

# Hanging Baskets Problems

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Hanging baskets are an important part of most greenhouses' crop mix; they provide a lot of "WOW" factor for customers when they arrive, they generally have a decent price point, and they are a "set it and forget it" crop. "Set it and forget it" you say...sounds to good to be true, right? Well, like most things that sound too good to be true, it is too good to be true. It is easy to fall

into this; we plan ahead and pot up our baskets early in the season and when we need the bench space we hang them in the air. Thus letting the cruise control take over.

While visiting growers over the last couple of weeks I've found supporting evidence of why this is too good to be true. In this issue of e-GRO Alert we will take a look at some common ways that hanging

baskets can cause us problems.

Hanging baskets are typically hung just before or just as the foliage is spilling over the edge of the basket. At this stage it can be easy over-estimate the number of baskets that can fill a space, Figure 1. In this example you see pots and baskets hung in the air to make room on the benches. What the grower didn't properly



Figure 1. Hanging basket density might look fine when they are first hung, but be space for finished plant size



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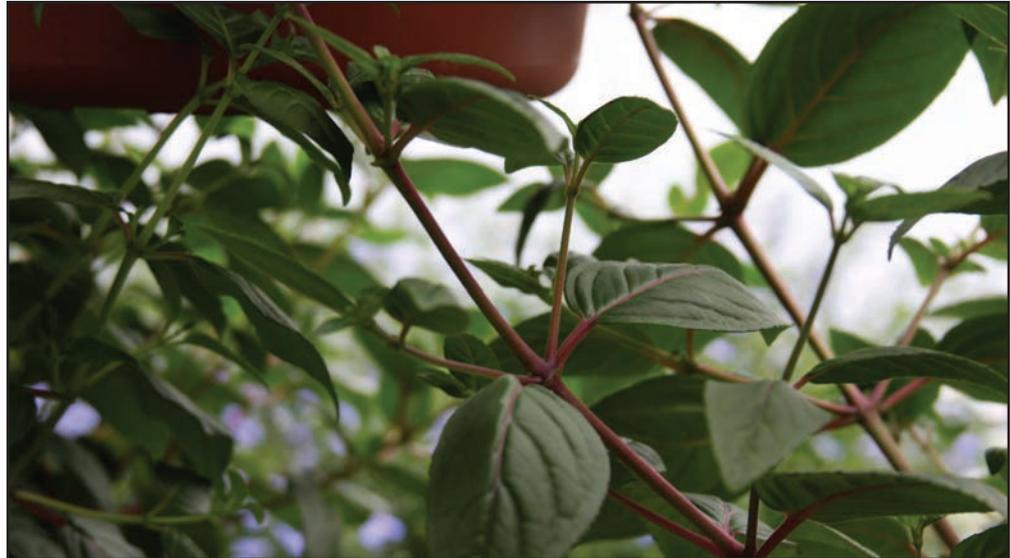


Figure 2. Tight spacing of baskets will reduce light and cause stretch (even on your baskets).

anticipate is how much the plants were going to spread, or the amount of light they were going to reduce. Figure 2 shows how much these fuchsia baskets stretch due to the low light levels, even at the basket level in the greenhouse; just imagine how little light was making it to the benches. You can see how much light baskets can exclude; Figure 3 is a great example of how more baskets isn't always better. The basket spacing in Figure 4 ideal.

Scouting can be difficult with baskets due to their position relative to our eye level, especially in taller houses. Giving our crops a good once over while we are watering or just walking down benches is second nature. But when was the last time you system-

atically scouted your crops in baskets?

A grower was surprised to find a healthy population of spider mites in

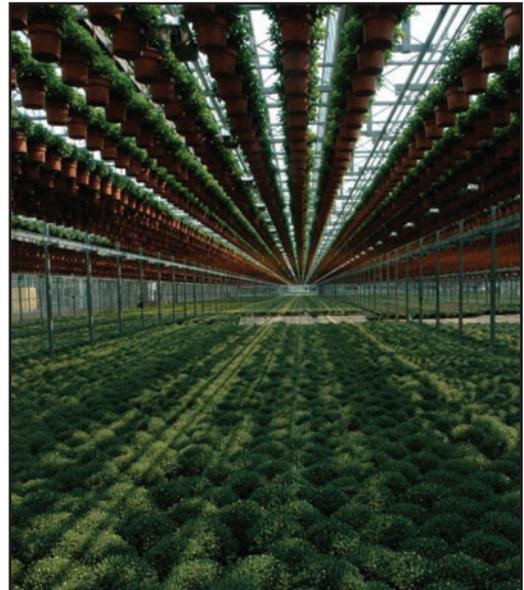


Figure 3. High density basket spacing will drastically reduce light to the crop below

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Figure 4. Proper spacing of baskets above crops on benches

their New Guinea Impatiens baskets Figure 5. Not only was there substantial damage to the crop, but also it is very difficult to spray hanging baskets with good coverage. Regular scouting of your baskets will allow

you to catch infestations like this before it gets out of hand and when it is more easily treated.

In the northern part of the country there are still lots of hanging baskets in greenhouses. Make

sure that you didn't "set it and forget it" when it comes to your crop of hanging baskets. Proper care and scouting may take a little more effort than other crops but the payoff will be worth it. ❖

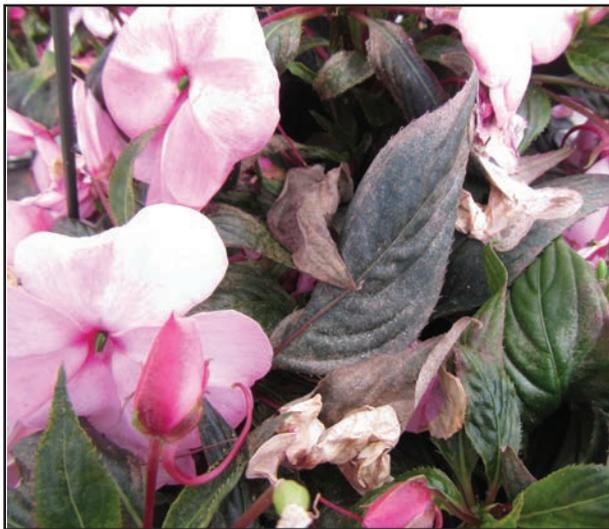


Figure 5. Spider mite damage - Hanging baskets require extra effort to scout making it easy to miss pests and diseases present.