

BOUGAINVILLEAS

Bougainvilleas will flower nearly all year round in our climate and there are many attractive new varieties now available. Plants will grow in salt air, right down to the beach.

Bougainvilleas can be kept in pots and tubs too. The many different varieties are most adaptable to a wide variety of uses. They can be used as ground covers, on sheds and fences, as a bushy shrub, a hedge or over a pergola. With very little effort, bougainvilleas can be trained as standards for footpaths or features in the garden.

Bougainvillea's may be grown permanently in pots, say 30cm (12") or larger, and these may be trained onto a trellis, or trimmed and grown as a bush. Hanging baskets are also spectacular, provided care is taken with watering as they dry out faster than pots on the ground. Bougainvilleas really like heat, and with sufficient water in the summer, they will often grow where other container plants will not.

Planting

Bougainvilleas love the sun so pick a warm sunny position - the more sunlight the better. When planted in the shade, for instance on the southern side of a fence, they will flower well when the plant grows into the sun at fence-top height, and then should be trained along the top to maximise flowering.

Adaptable to most soils, bougainvilleas will benefit from any organic matter mixed in when planting. Very wet areas should be avoided. Bougainvilleas do not like any root disturbance, and as the roots are very brittle and easily broken from the plant, a little extra care should be taken when transplanting.

First, completely moisten the plant, then carefully lift the pot off the root-ball while holding the plant upside down with your other hand. Do not disturb the soil around the roots. Place the plant in the hole which has been prepared ahead, put a stake next to the plant in the hole and replace soil gently. Tie the stems firmly to the new stake, and leave any existing stake to be removed after the plant has established. Alternatively use the old stake hole, if available, for the new stake and tie. This will prevent root damage and ensure the stake is well seated. Water well after planting. Avoid the coldest time of the year for planting and also reduce your watering when it is cold. Occasionally, some plants may defoliate at transplanting time, but these should be watered as normal and soon new shoots will appear. Bougainvilleas are very hardy once established.

Fertilising

Most complete garden fertilisers such as Osmocote and Apex Bloom are suitable for feeding. Follow the instructions on the container and be sure the soil is moist before fertilising. Feed plants only when growing.

Pruning

Plants can be cut back after heavy flowering and pinching the tips makes a more bushy plant. Do not hesitate to cut the stems when they have grown to the length you wish and prune to whatever shape you desire. Pruning encourages flowering.