and stunning in any container. *Great fillers: Petunia (upright), Osteospermum, Phlox Intensa, Geranium, and Lobelia.*

## 3. ACCENTS: CONTRAST NATURALLY

Accents weave through the thrillers and fillers, and add much-needed foliar texture. While accents usually lack the bold color associated with fillers, they provide great shape and visual contrast. *Great Accents: Ipomoea (Sweet Potato Vine), Lysimachia, Plectranthus, Lotus, Coleus, and Vinca.*

## 4. TRAILERS: CASCADE BEAUTIFULLY

Trailers cascade over the sides of the container, softening its edges. They unify the composition by climbing through the arrangement, or simply, adding a complementary color, shape or texture. *Great trailers: Petunia (trailing), Verbena (trailing), Calibrachoa, Bidens, Bacopa, and Lobularia.*

## PLAN & PREPARE

When planning your baskets and planters, choose plants that best fit your environment. Pick the right colors for you, whether they're bold, exciting combinations or colors complementary to your home and landscape. Also consider the growing conditions. Will the basket or planter be sitting in the sun or shade? And, how much moisture will your new plants require? Develop a plan with each of these details in mind and build around it.

Fill your containers with a potting mix rather than garden soil. Potting mixes drain better, and garden soil may contain weed seeds and pests you don't want in your containers. IFA

Premium Potting Soil and Black Gold All Purpose Potting Mix are both formulated with the finest blended ingredients, and provide good moisture retention and drainage.

When filling your containers, dampen the soil and allow some space between the top of the basket or planter and the surface of the soil. This will allow water to soak into the soil as opposed to running out of the container.

## START PLANTING

Now that you've chosen your flowers and your hanging basket or planter is ready, let's start planting.

1. Dig your holes where you want to place each plant. Make sure the holes are deep and wide enough to hold the plant's root system. To make sure it's the right size, place the pot itself inside the hole.
2. Carefully remove each plant from its pot. Hold the pot with one hand and place your other hand around the base of the plant. Tip the pot to the side and allow the plant and soil to slide out.
3. Loosen the root ball, especially if the roots are heavily entwined or match the shape of the container. To make sure the roots grow outward into the surrounding soil, gently tease or pull on the roots with your hands.
4. Place the roots in the soil. If the hole is too deep, fill it in slightly with a handful or two of loose dirt. Gently fill soil around the roots until the hole is filled, and pat the soil down to remove gaps and support the plant.
5. To help establish your plants, thoroughly water, and pinch off existing flowers so all of the energy is placed into developing a strong root system.

## PRESERVE ITS BEAUTY

Your flowers are now planted and looking good. The main goal from this point on is to maintain healthy, colorful plants throughout the summer.

First, water your plants deeply and regularly to make sure it reaches the bottom roots. This encourages the roots to grow down toward the bottom of the basket or planter, and develops a stronger overall plant. They prefer water in the morning or evening and less in the mid-day sun. Also make



sure to water the soil and not the leaves. Wet leaves can lead to fungus, mildew, disease, and in some cases, sunburn.

Check the moisture level before each watering by sticking a finger an inch or two below the surface. If it feels dry around your fingertip, your plants need water. Moisture levels can also change quickly on a hot summer day. A basket or planter that feels quite moist in the morning may be dry by mid-afternoon.

Hanging baskets hold a small amount of soil and tend to dry out quickly. There's also less room for roots to spread and grow. Give your hanging basket flowers a good, long drink of water four to five times each week, and possibly daily if weather conditions are extremely hot or windy. Add enough water so it runs out of the bottom of the basket, and make sure to hit the edges along with the center of the basket. One last thing to remember: healthy plants produce new blossoms. To maintain your plants health and to stimulate growth, make sure to fertilize, prune, and routinely deadhead your flowers. When fertilizing, you have two types of options. Liquid feeds such as IFA Grand Champion All Purpose Fertilizer or Fertilome Blooming & Rooting Plant Food may be applied once per week (or every other week) when watering. As an alternative, long feeding pellets such as Fertilome Garden Cote 6 are a time release option that will feed your plants for the entire season with only one application. Snipping blooms that are past their prime improves the appearance of your plants and encourages them to produce more flowers. Remove any wilting or dead blossoms or plants with a pair of gardening shears.

There are many plant variations and even more combinations. Use this recipe as a guide and explore the possibilities. Be colorful and bold, but more importantly, choose a combination you'll enjoy in your yard all year long.

*Information for this article was provided by Kent Mickelsen, Utah Certified Nurseryman, IFA Country Store.*



# A SIMPLE RECIPE FOR CREATING BEAUTIFUL FLOWER BASKETS AND PLANTERS



## THRILLERS

Many are ornamental grasses\*\* and have cultivars of each type.

- Carex\*\*
- Cordyline\*\*
- Dracaena Spikes\* (Green Cordyline)
- Geraniums
- Juncus\*\*
- Pennisetum\*\* (Purple Fountain Grass)

## TRAILERS

All are trailing plant types.

- Bacopa\*
- Bidens
- Calebrachoa (Million Bells Petunia)
- Lobelia
- Petunia
- Verbena

## FILLERS

All are upright plant types.

- Dahlia
- Geraniums\*
- Lobelia
- Osteospermum\* (African Daisy)
- Petunia
- Phlox Intensa

## ACCENTS

Some plants are both an Accent and Filler. Mix up plant types for the best results.

- Coleus
- Diamond Lace Euphorbia
- Ipomoea\* (Sweet Potato Vine)
- Osteospermum\* (African Daisy)
- Petunia
- Phlox Intensa

