

Companion Plants for Fuchsias
By Mrs. Paul Deiro, Northwest Associate Editor

Who would deny the fact that a well groomed fuchsia plant is in itself a beautiful and complete living picture? Lest of all a fuchsia enthusiast. So the following information is given with three objectives in mind namely—1: to suggest ideas that you may incorporate in your own garden with the use of some of the present shrubs or plants which without doubt would appreciate and enjoy the company of a gracefully festooned fuchsia plant;-- 2: to add variation to a so-called “set pattern” that you have been apt to follow year after year;-- 3: to enlarge, or create further appealing pictures with the use of a limited number of fuchsia plants.

Have you ever thought of the Hydrangea shrub in your garden as being complimentary to a fuchsia? It can be. I recall several of these lovely combinations in our member’s gardens. Several plants of one variety or color of fuchsia are more effective than a combination of colors. With bright blues or periwinkle shades of hydrangea try pink fuchsias, or any of the pastels, single or double. The reddish or wine shades of hybrid hydrangeas give a pleasing note when combined with the large wine red, dark blue or purple fuchsias. The taller growing fuchsias are used to good advantage here. If the hydrangea is against a building or fence don’t hesitate to use basket or trailing fuchsias in a salt box. Now doesn’t that hydrangea look happier in such good company? It too prefers semi-shade and moisture, and its lush green leaves give a feeling of coolness.

If you are so fortunate as to have a clematis vine take advantage of the opportunity to use fuchsias with it, salt boxes or hanging baskets when conditions present such.

Many fuchsia growers also grow tuberous begonias as companion plants, but don’t overlook the little semperfloren or wax begonia as edging to a fuchsia bed or border. The bronzy red leaf variety with a bright orange red blossom is outstanding in a window or porch box (south exposure) with the fuchsia ‘Falling Stars’ and ‘Autumnal’. Another eye catcher is the Beloperone guttata or Shrimp plant combined with ‘Autumnal’. Then there are the pink and white blossom varieties. Picture the white blossomed variety with white fuchsias, also the new white variety ‘Sultana’ or ‘Impatiens’. Lobelia, either compact or trailing as well as ageratum, combine nicely with fuchsias. The light blue lobelia, Cambridge Blue, is especially nice with pink, apricot or white fuchsias.

If you have never used Coleus with a planting of fuchsias you have a treat in store, particularly in bed or border as the coleus attains considerable size by the end of the season. They are easily grown from seed or cuttings. If grown from seed, sow seed indoors in early spring and prick off into small pots or a flat. In their permanent planting they do best with filtered light but will also flourish with an eastern exposure. Full sun has a tendency to stunt the growth as well as burnish their brilliant colorings. The color range is from creamy ivory with green edging, through coral rose to deep wine reds. I like to use each shade near fuchsias of the same coloring, the resulting effect is so well worth that little extra consideration.

Ferns with their delicate and interesting foliage of cooling green are always good in the company of fuchsias. The moisture and humidity on which a fuchsia thrives is so much a part of the ferns environment that it will outdo itself to reward you. Our native ferns offer a large choice of form and texture as well as the hardy British ferns.

The Hosta, which is enjoyed for its heart shaped foliage rather than its flowers offers a wide range of greens as well as several variegated varieties. They also like moisture and filtered light. They are especially nice when grown in the foreground of a planting of tall growing fuchsias interspersed with clumps of maiden hair fern with our native shield fern giving height and airiness to the background.

Why not do something outstanding with the clump of Dusty Miller? Since it likes the sun choose fuchsia varieties that do also. Its interesting gray foliage is a natural for any fuchsia color—light or dark.

If you are using fuchsias in the rockery don't overlook lambs' ears (*stachys lanata*) a compact low growing plant whose lovely gray foliage is so velvety that it is fascinating to adult and child alike.

The buddleia or butterfly bush in either orchid or purple variety provides background for hardy phlox, which in turn can complement a planting of fuchsias in the foreground. Phlox transplants easily and are benefited by periodic divisions which enables one to increase their stock. Prune the buddleia heavily each spring for vigorous and plentiful new growth and blossoms.

No list would be complete without the mention of the smaller vines. The following three are favorites with me and their place and use is not questionable once you have used them. The feathery gray green foliage of the lotus vine is so compensating in a fuchsia hanging basket. This past summer I used it with the lovely apricot orange 'Mrs. Rundle'. It is equally nice with 'Falling Stars', although the combinations are practically unlimited.

The variegated foliage of vinca (*myrtle*) is good for either sun or shade, as is the variegated ground ivy (*creeping Charlie*). I pleasantly recall a last summer slat box of the double ivory white fuchsia 'Snowball' (pinched heavily to keep low and compact) with long graceful runners of this green and white vine cascading over the edge of the white container. The fuchsia 'Snowflake' would be nice also.

If you haven't already tried growing the small leaved branching and trailing ivies out of doors, do so, as they will stand the average winter cold without protection and are much prettier and far more vigorous than when grown indoors. When tumbling over the edge of a raised bed or ledge of a planting box their lush interesting foliage is a perfect foil for any fuchsia. Wild ginger though not so easily obtained is a delightful addition when tucked in among the ferns.

Why not try something different this summer? Whether your fuchsia collection is large or small, it can be fun and so rewarding.

Editor: Here are many fine suggestions for the show chairmen who are always seeking new ideas for the Fuchsia Flower Show exhibit.

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