

Ant Nelli's Fuchsia Recipes **Recreated by Donald Helsel – Crescent City Fuchsia Society**

Antonelli Brothers Begonia and Fuchsia Nursery is now long gone due to the disastrous fire that destroyed one of the best Fuchsia/Begonia nursery's in California. Now their fuchsia legacy lives on through the efforts of Michael Breneman (Ant Nelli's fuchsia expert) with his nursery "Michaels Fuchsia Galore". The following is advice taken from and offered in "Ant Nelli's Fuchsia Recipes, a handout from the old nursery. To this day Michael follows these guidelines.

HISTORY

The genus FUCHSIA (family Onagraceae) is named in honor of LEONARD FUCHS 1501 – 1565, a German professor of medicine and a botanical author. Fuchsia plants are native to tropical America (Mexico, Central and South America) and the West Indies to New Zealand. They are much varied in the wild, most are small shrubs or herb like plants, yet others are large trees up to 30 feet tall. There are 75 or more species of which only 25 or 30 are of real importance to the nursery hobbyist/trade. Of these only a handful are the parents of the beautiful plants we know today as HYBRID FUCHSIAS. The two most important species are F. MAGELLANICA (Peru) and F. FULGENS (Mexico)---(the earliest parents) dating back to the late 1700's.

In the last 100 years there have literally been thousands of Fuchsia varieties introduced to the world through hybridization. Before the fire, Antonelli Brothers Nursery stated they had over 400 varieties of fuchsias for sale.

HOW TO GROW FUCHSIAS

Fuchsias are very easy to grow. They require a rich, well-drained soil, a cool shady location, frequent watering, and regular feeding. If you follow the recipes closely you can then sit back and enjoy the full beauty of your fuchsia hybrid or specie plants.

SOIL

The soil for fuchsias, whether in the garden or in a container, should be rich, well drained, slightly acid and should hold moisture without being soggy. To the average garden soil or flower bed add plenty of compost, peat moss, or forest humus. If the soil or planting mix is heavy a good amount of sharp sand is beneficial. Or as an alternative to sand you can use Perlite (sponge rock) instead. When your soil is poor, add steer or chicken manure and a small amount of cottonseed meal. Whatever you add to the garden soil be sure to thoroughly mix to a depth of 24 inches. It is pretty hard to overdo the mulch part but you should be careful not to overdo the manure as excess can burn tender roots. If in doubt let the mixed soil sit for a week to 10 days

An excellent mixture for containers would consist of 1/3 peat moss, 1/3 leaf mold (forest humus) and 1/3 rich sandy loam. Rich sandy loam can be made by mixing a quantity of regular garden soil, adding 1/3 sand, 1/6 manure (chicken or steer) and mix it all together and let sit for 30 days.

If you consider that to be too much work, then go to your local nursery and buy any one of a number of brands of POTTING SOIL. Do not buy potting mix as it is often heavier and may require the addition of sand or Perlite.

LOCATION

Fuchsias perform best when provided with filtered sun, although they sometimes will grow quite well in full sun, in cool coastal climates. Usually they grow well on the north or east side of buildings, fences, trees, or large shrubs which give them protection from the hot mid-day sun. Fuchsias require some sun light so do not plant them in total shade. Without sufficient sunlight they will grow spindly and have very few flowers. On the other hand, Fuchsias grow poorly when exposed to full sun in hot climates and will usually have scorched leaves, few flowers, and wilted stems.

The ideal location is where they will receive early morning, filtered afternoon shade, and/or full evening sun. Where the summers are hot it is best to give them morning sun only.

During winter, when Fuchsias are inactive, they require only enough water to keep the roots damp. They do require protection from hard frost/freezing weather. Where winters are mild they can stay outdoors with only slight overhead protection. Generally, most garden fuchsias are hardy to around 22-25 degrees F. Bring fuchsias indoor in cold climates, give them some light indoors and cool (50-60 degrees) temps. **ABSOLUTELY DO NOT FERTILIZE FUCHSIAS IN WINTER** unless they are under greenhouse conditions.

FEEDING

At the first sign of spring growth, apply “fish emulsion” fertilizer. As soon as the plants actively begin growing (about 2 weeks) use Romeo 24-14-14 at the rate of 1 tablespoon per gallon of water. Continue to use 24-14-14 every two weeks until plants achieve blooming size. After the plants achieve blooming size begin using Romeo 18-18-18 at the rate of one tablespoon per gallon every two weeks. An occasional feeding of fish emulsion is recommended. Continue feeding until the first sign of frost in the fall.

(NOTE –Romeo fertilizer was the preferred fertilizer at Antonelli’s and continues to be used by Michael at Fuchsia Galore. It is available but must be ordered via the internet if you are not in the Watsonville area.)

Every two weeks is easy to keep track – feed on the 1st & 15th of the month.

SELECTING FERTILIZER

There are dozens of fertilizer brands suitable for fuchsias. Antonelli’s used and recommended those above, but if you are having good results with your fertilizer, keep using it.

Remember to use a Nitrogen (grow) food in the spring. The numbers are the key. Romeo 24-14-14 is high in nitrogen as indicated by the larger number (24). Nitrogen is always the first number. Others like Miracid 30-10-10 or Spoonit Orchid food 30-10-10 will work just as well.

In the later spring and throughout the summer use a “High Phosphorous” (bloom) food like Romeo 18-18-18, Jack’s (Peter’s) 20-20-20, Miracle Grow 15-30-15, all purpose Spoonit 18-20-16. As you might guess the second set of numbers indicates phosphorous and should be higher than the other numbers. Phosphorous helps the formation of flower buds.

Any brand of fish emulsion is satisfactory as long as it says “Fish Emulsion, No Additives”.

PRUNING

Pruning is very important because it stimulates new growth which will give more and better flowers. Fuchsias should be pruned rather heavily each year after danger of frost is past. Here in California usually mid-February or early March. In colder areas late March or early April. Under greenhouse conditions, mid-February is best for pruning, bringing plants into bloom in early May.

When pruning, all vigorous branches should be cut back to one or two pairs of dormant buds. This is about half way down on upright types and to the edge of the container on hanging varieties. Very weak branches, twigs and those branches interfering with other branches should be eliminated. Any frost damaged or dead branches should also be eliminated.

REPOTTING

Pruning time is also the best time to repot Fuchsias. Young plants can be potted up into larger containers. Very old plants can be removed from their container and some of the old root system “shaved off”. This is done with a sharp/stiff knife, cutting off 1 inch from all sides of the root ball and 2 inches off the bottom. After “shaving” is finished, put 2 inches of fresh potting soil in the bottom of the same container, add the root ball and 1 inch of fresh potting mix around the edges. Now that old Fuchsia plant is ready for the new season. During the growing season old flowers and seed pods should be removed whenever they are noticed. This will lengthen the flowering season by giving the plant more strength for flower production rather than seed production.

PROPAGATION

Fuchsias are usually propagated by cuttings rather than seed. This insures the new plant is identical to the parent plant. A short stem section from the growing tip with the lower leaves removed will make the best cutting. Just stick it in moist sand and keep it cool and moist.

Hybridizers grow Fuchsia from seed as no two seeds will reproduce exactly the same appearing plant. This is how new varieties are developed.

PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL

There are only a few troublesome pests that attack fuchsias. The most severe problem is the “Brazilian Gall Mite”, also called the “Fuchsia Gall Mite”, or “Fuchsia Mite”. These microscopic mites burrow into the tissue of the new growth causing a distortion of the leaves, stems, and flowers. The damage gives the appearance of “peach leaf curl”.

(NOTE—I have removed reference to specific pesticide treatment of this pest as the chemicals referenced are no longer available or legal in California. Contact your local nurseryman for his advice. There are still some short term contact sprays that should be helpful in treatment, in conjunction with removal of distorted leaves, branches, and flowers. DJH)

Sometimes the hardest battle is fought against a small flying knat – the “white Fly”. This pest multiplies rapidly and is hard to control with standard insecticides. They are especially bad under greenhouse conditions. There are some organic controls for the white fly. Ask your nurseryman. Aphids and Spidermite can be a problem also but again your nurseryman can advise you. Slugs and snails are easily controlled with any of the many all-purpose granule baits.

Fuchsias seldom suffer from attacks of disease. They are however subject to “root rot” which causes the whole plant to wilt as if dried out. The only real cure for this is “NOT TO OVER WATER”. It has been suggested that more Fuchsias are killed through over watering (root rot) than any other cause.

Occasionally small brownish spots will develop on the underside of Fuchsia leaves which cause the leaves to yellow and drop off. This is caused by Fuchsia Rust and can be treated with a fungicide spray. Usually this will control the rust for the entire growing season.

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