

There's a special pleasure in growing plants overhead. They can enclose you in a canopy of flowers, giving you high color while not stealing precious outdoor living space.

Baskets can hang from anything high enough and strong enough to hold them. A wide roof overhang, an arbor, a pergola, a pretty gazebo, a tree limb--these are but a few of the possible supports for an overhead garden.

All you need is a handful of screw eyes or large cup hooks fastened to a beam or other solid wood, a few sturdy wire baskets, and some lightweight chain or rope to use for hanging. Sphagnum moss, lightweight perlite, or vermiculite mixed with a standard potting mix will make the pot burden lighter. Do not use soil only, because it is too heavy; the lighter the burden, the better.

If your climate is humid most of the time, plants will grow well in moss-lined baskets. Where humidity is low, be sure to spray the baskets each day. In extremely dry situations, grow the plants in plastic or clay pots with saucers that will retain more moisture.

Plants in hanging pots need more attention than those growing in the garden. However, this is not a problem if you have all your hanging baskets concentrated in one place within easy reach of the garden hose. Annuals in balls of sphagnum moss will dry out faster than annuals in clay or plastic pots, so they need to be watered more often. Metal extenders that fit the garden hose make watering a snap.

Use only compact bushy varieties of annuals in sphagnum moss balls if you wish to retain the ball-like appearance of the planter. Otherwise, trailers will do fine, as they do in traditional hanging baskets.