



Horticulture

# Plant a Moss and Wire Hanging Basket

## Perennials with Interesting Flowers

Home gardeners can choose from many species and varieties of perennials. Perennials differ in growth habit, size, leaf shape and other characteristics. Sometimes what sets one perennial apart is its interesting flower. Below is a list of perennials with unusual flowers.

For interesting late spring bloom, try **Columbine** (*Aquilegia* hybrids). The foliage is blue-green and softly hairy. The flower is composed of five petals and five sepals. The petals have backward projecting spurs. The sepals are shorter than the petals and may be the same color or a contrasting color. Colors for the sepals and petals include red, pink, yellow, blue, white, and purple. This plant grows 1 to 3 feet tall by 1 foot wide. It prefers full sun to partial shade and well-drained soil.

Old-fashioned **Bleeding Heart** (*Dicentra spectabilis*) has blue-green foliage. Flowers hang down from arching stems in late spring to early summer. The outer petals are rose-red with reflexed tips. The inner petals are white. Bleeding heart gets its name from the flowers that resemble pink broken hearts. This plant grows 2 to 3 feet with a graceful arching effect and a rounded growth habit. Bleeding heart performs best in well-drained, moist soils in partial shade.

**Sea Holly** (*Eryngium amethystinum*) has rigid, deeply cut, spiny, silvery foliage. The blue flowers appear in heads 1/2 to 3/4-inch in diameter. Long, spear-like bracts surround the heads. Blooms appear in mid-summer. Sea holly prefers full sun and sandy, dry areas. This perennial is tolerant of dry, sunny conditions and infertile soils. It can be used as a single specimen or in groups of three. Sea holly can also be used as a dried flower.



Sea Holly

To add bright colors to the perennial garden, incorporate specimen plantings of **Red-Hot Poker** (*Kniphofia* hybrids). The foliage is linear or sword-shaped, and gray-green with rough edges. Tubular flowers appear massed in the top 6 to 10 inches of the flower scape in the summer. Flower colors include red, yellow, coral/orange and combinations. The plant has a mature height of 2 to 4 feet and a width of 3 feet. Red-hot poker prefers a site with full sun and well-drained soil. Avoid planting this perennial in heavy, wet soils. The flowers can be used as cut flowers. Mulch heavily in winter.

**Beebalm** (*Monarda didyma*) has foliage that is aromatic and stems are square. Two to three inch, tubular flowers occur in dense heads from late-spring to

summer. Deadheading promotes new blooms. This plant grows to a height of 2 to 4 feet with a spread of 3 feet. Beebalm prefers full sun and good soil moisture. If beebalm is to be used in the perennial bed, divide plants every 2 to 3 years as it spreads rapidly. Beebalm can be used in naturalized areas and to attract bees and butterflies.

For late-summer bloom, try **Obedient Plant** (*Physostegia virginiana*). The spear-like, serrated leaves are green in the growing season. The stems are square. The flowers appear in spikes spaced in four vertical rows. Flower colors include rose, purple and white. The plant grows to a height of 2 to 4 feet and a width of 3 feet. The ideal site includes sun to partial shade and moist soils. Because of its height, staking may be required. The obedient plant spreads vigorously. The obedient plant requires little or no fertilizer. Heavy fertilization promotes rampant growth and increases the plant's invasive tendencies. Obedient plant is heat tolerant. The bloom may be used as a cut flower. Obedient plant gets its name from the ability of individual flowers to be twisted on the stem and then remain as arranged.

**Balloon Flower** (*Platycodon grandiflorus*) has serrated, dark green leaves, 1 to 3 inches long with short petioles. The saucer-shaped flowers appear in summer in lavender, blue, pink and white. Several double-flowering varieties are available. The plant has 2- to 3-foot upright growth. Balloon flower prefers sun to part shade and well-drained soil. The plant does well as a cut flower, in rock gardens and in perennial beds.

For the perennial border, try **Pincushion Flower** (*Scabiosa caucasica*). For three to four weeks in the summer, light blue or pink, flattened flower heads appear on long stems. Cultivars such as 'Butterfly Blue' and 'Pink Mist' can bloom for two months. The flower head consists of an outer ring of flattened petals and a tufted, cushion-like center. The shape of the flower gives pincushion flower its name. Plants are 1 1/2 to 2 feet tall and 1 1/2 feet wide with a rounded growth habit. Full sun and well-drained, fertile soil are necessary for optimum growth. To promote flowering, spent blooms should be removed. For the best effect, plant this perennial in the perennial bed in groups of 3 or more. In addition, the blooms can be used as cut flowers. (MJF)

You can create the same kind of moss-lined baskets at home that you see dripping with flowers in the home and garden magazines. It is easy and a fun project to try.

Start with a wire basket, available at many garden centers and through mail order. Do not go smaller than 14 inches in diameter. Line the bottom and sides of the basket with sheets of green moss, also available at many garden centers or mail order catalogs. You should put down a thick enough layer to cover the inside of the basket completely, but not so thick it takes up room the plants will need. Cut a round piece of plastic from a garbage bag. Place the plastic liner inside the basket, over the moss. This liner will help keep the plants from drying out too quickly. Pierce three or four drainage holes into the liner's bottom.

To get the lush, full effect of a basket dripping with flowers, you are going to plant the sides of the basket. Start with four-inch pots of trailing annuals, such as sweet alyssum, lobelia or verbena. Remove the plants from the pots gently. Wrap a plant in a small sheet of plastic, rolling it so it is shaped like a cone. The roots are at the wide end of the cone and leaves at the



PHOTO/Container Gardening Through the Year by Malcolm Hillier

point of the cone. Now, pierce a whole in the liner, in the side of the basket near the bottom. Working from inside the basket, carefully thread the pointed end of the cone through the hole you've pierced. Pull it through gently until the leafy part of the plant is on the outside of the basket. Then gently pull the plastic cone away from the plant. Continue this procedure all the way around the basket, planting either one or two rows of small trailing plants. If you are planting two rows, complete the first row and then add

enough soil to cover the roots. Once the sides of the basket are planted, you can plant the top. Use a mixture of upright plants, bushy plants and trailing plants to make a pleasing arrangement. Suggestions include verbena, impatiens, coleus, petunias, geraniums, fuchsias marigolds and pansies. Try some trailing foliage plants, such as vinca major, sweet potato vine, English ivy and a pretty silver-gray leafed plant called helichrysum. If you decided not to plant the sides of the basket, you can encourage trailing plants to spill over the edges by planting them at a slight angle, tipped toward the basket's edge.

Hang the basket in its desired location and water it thoroughly. When baskets are wet, they can be quite heavy, so be sure your hardware is firmly attached to a wall or rafter. Since the basket is over planted, you will have to fertilize and water it more frequently than usual.

Variations of the hanging basket include the half basket and the hayrack. Each of these has a flat side mounted on a wall. They can be lined with moss and planted in the same manner as a basket. (MJF)

## 2002 April/May Garden Calendar



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Plant cool season vegetable seeds outside	4 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	5	6
7	8 Power rake or aerify bluegrass	9	10 Apply fungicide to pines for tip blight	11 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	12 Apply preemergence	13
14	15 Fertilize bluegrass	16 Fertilize tall fescue	17 Apply fungicide to crabapples for cedar apple rust and scab	18 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	19	20 Spring Affair, State Fair Park 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
21	22	23 Control iris borer	24 Apply preventative fungicide to bluegrass	25 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	26 Arbor Day	27
28	29 Apply fungicide to pines for tip blight	30 Control euonymus scale	1 Check pines for sawfly	2 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	3	4
5	6 Control billbugs in bluegrass	7 Put out rain gauge	8 Apply fungicide to pines for needle blight	9 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	10 Average date of last frost	11
12	13 Plant wildflower seeds	14	15 Plant gladiolus bulbs	16 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	17 Plant cannas	18 Plant buffalograss
19	20	21	22 Plant warm season transplants	23 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	24	25
26	27	28	29 Fertilize zoysiagrass	30 Backyard Farmer 7 p.m. NETV	31	

Many of us need reminders. That is the purpose of this calendar. Check the calendar each month and follow the recommendations if they are necessary in your landscape situation. (MJF)