

# A Victoria Tradition

Since 1937, the official beginning of summer is celebrated every June in the City of Victoria by the placement of over 1,600 flower baskets on lampposts. Visitors come from all over the world to marvel at these creations, which are now known as one of the City's most recognizable trademarks.



When Victoria's baskets were first introduced, the practice of hanging flower baskets in public areas was limited to a few European cities. Because many of the plants used in Europe would not have performed well in Victoria's climate, a variety of species and colours

were tried in the baskets in the early years. Plants were ultimately chosen for their vigour, period of bloom, maintenance requirements and resistance to disease and insects.

The plant selection currently used in Victoria's hanging baskets has varied only slightly since the 1960's. Trials to improve the assortment with new plants and varieties continue today.

# In a Nutshell

## Did You Know?

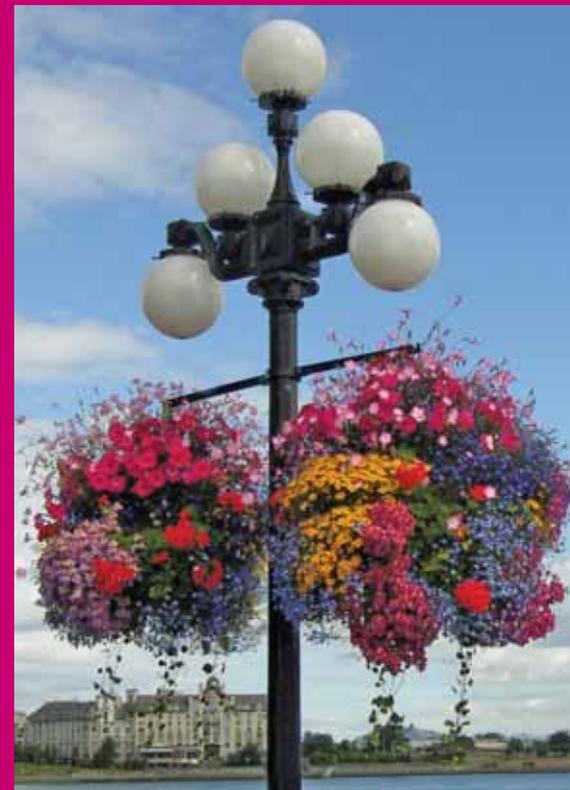
- Parks staff water hanging baskets from 11 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. every night in the summer.
- When fully grown, the baskets can weigh over 20 kilograms (approximately 45 pounds).
- Baskets in exposed areas are watered 6–7 times per week.
- Baskets in sheltered areas are watered 4–5 times per week, depending on the weather.
- Fertilizer is added to the soil mix when baskets are constructed and soluble fertilizer is used in each watering.
- Over 1,600 flower baskets are hung in downtown Victoria every June.



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# Victoria's Hanging Baskets



# From Seeds to Blooms

Plants for the City of Victoria's hanging baskets are grown in Beacon Hill Nursery, located in the southeast corner of Beacon Hill Park. In the first week of May, a crew of six gardeners begins constructing over 1,600 hanging baskets, a process that takes approximately four weeks.

Once the baskets are made, they remain in greenhouses for one week before being moved outside to acclimatize to the conditions they will encounter on the streets.

During the second week of June, the baskets are placed on the City's signature lampposts.

Parks staff water the hanging baskets every night throughout the summer, from 11 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. Trucks transport water in 2,250 litre tanks, and handheld wands are used to water the flowers. Parks staff give each basket 6.5 litres of water containing a trace amount of fertilizer. Baskets in exposed areas are watered 6–7 times per week, whereas baskets in sheltered locations are watered 4–5 times per week, depending on the weather. In addition, baskets are sampled weekly for moisture content, pH and soluble salt levels and appropriate corrective measures are taken, if required.





## How to Make a Victorian Hanging Basket



**1** A Victorian hanging basket starts with two extraordinary bits of hardware: a collar for the top and a pan for the bottom, both serving as water reservoirs.

**2** Line the basket to half its depth with an inch layer of sphagnum moss. Fill to the top of the moss with hanging basket soil. Pierce three equally spaced holes through the moss and push the roots of the Lamium through, into the soil. In the same way, plant a yellow Tagetes in the spaces between.



**3** Add a little more soil to cover and place in the next layer of plants, roots on top of the soil, with the stems and leaves protruding through the moss. Put the Geraniums over the Tagetes and then the Schizanthus, golden Tagetes and light blue Lobelia, repeating the order three times around the basket.

**4** Complete the moss liner, insert the collar and add soil nearly to the top. Plant the Viscaria in the middle of the top and surround it with alternating Petunias and dark blue Lobelia, making sure the dark Lobelias aren't planted over the light ones.



**5** Water the new basket thoroughly and protect it from wind and hot sun for at least one week.

**6** After hanging the basket, attach the pan to the bottom and fill the top and the pan with a quarter-strength fertilizer solution 4-6 times per week.

Begin to water and fertilize the baskets and assess the performance of plants in different areas to determine the appropriate location of baskets for next year.

Change to a high phosphate fertilizer and conduct plant trials to test new varieties of plants for the next season.

Clean and store basket hardware.

Begin to propagate Geranium cuttings.

Propagate seedlings and Geraniums.

Blend soil, peat, and perlite mixture for baskets.

Hang flower baskets.

## The 12 Month Basket Cycle

