

Tips on Growing Mixed Hanging Baskets

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Mixed hanging baskets and planters are becoming increasingly popular with customers who are looking for something unique and different. Mixed planters can provide instant color to a patio or deck. Many greenhouse growers have noted that sales of hanging baskets are increasing more than bedding plant flats. More growers in Connecticut are adding mixed containers to their product line. The following article highlights some suggestions presented at the Winter Meeting of the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association.

Cultural Considerations

Choose plants that have similar temperature, light and watering requirements. Combination planters can be started by using either plugs or four-inch pots. Some of the advantages of using plugs include: reduced labor costs and a more natural blending together of the plants as they grow in the planter. Some of the disadvantages of this method include: increased use of growing space and a longer finishing time.

Starting the planters with four-inch pots also offers several advantages. There is a more efficient use of growing space during prime spring production. Fewer plugs are needed for the finished product. As a grower, it is easier to experiment with different combinations starting with larger plants. You can also use "leftover" plants to make combination planters. However, at the time of marketing, the planter may have a more clustered appearance which may not be as attractive to customers.

Use a peat perlite mix with good drainage that has performed well for you in the past. Consider using a wetting agent for those plants that will need a lot of water or when using speciality baskets (such as moss or coco fiber) that tend to dry out. A 200-250 ppm constant feed will work for most planters unless very heavy feeders such as superpetunias are included in your design. Some plants such as scaevola and superpetunia will also benefit from the addition of chelated iron.

Design Considerations

Effective use of color is key to making pleasing combinations. Use either contrasting color combinations such as yellow and orange with blue and purple or use similar shades and tones of a particular color. Add trailing foliage plants at the edge of the basket with upright plants in the center. Add mounding type cultivars of intermediate height to avoid gaps in the center of the planter. Experiment with different combinations on a small scale to learn what your customers want. Some of the combinations that have been popular recently focused on a purple and pink theme, for example, verbenas with licorice plants and scaevola.

Some Ideas on Twelve-Inch Combination Planters

Blue Theme

Calibrachoa hybrid Million Bells® 'Trailing Blue'

Scaevola aemula 'New Wonder'

Torenia hybrid 'Summer Wave®'

Anagallis monelli Flaxleaf Pimpernel

Red Theme

Calibrachoa hybrid Million Bells® 'Cherry Pink'

Verbena hybrid Temari® 'Bright Red'

Red New Guinea Impatiens

Red Geraniums

Pink Theme

Calibrachoa hybrid Million Bells® 'Trailing Pink'

Verbena hybrid Temari® 'Bright Pink'

Verbena hybrid Tapien™ 'Pink'

Petunia axillaris hybrid Surfinia® 'Pink Vein'

Calibrachoa hybrid Million Bells® 'Trailing Pink'

Verbena hybrid Tapien™ 'Lavender'

Verbena hybrid Temari® 'Bright Pink'

Petunia axillaris hybrid Surfinia® 'Brilliant Mini Pink'

Calibrachoa hybrid Million Bells® 'Trailing Pink'

Verbena hybrid Temari® 'Bright Pink'

Pink Geraniums

Pink New Guinea Impatiens

Purple Theme

Verbena hybrid Tapien™ 'Blue'

Verbena hybrid Temari® 'Violet'

Petunia axillaris hybrid Supertunia™ 'Sun Striker'

Petunia axillaris hybrid Supertunia™ 'Sun Wine'

Verbena hybrid Tapien™ 'Blue'
Petunia axillaris hybrid Supertunia™ 'Sun Wine'
Petunia axillaris hybrid Supertunia™ 'Purple Sunspot'
Verbena hybrid Temari® 'Violet'

Yellow Theme

Bidens ferulifolia 'Goldie'
Marguerite Daisy 'Butterfly'
Helichrysum bracteatum 'Golden Beauty'

White Theme

Verbena hybrid Tapien™ 'Powder Blue'
Sutera cordata Bacopa
Marguerite Daisy 'Sugar N Ice'
Marguerite Daisy 'Sugar Baby'
Marguerite Daisy 'Summer Angel'
Verbena hybrid Tapien™ 'Powder Blue'
Petunia axillaris hybrid Surfina® 'White'
Nemesia 'Compact Innocence'

Pastel Theme

Verbena hybrid Tapien™ 'Pink'
Calibrachoa hybrid Million Bells® 'Trailing Blue'
Brachycome
Verbena hybrid Temari® 'Pink'
Torenia hybrid 'Summer Wave®'
Calibrachoa hybrid Million Bells® 'Trailing Blue'
Pink New Guinea Impatiens
Pink Geraniums
Verbena hybrid Tapien™ 'Powder Blue'
Verbena hybrid Tapien® 'Pink'
Torenia hybrid 'Summer Wave®'
Pink Geraniums

Bold Color Theme

Verbena hybrid Temari 'Red'
Bidens ferulifolia 'Goldie'
Orange New Guinea Impatiens
Red New Guinea Impatiens
Bidens ferulifolia 'Goldie'
Calibrachoa hybrid Million Bells® 'Cherry Pink'
Red New Guinea Impatiens
Helichrysum bracteatum 'Golden Beauty'

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®=Registered Patent of Proven Winners

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