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Upgrade a hanging basket with a capillary wick irrigation system

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Who doesn't love a hanging basket of flowers? But keeping them green and flowering can be a challenge as they sit up in sun and wind.

Adding wicks to a hanging basket with an integral reservoir can make it easier to maintain your flowery finery.

Start by obtaining the basic materials - a hanging basket with integrated reservoir and wick material. I like the Eezy-Gro made in Canada.

I prefer 1/2" solid braid nylon rope for wicks but polyester and other fiber tapes and ropes will also work. Wash with detergent or soap before use.

Test wick material by hanging it into a bottle or pot with water colored with a bit of food coloring. The water should rise rapidly up the wick. Try some wick races!

Polypropylene and many mixed fiber ropes will not wick!



Wick races



EEZY-Gro plant containers with wick and reservoir

www.apollo-plastics.com

pots, containers, or fence railing boxes



Cut holes in the slotted reservoir cover large enough for your wick material. This container already has a small flat wick -- but adding more wicking really improves performance.



Cut wick material to length and place 3-4 inches of each end into the reservoir under the slotted cover



Hold the wicks up as you add potting mix so that they will be at the level of the roots of the flowers you are planting.



For this basket I used marigolds and lobelias. After planting water with a watering can or nozzle wetting the soil and filling the reservoir.

Periodically check the reservoir and refill. This can be done by watering from above or through the fill/drain hole. Excess water will drain off and this minimizes the risk of over-watering.

These flowers are still going strong after 5 months! despite drying winds, heat and a few trips when we were gone for a week or more.

For more information on wicks and super efficient irrigation for gardens and landscaping look for my book ***Gardening with Less Water***, December 2015. Storey Press.

Review other free resources under GWLW at:

http://works.bepress.com/david_a_bainbridge

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Suppliers

EEZY-GRO Hanging container -- Gardener's Supply <http://www.gardeners.com>

Polyester rope – West Marine and others.

Solid braid nylon rope – available from many sources but make sure it is pure nylon or polyester not a nylon/polypropylene blend. Test before using.

Gulf Rope Pistachio wicking rope <http://gulfrope.com/agriculturehorticulture.html>

Other wick container options

Wickinator www.flowerwindowboxes.com/Self-Watering-Window-Box.html

Groasis Waterboxx www.groasis.com

For more on the history of using wicks for field planting see my book ***A Guide for Desert and Dryland Restoration*** (2007).