

## **CONTAINER GARDENS FOR SHADE**

Shady annual planters are well suited for display on covered patios and northern exposures where the light is bright but there is no direct sunlight. If you have shade trees that filter or allow for dappled light to reach your site, shady annuals will thrive. If your container suggests display in partial sun, this usually suggests morning sun or late evening light. Morning sun for most shady containers should not extend past 11:00am. The sunlight you most want to avoid is the heated midday sun. The cooler light of morning and late evening will prevent stress and promote growth and blooms.

Fertilize your planters regularly. Container plantings are generally much more closely spaced than garden beds. This creates a little competition for adequate nutrients for root growth. Frequent fertilizing will stimulate growth of roots and foliage. A fertilizer high in phosphorus will promote heavy blooms

Before watering your planter or hanging garden, feel the soil to check the moisture level. If your soil is still moist near the top of the planter, avoid watering. Watering should occur when your soil is moderately dry for most planters. What is moderately dry? Depending on the size of your container, this generally means that your top layer of soil is dry to the touch and the soil is only slightly moist 2 to 3 inches into the soil. Always feel the soil toward the center of the pot rather than near the edges. The soil will dry more quickly on the exterior of the planter and does not always accurately reflect the level of moisture around the roots. It is best to apply the water in the morning hours to avoid stress through the heat of the day. It is advised that on particularly warm days to check the container again later in the day. Wilting is very stressful to plants and can result in irregular growth and poor blooming. If the stress is repeated it can result in loss of the plants. Watering should be thorough. The water should run out of the bottom of the pot and the water should soon be emptied from the drainage trays.

Pots that sit in water promote water logging in the lower layers of soil, resulting in poor root development and sometimes disease.

If your pot can be lifted, you can tell if the soil is well wetted by the weight of the pot. This is an excellent way of determining the watering needs of hanging baskets. Avoid overhead watering, as this will shorten the life of the flowers.

To keep your pots shapely and attractive, remove spent blooms regularly. As blooms begin to deteriorate is the ideal time, rather than waiting for the bloom to actually die. Plants spend a great deal of energy producing and maintaining their blooms. The less energy they spend on an already dying flower the more they can spend producing new ones.

Plants should also be regularly pinched early in the season. Pinching is the removal of sections of growth. This encourages good basal branching and will produce a sturdy plant with excellent

shape. The more branches a plant produces, the more flowering stems it will produce. With proper pinching, leggy growth can be avoided. When pinching, remove the stem selected just above a leaf at the chosen height.

### **Special Tips**

**Begonias** --- Avoid overhead watering and always water in the morning hours. This will aid in the prevention of powdery mildew. Water allowed to remain on the foliage or evaporating from the soil in the evening hours can often result in this.

**Lobelia** --- Check moisture level frequently to avoid wilt. It's delicate foliage can easily become stressed with the heat is on.

**Pansies** --- Pinch regularly to prevent leggy growth and promote blooms. Place basket in a cool location to promote good growth and blooming.

**Impatiens** --- Regular pinching will insure good shape and blooming. Avoid over watering. This is marked by poor blooming and growth, withering green leaves and often brown or black stems.

**New Guinea Impatiens** --- Avoid over watering. Regularly pinch to encourage branching and blooming. Avoid over fertilizing.

**Fuchsias** --- Please pick up a care sheet specific to this plant, available at the customer service counter or from an annuals sales person.

**Ivy Geraniums** --- Avoid over watering. Frequently remove spent blooms. Pinch or prune as needed to promote even growth and branching.

As always, please feel free to contact your independent garden center with any questions you may have about growing your plants. We are happy to help you grow more beautiful plants.