

GARDENING

Hanging Baskets

Let's have lots and lots of hanging baskets this summer! And why not make them yourself? So just a little advice, some suggestions and the nitty gritty about materials and plants you need.

First of all you must have a bracket big enough to hang the basket and it must be very firmly screwed to the wall using plugs. It has to bear a lot of weight for a basket full of damp compost and many plants is quite heavy. Baskets vary in size from a diameter of two feet down to ten inches. The basket can be of wire or plastic and the latter makes the operation a bit simpler but may not look so nice. A wire basket needs a lining of sphagnum moss - that's the thick kind found on the floor of woods and, in this Cotswold country, on walls as well. You will need a saucer or piece of polythene inside the moss to retain moisture.

Now the compost to fill the basket. You need two parts of peat to one of good soil - a molehill is ideal for this - and mix together with some brick that you have pounded with a hammer, or perlite if you have some, and also a pinch of Growmore. The amount needed for a 12" basket is about 5lbs in weight, or three quarters of a bucketful.

The choice of suitable plants is rather wide, but I limit the foliage trailers to three. They are cascade lobelia - colour of your choice, helichrysum petiolatum with a grey downy foliage and saxifraga stoloni-fera (mother of thousands) - get the variegated kind. Four cascade lobelia, one helichrysum and two saxifraga are suffi-

cient for one 12" basket. The more usual flowering plants used are fuchsias, an erect grower for the centre and trailing ones for sides; geraniums, ordinary varieties for the centre and ivy-leaved for trailing; impatiens (busy lizzies), trailing begonias and any petunias.

If you can't water regularly, please note that fuchsias have only to be dry once to lose their leaves, begonias need watering twice a day in hot weather, and so to be safe limit your plants to geraniums, lobelia and helichrysum.

Now to fill the basket. Having lined the wire basket with sphagnum moss, green side out of course, and placed a saucer or polythene inside, fill it up to the top with the compost you have mixed; make it nice and firm but not too compacted. Plant the centre fuchsia or geranium, surrounding this with helichrysum and saxifraga, then plant five ivy leaved geraniums at regular intervals around the edge of the basket, filling in the spaces with lobelia, petunias and busy lizzies. Should you require some white flowers, put a few seeds of alyssum around the edge of the basket - they germinate and grow quickly. A basket like this will cost about £4.50 but remember that a galvanized wire basket will last for many years. The plants I suggest can be obtained in this area at the prices shown:

Basket £1.20, Trailers 25p, Compost 50p, Lobelia 12p, Fuchsia 35p, B.Lizzie 25p, 5 Geraniums £1.75, 2 Petunias 40p.

I must mention too, the basket of nine cascade geraniums - nothing else. This will give you a lovely ball of red flowers for weeks and weeks, especially if you dead head, water and feed regularly.

Have your baskets ready to hang up in late May or early June. Please remember to

water your baskets daily if possible and to give a weak feed every seven days. If not too much trouble, take the baskets down once a month for dead heading, weeding and the removal of pieces broken by high wind.

Let's have a lovely show in our villages this summer!

The Garden

Time marches on relentlessly and most of the seed sowing has been done. There are some of course that are better sown 'latish', particularly runner beans, marrows and outdoor cucumbers. Sow beans and cucumbers on Stow Fair Day and autumn cauliflowers a week earlier. The seeds of cucumber are too expensive to risk on a May frost. Then there is the succession of plants such as radishes, lettuce, spinach and carrots.

Put some slug pellets around the strawberries before putting down the straw or mats. The most popular herb at present seems to be basil; you can chop the leaves into tiny pieces and sprinkle them on cut up tomatoes, salads and that sort of dish - apparently it makes them delicious (I can't vouchsafe an opinion as I don't like herbs at all!) However, for those that like them, sow a few seeds occasionally outdoors; two or three plants should be ample. Make

three or four sowings. Put in cuttings of dahlias and early flowering chrysanthemums in mid April and plant out the rooted cuttings in the last week in May, three feet apart for the dahlias and six inches for the chrysanths. Sow also in April outside annuals such as clarkia, godetia, lavatera, night scented stocks, alyssum for edging, and there are also balsam, cornflower, annual chrysanthemums, cosmea, mignonette, larkspur, limnanthes and statice. Seeds are cheaper than plants - sow thinly.

I wish you good growing.

A.V. Mitchell.



SHIPTON-U-WYCHWOOD SUMMER FAYRE

In aid of the Recreation Field Playground Equipment Fund

Will be held on Saturday, June 23rd on Shipton Green.

Our Playground Equipment is in urgent need of replacement to make it safe for the children, so please support our efforts.

Any ideas or offers of help would be extremely welcome. If you can help, please come to the next meeting of helpers on Wednesday, 11th April, at 7.30 p.m. in Shipton Village Hall, or contact Rosemary Salter on 830559.

PLEASE HELP US IF YOU CAN!