

## FUCHSIAS

Fuchsias are a member of the family *Onagraceae*. Presently, there are about 110 species of fuchsia found in the wild in Central and South America, and over 8000 varieties available. Most of the fuchsias that we see today are cultivars of the hybrids of three species: *Fuchsia magellanica*, *Fuchsia coccinea*, and *Fuchsia fulgens*. While the fuchsia plant has no fragrance, its bright colors and sweet nectar are attractive to hummingbirds and bees.

Fuchsias come in all colors except true yellow and true blue; they are often described by their colors and their form. Fuchsia colors are a combination of bright and deep hues, or sometimes a solid color. Fuchsia form may be **single** with 4 petals, **semi-double** with 5-7 petals, or **double** with 8 or more layers of petals. The single or semi-double cultivars produce compact plants with abundant blooms and require less space to grow. Large-flowered doubles display fringed, ruffled, serrated petals as well as showy pistils and stamens. American growers favor doubles, which are usually grown in baskets.

Fuchsia hardiness depends on the original species. Hardiness can be described as the ability of the plant to survive over winter in the ground, even in freezing temperatures. There are some **hardy** fuchsias, *F. magellanica* and its hybrids. **Half-hardy** fuchsias which will die back to the ground in winter, but send new shoots up in the spring. **Tender** fuchsias will not survive below freezing temperatures. Consequently, tender fuchsias must be overwintered indoors or a shelter, or discarded at the end of the growing season.

### GROWING FUCHSIAS

#### *Location*

Fuchsias are shade-loving plants. When kept indoors, you can put them in almost any sunny room if they are not in direct sunlight under a window. Outside, they need to be in a well-shaded area for most of the day. They can tolerate a couple of hours of morning sun, but the afternoon sun will be too hot for a fuchsia.

Hardy fuchsia plants are usually happy in sheltered borders all year round and are best planted deeply in the ground to protect the crown during cold winter weather.

#### *Soil*

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e-mail your garden questions to: [mastergardener@spokanecounty.org](mailto:mastergardener@spokanecounty.org)

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You can plant fuchsias in the ground or in a pot. Fuchsias are adaptable to many kinds of soil, if the soil drains well and quickly. Potting mixture that contains fertilizer and added vermiculite or perlite is the best choice for planting fuchsias. If you are planting in the ground, Washington State University recommends adding vermiculite or perlite to the soil so it drains well. Or, you can use a potting soil already mixed with perlite or vermiculite.

## **FUCHSIA CARE**

Care of fuchsias is not necessarily low maintenance, but with a little special attention their beauty is worth a bit of extra effort.

### ***Watering***

Fuchsias grown in pots or baskets 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. Fuchsia roots do not like to sit in water.

### ***Fertilizer***

You can fertilize fuchsias every week in spring and summer, but begin to taper off feeding as fall approaches. A soluble, balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) is most commonly used. Apply at the rate recommended on the label. Many basket/container growers use a slow-release fertilizer that remains effective for two to four months.

### ***Pinching Back***

Fuchsias will thrive and blossom more abundantly if they're pinched back as new growth appears. The "Pinching" process means to remove the tips of side shoots at one or two pairs of leaves from the origin of their growth. Pinching can be repeated, to produce a greater number of side shoots that will then become branches that produce more blooms. When a branch has finished blooming, clip it back with clean garden shears.

## **WINTER**

Hardy fuchsias can be overwintered in place if given added protection by applying a deep mulch of bark chips, leaf mold or straw in late autumn each year.

Many of the most popular fuchsia cultivars for hanging baskets and patio pots are half-hardy fuchsias. Half-hardy fuchsias tend to be grown as annuals in many gardens, but they can be easily overwintered.

Standard fuchsias will also need to be moved to a frost-free position during the winter months to protect their vulnerable stem from frost damage.

### ***Rest is important***

The best thing you can do to over winter fuchsia is to put them into dormancy, which is kind of a rest period for plants. The plant will look dead, but it will just be sleeping for the winter. The overwintering process is as follows:

1. Bring fuchsias into your home.
2. Carefully spray the fuchsia plant, on top and bottom of leaves, with water to knock off any pests that may be hiding in its leaves.

3. Find a cool, dark place in your home to store the fuchsia.
  - a. The temperatures should range from 45-55° F. Basements and attached garages normally work well for this.
  - b. Place the fuchsia in the storage space and cut back watering.
4. The plant will lose its leaves and appear dead, but remember that it is not, it is dormant (resting).
5. Water about once every three to four weeks. The soil should be moist but not soaked.

The last step to overwintering a fuchsia is to bring it out of dormancy. About a month before your last frost date, take your fuchsias out of the storage location.

1. Cut all the branches on the plant back by half.
  - a. This will encourage new growth, which will in turn make more fuchsia flowers in the summer.
2. Place your fuchsias in a location with bright filtered light, away from direct sun, and resume normal watering.
3. Once your last frost date has passed, you can acclimate your fuchsias by moving them to a shady area outside during the day and bring them in at night.
4. Continue this for one week.

You may now plant your fuchsias in the garden or in pots, giving them care as usual.

## **PROPAGATION**

Fuchsias are among the easiest plants to propagate asexually, as cuttings root quite quickly. You can propagate using either water or soilless growing medium. Choose a healthy, mature fuchsia to take your cuttings from, and water it thoroughly several hours beforehand. The cuttings will grow into exact replicas of the parent plant

Take an unblemished 3-inch semi-hard stem tip cutting with a clean, sharp razor blade or sharp knife. Make a clean, diagonal cut just below a node. Leave at least two sets of leaves at the cutting's tip, and strip off all lower leaves.

### *Water*

Place cutting in a glass of water. When the cuttings produce some well-developed roots, they can be planted in soil.

### *Growing Medium*

1. Combine equal parts perlite and vermiculite or peat moss in a 2-inch pot.
  - a. Set the pot in a container of water until the surface feels moist to the touch.
  - b. Take the pot out of the water and allow it to drain freely for about 15 minutes.
2. Dip the cut end of your fuchsia cutting in a rooting hormone.
3. Place the cutting in the moistened rooting medium prepared in step one.
4. To help retain moisture, cover the cutting with a ventilated plastic bag or the bottom half of a clear plastic 2-liter bottle with some holes poked in it.
  - a. Remove the plastic cover for 5 to 10 minutes two or three times each day. Keep the medium evenly moist, but not soggy. Don't allow it to dry out.
5. In 3 to 4 weeks or less, the cuttings should be rooted and ready for planting or potting.

## **PESTS & DISEASE**

According to the Northwest Fuchsia Society, the fuchsia enthusiast can avoid most pests and diseases by following some basic procedures:

1. Check to see if the type of fuchsia that you have, or plan to get, is resistant or immune to any pests.
2. Plant in clean containers with soil that drains well; repot when soil begins to harden.
3. Clean up dead leaves and debris where pests and fungus hide.
4. Ventilate the plants well.
5. Water in the morning.

Even so, problems can, and do, occur. Products to control pests and diseases can be obtained at most garden stores. Read and follow all product labels.

## **REFERENCES:**

Northwest Fuchsia Society <http://www.nwfuchsiasociety.com/>

Solent Fuchsia & Flower Club [https://www.thefuchsia.co.uk/grow\\_pleasure.html](https://www.thefuchsia.co.uk/grow_pleasure.html)