



Golden pods of dwarf French bean 'Berggold' tumble over an underplanting of non-hearting red lettuce (left), showing that hanging baskets are not only suitable for ornamental plants.

The violet-purple flowers of *Geranium Rozanne* ('Gerwat') (below) cascade over the basket, softening the edge. Easy to grow and vigorous, it is a reliable plant that creates an eye-catching, long-lasting display.

GAP / GRAHAM STRONGS



GAP / RICHARD BLOOM

# Animated suspension

Hanging baskets deserve more than just summer bedding. It is easy to create lively displays using striking, structural and even productive plants >>

Author: **Nicola Oakey**, Trainee Horticultural Journalist for *The Garden*

## Hanging baskets

### For the kitchen

Baskets are great for growing herbs and vegetables if space is at a premium, and are out of reach of slugs and snails.

**1** Tomatoes can thrive in baskets. Dwarf bush cultivars such as 'Cherry Falls' or blight-resistant 'Losetto' have compact habits and will not need training or their sideshoots pinching out. One plant is ideal for a 33cm (13in) basket.

**2** Use containers other than standard wire frames, as long as they have drainage holes and are not too heavy. A colander of herbs, including thyme and mint, beside the kitchen door makes harvesting fresh herbs easy.

**3** Planted alongside basil 'Adi', and curly and flat-leaved parsleys, the young leaves of chard Bright Lights (below), can be used in salads and add a dash of colour.



1



2

'...great for growing herbs and vegetables if space is at a premium...'



3

## Planting a hanging basket



### Lining and compost

Line the basket, if necessary, with a pre-cut liner or by cutting your own. Half fill with compost - peat-free multipurpose for seasonal displays or John Innes No. 2 for longer-lasting baskets. Adding water-retaining granules to the compost helps to hold on to some moisture.



### Planting

Cut slits in the liner if plants are being grown around the sides. Push plants through the holes and rest them on the soil before adding more compost. Make sure the basket is not overcrowded.



### Finishing touches

Add final plants and compost to the top of the basket. Water well and check regularly to make sure the basket does not dry out. Deadhead to encourage repeat blooms.



4



5

## Making a statement

Unusual plant choices that can create a bold display.

**4** Succulents add a more contemporary appearance and come in a range of leaf shapes, colours and sizes. Ideal for a sunny position, they require less watering than many hanging basket plants. Rosettes of *Echeveria* (right) can be used to create an impressive and unusual basket.

**5** Many compact cultivars of *Clematis* have been bred specifically for containers or baskets and make bold colourful displays, gradually covering the basket. Of these two examples, *Clematis* 'Sunset' has crimson flowers to 12cm (5in) across and performs best in sun or part shade; pale-flowered *C.* 'Silver Moon' also has large blooms and will tolerate a more shaded position. Both flower in early summer and often again later in the season.

**6** Trailing *Campanula poscharskyana* grows in full sun or part shade. Contained in a hanging basket it creates a long-lasting display, flowering from early summer to early autumn.





RHS / TIM SANDALL

7

## Tempting textures

The colours and textures of foliage are an exciting alternative to bedding and can have just as much impact.

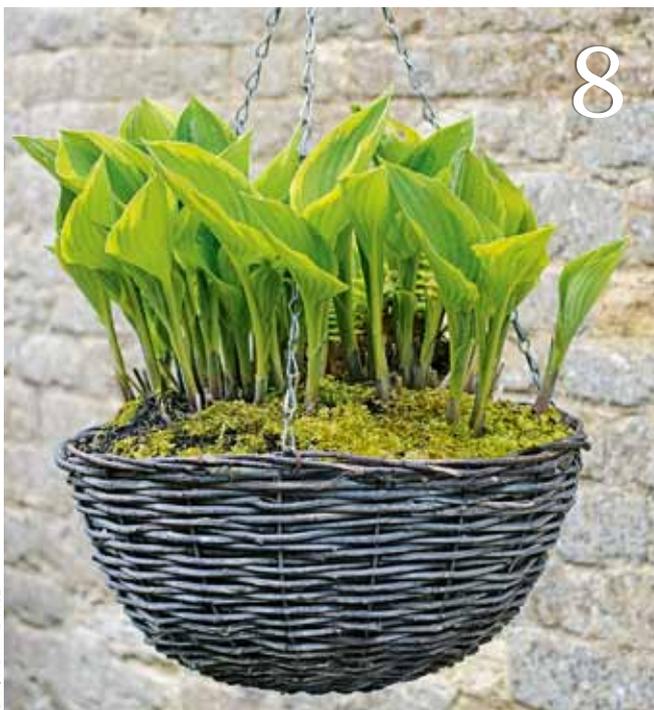
**7** The semi-evergreen blades of *Hakonechloa macra* create a soft cascading display that produces a delicate rustle if caught in a breeze. Earlier in the season, the same basket was a mass of colour and scent with spring-flowering grape hyacinth, *Muscari neglectum* (inset). Similar small bulbs are a great way to create successional displays and add early season interest to baskets, especially scented flowers in containers that can be hung and enjoyed beside a doorway.



MALCOLM ARTHUR

**8** The lush foliage of hostas is ideal for areas with less sun. Miniature cultivars from the mouse series, such as blue-leaved *Hosta* 'Blue Mouse Ears' or variegated 'Funny Mouse' have smaller leaves. Other compact cultivars, such as 'Ballerina', 'Nippers' and 'Kiwi Spearmint', would also suit a basket and can be kept year to year.

**9** Ferns are another alternative for full or partial shade, especially when hung under trees or against fences. *Dryopteris erythrosora* has copper-coloured fronds in spring maturing to green, and evergreen *Polypodium glycyrrhiza* 'Longicaudatum' has slender, lobed fronds. Ferns require a large hanging basket, which needs to be kept moist.



GAP / HOWARD RICE

8



GAP / JULIETTE WADE

9

[www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk) For more information on how to plant hanging baskets, search 'Hanging baskets' at: [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)