

Fuchsias in the Fall By Charles Rapp

With the arrival of Fall, September 23, we can expect cooler weather, more moisture in the air, and six to eight weeks of good weather. This is all to the good for fuchsias. Plants will continue to bloom with brighter colours and larger blooms. We must, however, look ahead to the time about mid-November, when we want our plants to be put into winter storage. Fuchsia roots never truly go dormant. They must always be protected from freezing.

There are several steps we should take now:

1. Keep faded blossoms and berries removed. The presence of large numbers of ripening berries is a signal to plants that it's growing and flowering season is over for the year. If you want your fuchsias to continue blooming, keep berries removed until November. Also consider where you want your fuchsia plant to concentrate its strength; into the preservation of fading blooms and ripening berries or into the production of more blossoms. If you want to continue blooms, keep fading blooms and berries removed.
2. Reduce or eliminate nitrogen from the fertilizer you use on your fuchsia. Nitrogen fertilizer produces new, green growth. You do not need or want new, tender growth in November when you put your plants in storage. Continue to fertilize with low nitrogen or a non-nitrogen fertilizer so new blooms will continue to be produced.
3. Reduce watering as the temperature cools and there is more moisture in the air. Your fuchsias will require less water. Do not let your fuchsia plants dry out completely. Fuchsia roots never do dormant so they must receive some moisture even in (especially in) winter storage.
4. Check your plants for pests. Cooler moist weather will reduce spider mites. It may slow down aphids, but aphids and whiteflies are not eliminated completely. Treatment for them should continue as needed until the plant leaves are stripped for storage.
5. Check for fungal diseases. Cool, moist weather is ideal for mold, mildew and other fungus diseases. Keep old leaves, old blooms and berries picked up from fuchsia soil. Don't crowd plants. Give them plenty of room with good air circulation. If mildew or other fungus diseases still develop, use a fungicide to stop its spread.
6. Develop a plan for winter storage and obtain any necessary materials.
7. Review this year's growing results. Did your fuchsias grow as you wanted or expected? What changes do you want to make next year? Are there some plants that just don't do well for you? Are you tired of some old plants? Why keep growing them when the local nurseries have so many different plants? Now is a good time to review and plan for next year. Avoid a last minute November rush when plants must go either into the storage or into the compost pile.

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