



Wm. Wheat & Son

FLORIST & GARDEN CENTRE

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Gardeners Guide to:



HANGING BASKETS FOR AUTUMN, WINTER AND SPRING.

Your hanging baskets have been grown and created on our own nursery by our knowledgeable and experienced staff. They should be healthy, pest and disease free and full of life. With care they will provide you with an ever-changing display through autumn and winter, culminating with a spectacular display in the spring.

Position.

Make sure you have a good strong bracket and hook that has been correctly secured and check for safety occasionally as winter winds and the steady movement of the basket can loosen the fixings.

Do not fit them too high as this makes it difficult to water and maintain (6- 8ft is about right). Avoid windy positions as wind will damage the plants and the compost will dry out very quickly.

Watering.

Our baskets are packed full of plants and so have a relatively small amount of compost to support them regular attention to watering is most important. Because of the lower temperatures they will not need as much water as your summer baskets. We recommend checking your basket every other day in autumn and spring and a check once a week in winter is probably all that is needed. During very cold frosty weather when the compost freezes solid, there is, of course, no need for water but as soon as the thaw comes check if the basket is dry.

Don't be deceived into thinking because we have had some rain that there is no need to water your baskets. Rain will run off the plants like an umbrella so no water will penetrate the compost. A good tip is to feel the weight of the basket after it has been placed in position and well watered, by placing your hand under the base of the basket and pushing up slightly. Repeating when you check. If it feels light you will know that it needs water. Another indicator is if you see the baskets swinging in the wind.

With the traditional English wire and moss lined basket it is most important that adequate water is applied to penetrate the whole of the compost so that the plants through the side and base receive their share of water. When checking look at these lower planted plants to make sure they are not drooping, these plants are the first to indicate shortage of water particularly the softer plants such as pansy. All our moss baskets contain a silicon gel water reservoir to aid water retention. Wicker and cane baskets come in many shapes, designs and sizes and have become increasingly popular over recent years. These will require much less water as they have polythene liners that retain the water longer and are not affected by wind apart from that all the above applies.

Feeding.

Our winter baskets have incorporated within the compost a slow release fertiliser granule that releases fertiliser as the plants require for most of the season so **NO** additional feed is needed until the spring when the addition of a liquid feed such as **Tomrite or Miracle-Gro** will provide the boost needed for that spectacular spring display, NOTE if too strong this will cause root damage – so always follow the instructions on the package.

Regular Care.

At least once a week pick off any dead leaves or flowers making sure that you remove the seed pod (at the back of the flowers) so as to encourage the production of more flowers.

Pests and Disease.

Very few pests are active during the autumn and winter period but during a very mild spell and particularly in the spring, greenfly can be most destructive, so keep a sharp look out for any tell-tale signs such as deformed leaves on plants such as a viola and pansy and the specks of white that are the skin scale shed by the greenfly as it grows. Another sign is if the leaves become sticky, this is honeydew excreted by the greenfly, they reproduce given the right conditions very quickly and can destroy your pansies (particularly if the plants are allowed to become dry) in just a few days.

At the first signs of infestation spray with 'Bugclear' or 'Roseclear' (a good all round combined insecticide and fungicide). But regular spraying from the end of February as a precaution is the best way of ensuring your basket is pest free. The most common disease to affect your basket is mildew, this is a white mould (like bread mould) growing on the leaves, this is easily controlled with a fungicide spray such as 'Fungus fighter' or 'Roseclear'. Again regular spraying as a precaution throughout is recommended.

We are proud of our hanging baskets and want you to enjoy them to the full. If you need advice please contact us as soon as you have a concern. Remember the most common cause for a poor hanging basket is lack of water and food.

NB. Many of the plants and small shrubs can be transferred to container displays or your garden to give pleasure for years to come.