Trailing Petunias: Perfect for hanging baskets

With the proper site selection, container, fertilizer and water, trailing petunias are easy to grow and are relatively care free.

Greenhouse operations know that there is no comparison for trailing petunia hanging baskets. No other annual trails as vigorously, withstands heat, and is as ever blooming in every color combination imaginable. At the greenhouse I worked for in St. Louis County, every spring our best seller was hanging petunia baskets. One hybrid in particular, Proven Winners ‘Giant Pink’ Supertunia gained so much attention and interest from customers, it began a “marketing campaign” of hanging them at the street for display.

The trailing petunia is my favorite flowering annual perfect for many different garden locations. Blooming profusely during the heat of summer, they are perfect for a hot sunny patio or empty garden bed, where they will quickly form a low mat of flowers, blooming from late spring till the first frost of autumn.

**Hanging Baskets:**

Trailing petunias are vigorous growers both in foliage and roots. Plan ahead for next season to purchase a pot which is large enough to support their growth throughout the summer. A larger, deeper pot will allow the plants to be less stressed during the heat of summer; requiring less frequent watering. Use a soilless
potting mix that is lightweight and porous, one that has a base of peat moss, perlite, and possibly vermiculite and/or fine pieces of wood bark. Place the well-drained container in a full sun (at least 6 hours of sunlight) location.

Since plant containers need more applications of nutrients through the growing season than their garden grown counterparts, due to nutrients leaching of the soil every time a container is watered, two types of fertilizers are recommended for use in containers. The first, a slow release fertilizer such as Osmocote should be added to the soil at planting. After the plants are established, a weekly application of a water soluble fertilizer designed for annual flowering plants is recommended to keep the plants vigorous and ever blooming throughout the summer.

When purchasing trailing petunias, one should look for small compact plants which are not flowering. Plants which are just about to flower and are not overgrown for their containers have a better rate of transplanting success. Next season just like tomatoes, petunias should be planted outdoors after the last chance of frost. There are many unique and colorful varieties of trailing petunias which can grow as much as three feet in a season.

Typically the trailing type petunias are lower growing than their mounding relatives. After planting, if the petunias show signs of long, “leggy,” weak growth, pinch the plants back a few inches to encourage branching.

I am personally partial to Proven Winners Supertunias, varieties such as purple streaked ‘Bordeaux,’ or the rose pink streaked ‘Raspberry Blast’ are excellent for containers. But there are other excellent trailing type petunias such as those hybrids under the series name ‘Wave.’

To prevent disease, allow the soil to dry to the touch between watering and limit getting the foliage and blooms wet with water. Try picking the pot up after it is watered, and compare the weight to when it is dry. After a couple tries, it will get easy to know when to water the containers, by feeling the weight, without needing to touch the soil.

Plan ahead for next season to incorporate petunias into your home garden landscape. With all the different colors of trailing petunias available today, there is a one for any landscape or container garden.

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2 [http://www.extension.iastate.edu/publications/rg301.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/publications/rg301.pdf)
3 [http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/dg1120.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/horticulture/dg1120.html)
4 [http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/flowers/hgic1171.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/flowers/hgic1171.html)