



FUCHSIAS

The first fuchsia was discovered by Father Charles Plumier (1646–1704) in the mountains of Santa Domingo. He named the plant *Fuchsia triphylla flore coccineo* in honor of the famous sixteenth-century German herbalist, Leonhart Fuchs. Father Plumier was a fine naturalist who dabbled in botany. The first noted reference to fuchsia was published in Father Plumier's work, *Nova Plantarum Americanarum Genera* in 1703. Other species were subsequently discovered in Central America, South America and New Zealand.

Fuchsias come in all colors except true yellow and true blue. American growers favor doubles, which are usually grown in baskets. At present, there are around 7,000 varieties in 97 species. Some fuchsias are classified as uprights while others are trailers. Many uprights can be trained to become trailers. Growth is often referred to as "stiff" or "lax." Fuchsia flowers can be solid colors but most often are a combination. Most blossoms are pendulous, with the pistil and stamens hanging down. The four sepals flare back and are usually red, white, or pink. The skirt-like corolla beneath is made up of petals that may range in color from a regal purple and magnificent red to subtle lavender, mauve, rose or salmon. Flowers may be single (4 petals), semi-double (5-7 petals), or double (many layers of petals). The single or semi-double cultivars produce compact plants with abundant blooms and require less space to grow. On the other hand, the large-flowered doubles display fringed, ruffled, serrated petals as well as showy pistils and stamens. Leaves are usually opposite, bronze-pointed ovals, 2-5" in length and may be variegated.

Fuchsias bloom from June until the first frost in late September or early October. Although fuchsias have no fragrance, their bright colors and sweet nectar are attractive to hummingbirds and bees.

Fuchsias are a member of the family *Onagraceae* and are hardy only to Zone 10. They must be treated like an annual in cold climates. However, winter hardy fuchsias do exist and with proper care and protection may be left in the ground.

Fuchsias are easy to grow, but require attention. A good potting soil with vermiculite or perlite added is essential for good drainage. Fuchsias don't like heavy soil because it retains moisture. Fuchsias need watering often, at least once a day. In hot weather watering twice or more a day may be necessary. Any container used must allow for excess water to drain out.

SUMMER CARE

A 20-20-20 fertilizer is most commonly used. Fuchsias prefer to be fed once a week on the same day. Many growers use a slow-release fertilizer that remains effective for two to four months.

In the Inland Northwest, where the humidity is low and the summers and winds are hot, fuchsias should be located on the east or north side of your house and protected from hot winds. Fuchsias like morning sun and shade from hot afternoon rays. They prefer humidity of 55% or above. Growing fuchsias in a lath house, shade house or under trees that provide a high canopy of foliage is often successful. Night temperatures must drop to at least 65 degrees for fuchsias to set buds. Some cultivars are more heat and sun tolerant; all should be kept moist but not soggy.

Remove seedpods when the flowers have faded or flowering will end prematurely and the plant will concentrate its energy on producing seed instead of more flowers.

WINTER CARE

Fuchsias are capable of blooming all year around. However, plants will be more vigorous and bloom will be fuller if given a period of dormancy. Their natural resting period is about one month. In the Inland Northwest fuchsias should be put into total dormancy after the first light frost and not brought out of dormancy until the chance of frost over.

Cut plants back severely and strip away all foliage. Hard pruning will encourage branching and flowering since fuchsias flower on new growth. Place in an area that is free from frost, such as an insulated garage, basement or crawlspace. Water **sparingly** every three to four weeks.

Important Note: Plants overwintered without the aid of supplemental light and at night temperatures above 50 degrees do not come into bloom until late July or August.

PROPAGATION

Fuchsias are among the easiest plants to propagate asexually, as cuttings root quite quickly. Take a cutting with a razor blade or sharp knife at least ¼ inch, diagonally, from the bottom of a new stem with at least two sets of leaves. Pinch out the set of leaves at the tip and carefully remove the bottom set of leaves just above the cut. Dip the cut end in a rooting hormone. Place the cutting in a moistened rooting medium such as perlite or vermiculite. You may cover the cuttings with a ventilated plastic bag to help retain moisture. In 3 to 4 weeks or less, the cuttings should be rooted and ready for potting.

Plant in a 2-inch pot filled with a rooting or potting medium. Commercial African violet mixes may be used if good drainage is provided. Or, you can mix 1 part mica-peat with 2 parts standard potting mix. You can also mix your own blend of 3 parts loam soil, 1 part coarse sand and 1 part leaf mold. Others use 1 bag compost to 1 bag well-rotted manure to a 5-gallon bucket of perlite, mixed well.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Aphids, root weevils, fuchsia gall mites, mealybugs, red spider mites, scale, thrips and whitefly can become pests. Botrytis and fuchsia rust, leaf drop and bud drop are occasional problems associated with disease.

Products to control these pests and diseases can be obtained at most garden stores. Read and follow all product labels.

For more information contact:

NORTHWEST FUCHSIA SOCIETY
P.O. Box 33071
Seattle, Washington 98133-0071

AMERICAN FUCHSIA SOCIETY
County Fair Building
9th Avenue & Lincoln
San Francisco, CA 94122