

Build petunia tree

By John Hughes
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The creative use of annuals can turn your front yard into a real traffic stopper. Several people across the province have built a Petunia Tree, to show a mass of blooms over the entire growing season.

To construct the 'tree' you will need the following materials — one 12-foot length of 2-inch metal pipe; seven pieces of 1/2-inch metal pipe, 21 inches long; five pieces of 1/2-inch metal pipe, 12 1/2 inches long; and three pieces of 1/2-inch metal pipe, 7 3/4 inches long. To make the top holder, you will need 1/2-inch by 1/8-inch metal. The 14 hoop holders, at the end of the branches, are made from 1/2-inch metal. Lastly, you will need 16 pots, 12 inches in diameter. Plant six cascading petunia plants in each pot, for a total 96 plants.

To assemble your Petunia Tree, weld the bracket pipes onto the main support post. Stagger each level of pipes, so the posts will not be located directly above the lower level. Weld hoops of 1/2-inch metal securely to the brackets to bear the weight of the planted pots.

The first level of seven brackets should be 35 inches above the ground. The second and third levels should be 16 inches apart. The top stub should be 5 inches below the top holder.

You will have to buy the large 12-inch pots from a local garden centre greenhouse early enough to ensure good growth when you plant up the "tree". Like all plants grown outdoors in containers, the limited volume of soil requires more frequent water and fertilizer than in ground beds.

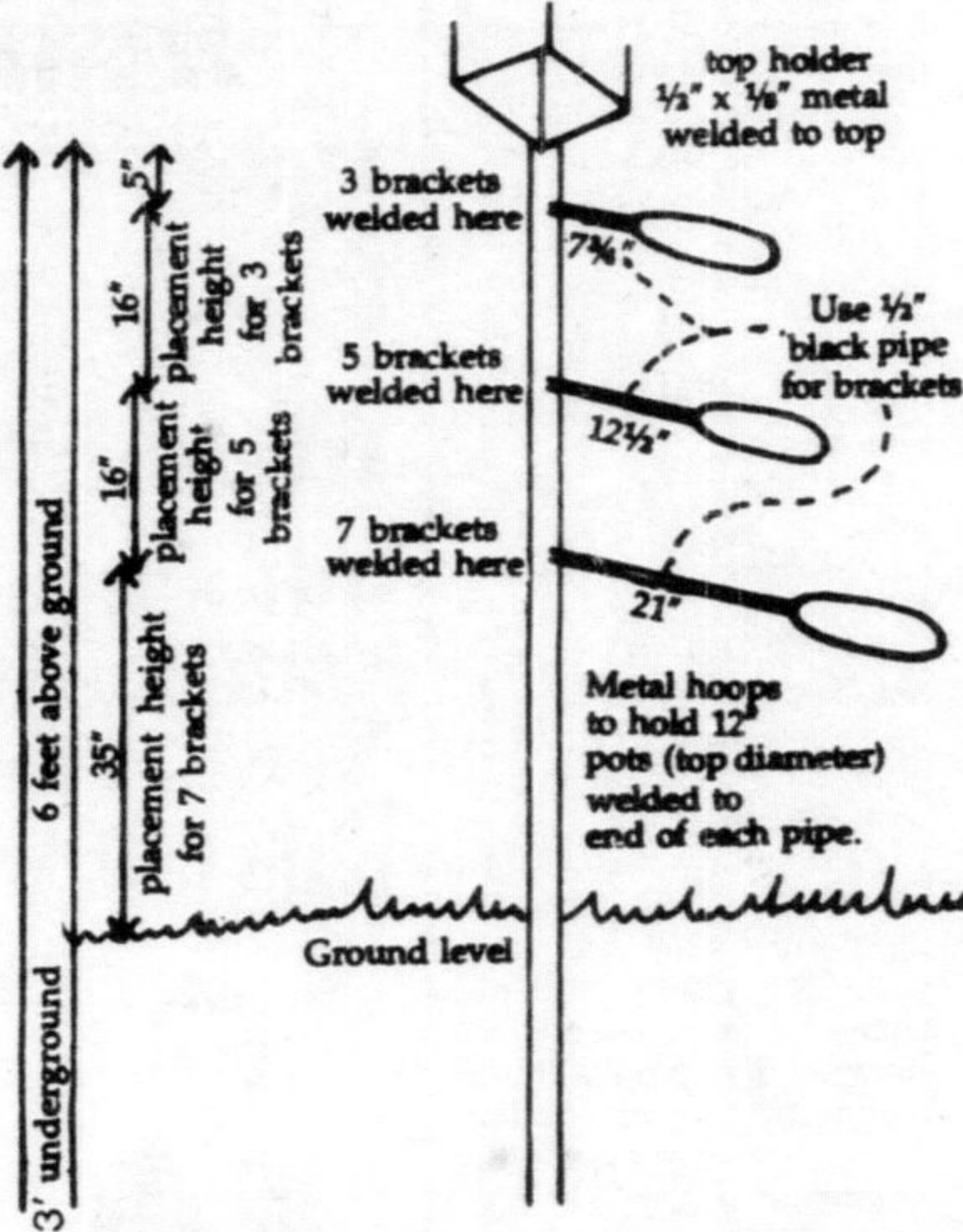
The cascading variety of petunias is recommended because of their training habit. Pinching will encourage additional

SOIL TEST

How fertile is your garden soil? Garden soil samples can be analysed at the University of Guelph. Visit local offices of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food for details.

side shoot development to make a fuller plant. Petunias are real sun lovers, so be sure to pick

a sunny location. This design can be scaled down if the tree is too large for your yard.



Gladiolus: The garden showpiece

By Burke McNeill
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Gladiolus, if you are as fond of them as I am, are one of the showiest and most versatile flowers that can be grown in the home garden. Displayed either as a single spike or in a basket, they make a wonderful show when in bloom. They will perform well in almost any soil and because they are treated as an annual, they can be grown successfully in almost any climate.

While glads are not too particular as to soil type, they will not perform well in poorly drained locations. Excess moisture around the corms either stunts their growth or rots them out completely. So be sure the site is well drained. Glads also prefer a soil that is high in organic matter. This can easily be provided by the addition of manure, compost or peat moss to the soil before planting.

Gladiolus are best planted in rows in the garden where they can be tended for insect and disease control and staked as needed. Reserve a space in the vegetable garden where they will be much easier to work with. Some gardeners are tempted to grow

them in the flower or shrub border.



A WELL-DESIGNED ROCK GARDEN blends into the surroundings, so it looks like a natural part of the landscape. (Photo by Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food).

Herb gardens easy to grow

By Bob Hamersma
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As food prices increase, the need to economize our meals and seasonings becomes more apparent. This need can be met partially by establishing a vegetable or herb garden in your backyard.

Vegetable gardening has become tremendously popular in recent years, but herb gardening has lagged behind. This may be due to the misconception that these 'exotic' seasoning plants are more difficult to grow. This is unfortunate because growing herbs, as a rule, requires no more skill or special conditions than most vegetables.

Generally speaking, herbs grow best in full sunlight, in a protected location, on well-drained, sandy-loam soil, away from competing plants. The plot need not be large — only a few plants are needed for most home requirements. High

fertility is not necessary. In fact, most herbs produce more of the essential oils needed for flavor and fragrance, on less fertile soils. If you wish to fertilize, apply an organic compost, such as well-rotted manure, to the soil at planting time.

Also add a superphosphate fertilizer, at a rate of 0.5 kg per 10m(2), mixing it thoroughly into the top 15 cm. of soil.

Once the herb garden is growing, it requires only minimum care. The reason many herb gardens are not as successful as they might be, may be because they have been treated too well. Once planted, herbs require no fertilizer, very little water, no spraying, and only an occasional weeding. To overwinter hardy perennial herbs, mulch with straw to protect the roots. Some tender perennials, such as Rosemary, will not survive the winter outside. These plants should be dug up in the fall, potted, and grown inside in a sunny window for the winter.

The leaves and seeds of most herbs contain the flavoring oils. Examples of 'leaf' herbs include mint, parsley, savory, marjoram, basil, thyme and rosemary. 'Seed' herbs include anise, dill, caraway, coriander, and fennel. Harvest leafy herbs just before, or as the flower buds open. Collect seed herbs when the seeds are just ripe.

After harvesting, herbs should be properly dried, to concentrate and preserve the flavoring oils.

Seeds can be dried in almost any warm, dry place. Dry the leaves by hanging bunches of the cut stalks, upside down, in a warm, dry, well-ventilated, preferably dark room. When leaves are dry and crisp, they can be finely ground through a wire mesh,

packed in dark glass containers or air-tight tin cans, and stored in a dry place, away from direct light.

Growing your own herbs is a very satisfying way of reducing food costs, and adding extra flavor to your meals.

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