

Growing Fuchsias

For years the delicate fuchsia has been a garden favorite—some varieties date back for better than a century. In fact, many people think of the fuchsia as “My Grandmother’s Flower” as they clearly remember them in her garden.

There are hundreds of varieties of fuchsias in existence today, and they are so versatile that almost everyone can include them in their landscaping plans.

All Shapes and Sizes

Fuchsias grow in many sizes, shapes, forms, colors and habits. The blooms range from miniature to very large, and from single to fully double. Most of us think only of the bush and basket when planting fuchsias, but they can be treated and used as espaliers, pyramids, trees, fans and pillars. At the present time, trailing fuchsias in hanging baskets have captured the hearts of fuchsia fanciers.

Color Range

The colors and hues found in fuchsias are wide and diverse, including shades of pink, blue, red, purple, rose, magenta, lavender, orange and white. While some are a single color, others are of two and three distinct colors, making for some interesting combinations.

A favorite fuchsia for many years has been ‘Swingtime’—a very good, sturdy, heavy blooming, non-temperamental variety with white corolla and red sepals. It is usually available as a hanging basket or trained into a small tree called a “Standard”.

Where to Grow

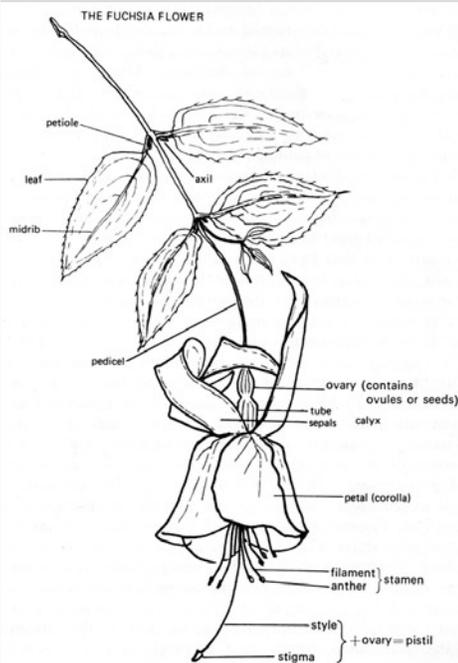
While fuchsias are essentially a shade flower, many varieties can stand considerable heat and sun—usually the red, single varieties are best for this purpose. The lighter shades and double blossoms tend to require more shade or filtered sun.

Feeding

As the weather warms, fuchsias should be fertilized every week to ten days, with **MasterNursery™ Water Soluble Acid Plant Food**, **MasterNursery™ Liquid Gold Fertilizer** or **Fish Emulsion**. Caution—be sure that plants have been thoroughly watered the day (or several hours) before applying the plant food and then make certain that the plants are not allowed to dry out for the next several days, or “fertilizer burn” can result.

Remove Spent Blooms and Fruit

This is an important function and your attention here will pay huge dividends. Like most other plants, the prime reason for flowering is to provide seeds to perpetuate the species. Once the plant has developed a sufficient quantity of seed, the blooming will stop. It is therefore a necessity that these developing seed pods (fruit) be removed to have your plant continue blooming. Also, these pods ripen into dark purple fruit which can stain patios, decks and walkways.



*“My
Grandmother’s
Flower”*

Protect From Insects and Diseases

Like anything really lovely in the garden, fuchsias have a pest or two. Aphids, White Fly, Strawberry Root Weevil and Red Spider Mite are a few that can be a problem, but since 1981 the “Fuchsia Gall Mite”, aka Brazilian fuchsia mite, has been the biggest source of concern among fuchsia lovers. This pest causes the leaves and flowers to become swollen and distorted—much like “peach leaf curl.” Ortho Systemic Insect Killer and GardenTech Sevin have both proved to be effective controls for most pests, including “Fuchsia Mite,” when used regularly (according to directions) for at least 4-5 applications. Some varieties of fuchsia have shown to be more resistant to the mite and many commercial growers are concentrating on these for the retail market. See the list of “resistant” varieties.

Water Carefully

During the warmer days of summer, fuchsias will need much more water than they did earlier in the season. However, they should be watered only when they need it not according to a set schedule. Some plants, those with the most foliage or growing in small containers, will require water more frequently than others. If a plant dries out completely it may be necessary to use some **Master-Nursery™ Soil Penetrant**, with the next few waterings, to ensure that the soil gets thoroughly saturated.

Winter-Spring Care

Once the crisp nights of fall and early winter arrive, one must be aware of the tenderness of the fuchsia family and take some simple precautions.

Our biggest concern will be with those in pots and hanging baskets:

1. Remove them from their summer location and place them in a spot that is most apt to be frost-free—preferably on the ground, in a greenhouse or under an overhang up against the house.
2. Maintain moisture through the dormancy period being aware of the fact that many overhead protection aids do keep the frost away, but also eliminate any rain water, so don't forget 'em!
3. Do not cut back until frost danger is past! This is about March 15th to April 1st, at which time the plants can be pruned—generally speaking we cut the branches back to the edge of the container and remove some of the old or weak stems. Begin feeding to start the new year's growth and blooming cycle.
4. Two, or at the most, three years are all that a hanging or potted fuchsia should be kept in a container without replanting or, at least having the roots trimmed and new planting mix added. Fuchsias are heavy feeders and tend to develop large root systems recalling the need for a balance between the top growth and the roots of a plant.

Continuing the Tradition

The popularity of fuchsias continues to grow and with so many lovely varieties and colors to choose from, they will undoubtedly be one of the favorites of shade gardeners for many years to come.

Mite Resistant Varieties

The microscopic Brazilian fuchsia mite ended the fuchsia hey-day. Almost everyone is familiar with the contorted, cancer-like growths that form when the mite is present. There is no biological control available to combat this pest.

There is some good news on the subject, however. We have discovered 15 or so fuchsias that are mite resistant, or are just minimally affected. Most of these are species fuchsias, that is, they are non-hybridized wild forms. The flowers are somewhat different from people have to expect in a fuchsia: they range from single tiny pink bells to large clusters of long white tubular flowers. They vary in height, too, from tiny-leaved 2-foot tall mounds, to giant tree-like shrubs of up to 20 feet.

These fuchsias make useful and worthwhile shrubs, providing lots of color in the shade. They are not bothered by the mite, but they are bothered by drought. To avoid using too much water we recommend planting them in areas that are already being irrigated, and remember to us plenty of mulch. If you're looking for a colorful shrub for the shade, consider these mite-resistant fuchsias.

- *Fuchsia arborescens*
- *F. asplundii*
- *F. bacillaris* (semi-resistant)
- *F. boliviana* (semi)
- *F. boliviana* 'Alba' (semi-resistant)
- *F. brevifolius*
- *F. campos-portoi*
- *F. colensoi*
- *F.* 'Constance' (semi-resistant)
- *F.* 'Coral Baby'
- *F. denticulata*
- *F. excorticata*
- *F.* 'Fanfare'
- *F.* 'First Success'
- *F. fulgens* (semi-resistant)
- *F. glazioviana*
- *F. loxensis*
- *F. microphylla* var. *hidalgensis*
- *F. microphylla* var. *quercetorum*
- *F. paniculata*
- *F.* 'Panylla Prince' (semi-resistant)
- *F. parviflora*
- *F. procumbens*
- *F.* 'Purple Rain' (semi-resistant)
- *F. regia*
- *F. regia* 'UCBG'
- *F. sanctae-rosae* (semi-resistant)
- *F. splendens*
- *F. thymifolia*
- *F. triphylla* 'Gartenmeister Bonstedt' (semi)