

Healthy Hanging Baskets

It's in the water. Commercial growers use devices that add a slight amount of fertilizer to their watering systems. The plants in their hanging baskets are fed a little bit with every watering, which is at least once a day. That's a pain to do at home, but you can approximate those results by using time-release fertilizer granules like Osmocote.

Use about a tablespoon of the stuff for each 10 inches of basket diameter (or 3 gallons of potting mix). Ideally the granules should be covered with soil (rather than on the surface) since they release fertilizer only as long as they remain damp. At potting time, I find that it's pretty easy to sprinkle on the fertilizer when I still have about half an inch of soil to add to the container.

The time-release granules are good for only about four months, so you'll need to add more late in the season if you want to keep the baskets blooming. By then the top of the basket will be thick with stems, leaves and flowers, so forget about burying the fertilizer. Just toss it on.

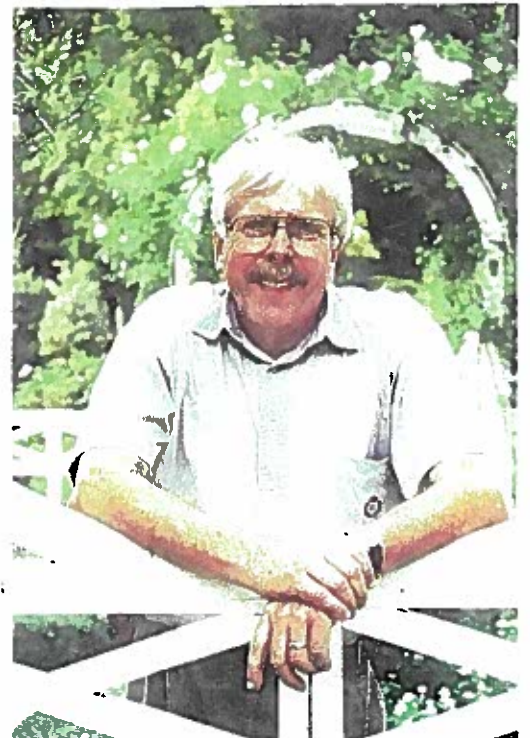
I find I get best results with heavily flowering container plants when I also water once a week all season with a half-strength

Hanging baskets that overflow with flowers are not hard to achieve—as long as you provide time-release fertilizer at planting plus a weekly liquid feed.

liquid fertilizer.

The other watering essential is to never let the containers dry out so much that the plants wilt severely. Once the roots fill the basket play it safe and check how dry they are as part of your morning routine. When the weather is very hot or windy, a basket may need irrigating everyday, sometimes more than once. Remember that when the plants are freshly planted and haven't sent roots out into the medium, they can't get much water from the surrounding soil. So apply water directly to the area of their root ball for the first week.

Plastic containers are more water-conserving than terra-cotta or those with the coconut fiber liners. Be sure to use a moisture-holding potting medium. I find that high-peat blends like Pro-Mix are ideal for building long-blooming containers.



THE TRUST *for* PUBLIC LAND

CONSERVING LAND FOR PEOPLE

Timothy L. Schaefer preserved his farm in perpetuity, and part of the rural Georgia County landscape, with a conservation easement facilitated by the Trust for Public Land

Chelsea Flower Garden

14743 Kinsman Rd.
Middlefield, Oh 44062
440-834-1222