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# Planning and maintaining hanging baskets all summer

**Q**uestion: How do I get and maintain the profuse flowering I see in so many hanging baskets?

**A**nsWER: There are so many choices of plants for lush, beautiful hanging baskets. Some people opt for all one type of plant in a basket, while others prefer a coordinated mixture of several different types of plants.

After selecting the location for your basket, note the growing conditions. How much sun will it receive daily? How much shade? Is the area fully exposed to weather conditions or does it have some protection? Knowing these details will allow you to select plants that will thrive in the area you have selected.

Additionally, all plants that will be put in the same basket should have similar watering and fertilizing requirements.

Pick prolific bloomers. With proper care most annuals will “bloom their little hearts out” all summer. (Credit for that little gem of wisdom goes to my friend and Master Gardener Mentor, Kay Livermore. Truer words were never spoken).

Achieving prolific blooms usually requires the dreaded and tedious chore of deadheading the blooms. If you like this, there is no problem; if not, choose flowers that do not require deadheading.

Deadheading means removing spent

blooms. When blooms are spent and not removed, the plant will use its energy to produce seeds. So, if you want blooming to continue, the spent blooms must be removed. This ensures that the plant’s energy goes into making blooms, not seeds.

A partial list of flowers that do not require deadheading are: begonias, lantanas, nemesia, million bells, impatiens, geraniums, peonies, lobelia and bush violets.

Prolific blooming also requires a regular watering and fertilization regimen. Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are essential for healthy plants. The nitrogen promotes the growth of lush foliage. Phosphorus or phosphate promotes blooms and fruit formation, and potassium helps promote healthy root systems.

On the fertilizer package you will see three numbers and they indicate, in order, the percentages of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in the fertilizer. Knowing the percentage of each nutrient allows you to select the



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right fertilizer required to achieve your specific goals.

At planting, use a fertilizer that encourages root growth and plant establishment. Adjust percentages as needed. For regular fertilization use a 20-20-20 mix. These percentages are prominently displayed on the label of all fertilizers.

Plants in hanging baskets tend to dry out quickly. To combat this, they need to be watered regularly and kept moist. Do not let them dry out.

Maintaining moisture in the soil can be achieved several ways. There are hydration aids that can be added to the soil at planting time. Other methods include placing a cut-up wet sponge in the bottom of the pot and/or placing a mulch or moss over the soil after planting.

While maintaining moisture and a having a regular watering schedule is vital to the success of your hanging baskets, it can leach out the fertilizers you apply. For this reason, consistent fertilizing (at least every two weeks) is important.

*Do you have a gardening or insect question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at [douglasmg@oregonstate.edu](mailto:douglasmg@oregonstate.edu) or 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg. Douglas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help the OSU Extension Service serve the people of Douglas County.*