



## Hanging Baskets - Decorative & Useful

Flowers are always a popular gift for Mother's Day, and this year hanging floral baskets are sure to top the list in popularity. Hanging baskets offer an interesting decorative touch to your home both indoors and outdoors.

Judith S. Levine, floriculture teacher at the Lancaster County Vocational Technical School at Brownstown attributes the great interest in hanging plants to the "green plant movement," meaning simply that green plants are becoming immensely popular. Perhaps it's part of the wish of ever increasing numbers of people to return to nature and the simple life. Miss Levine added that hanging plants are also becoming a "big part of decorating."

The "in" thing in modern decorating is the use of green plants at the window to replace curtains. Plants can certainly add a great deal more interest to a home, and they allow lots of light in while filtering it and offering privacy. Hanging baskets can also be the answer to a plant lover who lives in a modern home and lacks window sill space for flowers, and they can add interest to almost any room.

When selecting the location for hanging baskets in your home, it is important to consider the needs of the plant, according to Miss Levine. Usually a sunny window offers the best "home" but one that gets the hot sun all day may be unsuitable.

A wide variety of plant material is suitable for indoor hanging arrangements. Some of the more common ones come instantly to mind: the many varieties of wandering jew, Swedish ivies and other ivies; trailing coleus, philodendron, spider plant and begonias. Some other which make unusual hanging basket materials include Tahitian bridal veil, smilax, burrow tail, aluminum plants, and piggyback plants. Christmas cactus, strawberry begonias and even African violets can make attractive hanging plants.

Miss Levine says that all ferns make good hanging basket material, especially asparagus fern and staghorn ferns, but homes which are exceptionally dry may have a problem in keeping them in top shape. She added that baby tears can be used, but cautions that their underneath leaves tend to turn brown as the plant gets older.

Naturally, most of these plants are available at greenhouses and garden centers, but many can be grown yourself. There are several things to remember, however, if you hope to achieve the fullness and beauty of commercial plants. Miss Levine says, "You must use lots and lots of cuttings to make it full, and to get fullness in some plants you must not hesitate to pinch them to get maximum growth as early as possible." She added that any pinching should be done early before they begin trailing, and "you must let it grow a while" before it becomes a showpiece.

She said a new trend in hanging baskets is to mix plants of different varieties. She suggested simply using your imagination, remembering that all plant material in a single container should require the same conditions as to light, water, etc. She suggested mixing some upright plants to get fullness, with some plants of low density and some trailing plants. She added that in California and in Europe, innovative ideas in hanging baskets are far ahead of ours.

An important consideration in the actual hanging of your plant is the use of a strong hanger which will support the weight of the container and moist soil, which can be quite heavy. Miss Levine suggests using a toggle bolt for all locations, "that will last forever," and says you must be careful not to hang a basket from a hollow wall or ceiling.

Miss Levine recommends using a soil-less potting mix for a hanging basket you will be creating yourself because it is a lot lighter than using regular potting soil. She says a com-



Here are several cuttings, any of which could be used to make an attractive hanging basket for your

home: wandering jew (two varieties), spider plant, a peperomia, and smilax.

mercial, sterilized mix will give best results. She adds that perlite is preferable to pebbles as a drainage layer because it is lighter.

Containers, of course, can vary as much as your imagination. There are many containers made specifically for hanging, which are often lightweight and plastic, but ceramic is also a favorite. But you may adapt any favorite container around your home, or use a standard old-fashioned clay pot - just make sure the bottom is covered if there are drainage holes. There are also ultramodern lucite containers available, so you can really choose something which matches your decor. Miss Levine says some of her students are fashioning a coffee can into a hanging container, by covering it with cord.

Many commercial containers have wire hangers, but some are available with a thin cord which, according to Miss Levine, will not rust, and are therefore a little more attractive. Of course, there are many types of ropes and cord hangers available, and if you're a macrame expert, you can probably create your own.

Chains can also be used for an interesting effect. It is important to use a strong, secure hook, and both plain and decorative hooks can be obtained from garden centers and hardware stores.

Hanging baskets require at least as much attention as any of your houseplants, if they are to continue to be an attractive addition to your decorating scheme. Watering can be a problem, even in specially designed containers. To avoid splashing water and soil on your carpet Miss Levine cautions that all plants must be watered "very gently." She suggests that for some hanging baskets the best way to water them is simply to lay a few ice cubes on the soil and let them melt down through.

Miss Levine suggests fertilizing all hanging plants once a month, using a general purpose fertilizer or an organic fertilizer, and applying it in weaker dosages than for your other plants. She says you do not want to encourage a great deal of growth or your plant will outgrow its container. Eventually all plants become root bound, in which case she suggests repotting the plant.

There is also a wide variety of plants suitable for hanging outdoors. One of the most common is fuchsia, but petunias, impatiens, portulaca, lobelia, trailing coleus, begonias, columbia scavenger, and browallia are also good choices. Ivy geraniums can be used indoors as well as outdoors if you have a very sunny window, as can portulaca. Swedish ivy and wandering jew also can be used indoors or outdoors.

Miss Levine says strawberries or patio tomatoes can be made into attractive hanging baskets.

Paul Stauffer of Stauffer's of Kissel Hill says that it is especially important not to neglect watering your outdoor



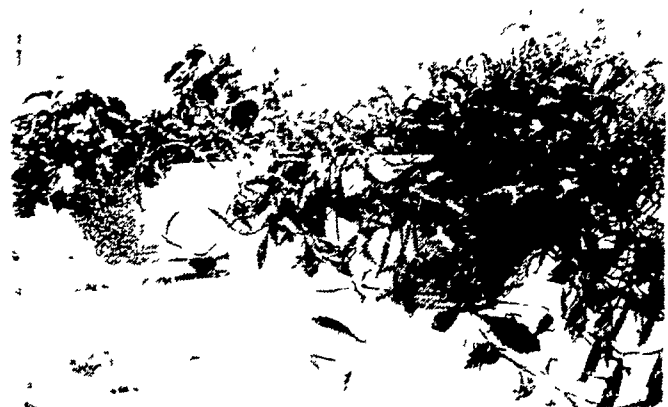
Tahitian bridal veil makes a lovely, full hanging basket. It has a small white flower which adds interest and beauty.

hanging plants. Because of the air movement they can really dry out. "Water your plants so that the soil stays moist," he says, and suggests fertilizing every two weeks with a weakened fish emulsion fertilizer to maintain the heavy growth which greenhouse plants have when you purchase them. He said the biggest reason for commercial success with hanging baskets is the combination of the proper soil, a good feeding program and using many plants and cutting them back where necessary to stimulate growth.

When asked about the current trend toward hanging baskets he attributed it to the fact that there are now better strains available which allow a plant to bloom all summer instead of blooming just once every few months. According to Stauffer, fuchsia is their biggest seller, and they can now offer it in about eight colors.

Most outdoor containers can be made of the same materials used for indoors, but they are usually larger. A wire basket is one popular outdoors container, and Miss Levine says the wire basket should be lined with spagnum (sheet) moss with the right side, or growing side, facing out.

[Continued on Page 28]



Lobelia and impatiens make two very attractive hanging containers for outdoors. These are displayed at Stauffer's of Kissel Hill