

Fuchsias

Fuchsias come from the Evening Primrose family and originate mainly in South America with just a few species from Tahiti and New Zealand. Their spectacular pendulous flowers, make it hard to resist buying. Normally regarded as only suitable for growing outdoors under shade, it is possible to succeed with fuchsia indoors. You need to start with young plants, preferably before flowering has commenced. More mature plants usually drop flowers and foliage after being moved indoors.

Two other critical requirements for indoor growing are high humidity and high light levels. It is in the shaded garden however, that fuchsias make their mark. Good growing locations include under the dappled shade of trees, under shadecloth covered patios or next to the east or south facing walls of your home. Fuchsias do not like full day exposure to hot sun during the summer. They react by presenting purple leaves, then leaf and flower drop, followed in many cases by death.

Fuchsias can be grown in a number of different styles and forms. Some varieties have very soft cascading stems and they can make glorious hanging basket specimens.

With some training, more upright types can be shaped as standards, virtually a tree design with a clean trunk and a sphere of foliage and flowers on top. Fuchsias can also be trained to grow along a fence as an espalier. All of the commonly available Fuchsias can be grown to wonderful effect in pots and tubs or they can make attractive upright bushes when planted in garden beds. Imagine a low hedge of these flowering beauties.

FOR A SUCCESSFUL POTTED FUCHSIA

Fuchsias need more care than many other shade loving plants. They demand free draining soils that are rich in organic matter. During the growing months the plants need to be kept moist constantly. In addition, a high level of humidity needs to be maintained. One way to achieve this is to sit the plant on a saucer of pebbles and water so that the base of the pot is not touching the water.

GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR FUCHSIA

As flowers form on new growth it is important to keep the plants growing in order to get the best show. Liquid fertilisers have proved very successful as have slow release types, that last for four to five months such as Apex Bloom. Regular pruning also helps to promote new growth for flower production. Plants can be pruned in autumn in frost free areas to get growth moving through winter in readiness for October flowering. In the South West of the state where there is some frost danger it is best to leave pruning till early September. Prune your Fuchsia back hard. This means that you would leave only one or two nodes on the stems of the new growth. Fuchsia can be lightly trimmed in summer also to remove excess foliage during the hot summer months of January and February. They are capable of flowering right through summer and into autumn. Here are some easy to grow varieties for the new grower.

'Dollar Princess' is an older variety that makes an excellent basket or pot specimen. Flowering commences very early in the season and continues over a long period. Double blooms are coloured rich purple and red.

'La Traviata' is another early bloomer, with strawberry pink flowers. This is a vigorous upright growing form that is bushy and free flowering. 'Sophisticated Lady' is a reliable variety with large pink and white blossoms. A pendulous growth habit makes this an ideal hanging basket type. It is very free flowering over a long period.

'White Spider' can be easily trained as a standard or as a bush. It is a strong growing variety with prett, single pink and white flowers.

'Uncle Charlie' has dainty rose red and lavender blooms borne in profusion. It makes a dramatic show in a hanging basket or pot. Happy gardening