

Planting Demos For Instant Container Gardens

By Pamela Crawford

Planting Demo #1: 1 - 2 - 3 arrangement in a 14" single-layer basket



Materials: This basket requires 16 side and edge plants and 1 centerpiece. Five rust coleus, 6 creeping Jenny, and 5 red-and-yellow coleus will form the sides and edges. They are all planted in 4-inch pots. The grass (in a 1-gallon pot) is for the centerpiece.

Gather these together with potting mix, fertilizer (if not included in your potting mix), a bucket of water, hose, and small shovel.

Spray the container with water to soften the coco fiber.



Step 1: Add potting mix up to the bottom of the first hole. I prefer dry mix, while others prefer it wet. Using wet potting mix minimizes its loss through the holes while you are planting. Since this loss is minimal, I use the dry mix because it weighs less, making it easier to move the container after planting.



Step 2: Remove the first side plant from the pot. Just turn the pot upside down and pull the pot off.



Step 3: Dip the roots in water, and keep them submerged until they are completely saturated. If you see bubbles in the water, they are not yet saturated. Remove the plant and squeeze the root ball 3 to 6 times - very firmly - until most of the water has dripped out.



Step 4: The root ball should be firm, not falling apart. If it still feels loose, squeeze it some more, until it is quite firm. (If some small pieces break off, that is ok - these are tough plants! I have had some root balls fall completely apart. I thought they would die, but planted them anyway, and they did just fine!)



Step 5: Push the root ball through the first hole, from the outside in. Don't worry if some potting mix falls off the root ball. That is normal.



Step 6: Be sure that the plant is on the outside of the container and the roots are on the inside. Adjust the flap so that it fits in between the roots and the plant.



Step 7: You will see some open space between the plant and the top of the hole. That is normal. Very little potting mix escapes from this opening because the roots grow together to form a solid mass quickly.



Step 8: Alternate the three small plants around the sides. Fertilize.*

(After I finish each layer, I wash off the table and the plants to remove any unwanted dirt. Be gentle with the plants!)



Step 9: After planting the sides, remove the growing pot from the centerpiece and put it in the middle of the new container. Measure with your fingers to see how much potting mix you need to bring the top of the centerpiece to about 1/2" above the top edge of the container.



Step 10: Take the centerpiece out and add the necessary potting mix.

Planting time: *About 15 to 20 minutes for beginners*



Step 11: Place the centerpiece in the middle of the pot, on top of the potting mix you just added. Add more potting mix around the centerpiece to bring the potting mix up to about 2" below the rim of the pot.



Step 12: After soaking the first edge plant in water and squeezing it, place it over a different plant - at an angle so that it leans slightly over the edge. You don't need to squeeze the plant as much for the edge as you did for the sides. A larger root ball fits well here. Continue alternating plants until the edge is planted.



Step 13: Look between the root balls for any empty spots.



Step 14: Add potting mix between the root balls, as well as on any exposed roots and pat it down slightly. Don't pile the potting mix up around the stems!

Wash the plants off very softly with the hose to remove any dirt from the leaves and stems.



Step 15: Fertilize.*



Step 16: Move your finished container to its chosen spot. Do not water it for at least 3 days because the roots are already soaked. After the first watering, add more potting mix with your fingers to fill in any spaces that appear between the plants.

*Note: You don't need to add any fertilizer if your potting mix already has it mixed in.

Planting Demo #2: 16" double-layer basket



Materials: This basket requires 30 side and edge plants and 3 centerpiece plants. 10 purple petunias, 10 red and orange coleus, and 10 wax begonias will form the sides and edges. The petunias** and coleus are in 4-inch pots, while the begonias are in an 18-pack. The 3 centerpiece plants, Persian shield, are in 1-gallon pots.

Gather these together with potting mix, fertilizer (if not included in your potting mix), a bucket of water, hose, and small shovel. Scissors can also come in handy.



Step 1: Spray the container with water to soften the coco fiber.



Step 2: Add potting mix up to the bottom of the first hole. I prefer dry mix, while others prefer it wet. Using wet potting mix minimizes its loss through the holes while you are planting. Since this loss is minimal, I use the dry mix because it weighs less, making it easier to move the container after planting.



Step 3: Remove the first side plant from the pot. Just turn the pot upside down and pull the pot off.



Step 4: Dip the roots in water, and keep them submerged until they are completely saturated. If you see bubbles in the water, they are not yet saturated. Remove the plant and squeeze the root ball 3 to 6 times - very firmly - until most of the water has dripped out.



Step 5: The root ball should be firm, not falling apart. If it still feels loose, squeeze it some more, until it is quite firm. (If some small pieces break off, that is ok - these are tough plants! I have had some root balls fall completely apart. I thought they would die, but planted them anyway, and they did fine!)



Step 6: Push the root ball through the first hole, from the outside in. Don't worry if some potting mix falls off the root ball. That is normal.



Step 7: Be sure that the plant is on the outside of the container and the roots are on the inside. Adjust the flap so that it fits in between the roots and the plant.



Step 8: You will see some open space between the plant and the top of the hole. That is normal. Very little potting mix escapes from this opening because the roots grow together quickly, forming a solid mass.



Step 9: Alternate the petunias and coleus around the bottom layer on the side. Fertilize* when you are done.

Wash the bottom layer of plants gently with water.



Step 10: Add potting mix up to the bottom of the next layer of holes.

Planting time: *About 20 to 30 minutes for beginners*



Step 11: Plant the second layer in the same, alternating arrangement you used on the first layer. Be sure to plant different plants above each other. Fertilize when you are done.*



Step 12: This photo shows the inside of the pot after planting the second layer. Patting the roots down slightly positions the plants upward on the outside of the container.



Step 13: Remove the growing pot from the centerpieces and put them in the middle of the new container. Measure with your fingers to see how much potting mix you need to add or remove to bring the top of the centerpiece to about 1/2" above the top edge. Adjust the level of the potting mix.



Step 14: To prepare to plant the edge layer, add potting mix around the centerpiece until it is about 2" below the rim of the container.



Step 15: After soaking the first edge plant in water and squeezing it, place it over a different type of plant. Angle it so that it leans slightly over the edge. You don't need to squeeze the plant as much for the edge as you did for the sides. A larger root ball fits well here. Continue alternating plants until the edge is planted.



Step 16: Look between the root balls for any empty spots.



Step 17: Add potting mix between the root balls, as well as on any exposed roots and pat it down slightly. Don't pile the potting mix up around the stems!



Step 18: Fertilize* the top.

Wash the plants off very softly with the hose to remove any dirt from the leaves and stems.



Step 19: Move your finished container to its chosen spot. Do not water it for at least 3 days because the roots are already soaked. After the first watering, add more potting mix with your fingers to fill in any spaces that appear between the plants.

*You don't need to add any fertilizer if your potting mix already has it mixed in.

**Many petunias did not like to be side planted. We had good luck with Wave petunias (Ball Seed), as well as Supertunias (Proven Winners).