

## AMERICAN FUCHSIA SOCIETY

### BASIC FUCHSIA CULTURE

The fuchsia growing cycle starts in the spring when the weather begins to warm and the frost period is over, in milder climates this is late January. The cycle ends in October or November when the fuchsias go dormant; in milder climates they may not lose all of their leaves. These general culture rules will increase your plant's beauty and the number of blooms it produces.

#### Pruning and Repotting

Container plants are repotted and pruned at the same time either in later January or early February depending on your climate. Prune trailing plants back to the edge of the pot leaving at least two leaf nodes for new growth as fuchsias bloom on new wood. Remove one third of the height of upright plants and prune lateral growth back to two nodes from the main stem. Cut away one inch or more of the old soil all around the outside of the root ball and replace it with new potting soil.

#### Potting Mixtures

The essential elements of any planting mix must provide good drainage and aeration. Fuchsias also require a slightly acid potting medium. Select any good commercial mix for potting. If the potting mix holds too much water, add either washed sand or perlite for better aeration. If the potting mixture dries out too quickly, add fine fir bark to the soil.

#### Watering

During the growing season, keep plants moist, but not over-watered. Water them whenever the soil appears or feels dry below the top layer. Soak potted plants until water flows freely from the drainage holes. In warmer climates hanging containers may need watering on a daily basis, best done in early morning or evening. Mist the foliage on hot or windy days, if the plants are in the shade. Foliage burn marks are caused when a plant is watered or misted while it is exposed to the sun. Mist, do not water, the plant if the temperature is above 80 degrees F, as the fuchsia roots do not take up water at this temperature. Fuchsias stored in the winter, during the dormant stage, should not become bone-dry.

#### Light and Sun Exposure

Avoid planting fuchsias in full sun or deep shade, as they need filtered sun to bloom. All-day, high filtered sun from tall trees, lath structures or shade cloth is ideal. The fuchsia will tolerate early morning sun until 10:00 a.m., but not mid-day sun. Some types of Fuchsias, such as singles in the shades of orange, are heat resistant but heavy frost will damage them. Large doubles perform poorly in hot, dry weather due to the heat and lack of humidity. Heat will reduce the size of the blossom and plant. White blooms when exposed to the sun turn slightly pink.

### Fertilization

Fuchsias are heavy feeders and potted plants must be fertilized weekly. Apply a high nitrogen fertilizer half strength until the plant is well leafed out. Then apply the fertilizer full strength until the plant sets bud. Use the fertilizer half strength during the blooming season. The most important element of feeding is to establish a routine and stick with it regardless of which fertilizer you use. This method produces a plant with abundant growth and blossoms. Plants in the ground do not require as much fertilizer as the soil holds the nutrients. Late September or early October apply, liquid, 0-10-10 to harden the plant off the dormancy. Leave on the seedpods, (berries). Late fall is the only time when 0-10-10 is used.

### Pinching or Shaping

A pinch or stop of the tip growth encourages lateral branches and more blossoms. When new growth is about three inches long or has two sets of leaves, pinch out the center tip. Two new branches will form from this pinch. Continue pinching all the tip growth in this manner until the desired size and shape is attained. It will take six to ten weeks for blossoms to mature after the last pinching. Single blossoms develop in the shorter time. During the growing season remove the seedpods.

### Pests

The Fuchsia Gall Mite was the number one problem for fuchsia growers in North America. The growing tips and blooms on the affected plant shrivel and curl, looking similar to peach leaf curl. The best way to control this pest is to cut off all affected foliage and dispose of it. Dip your cutting tool into rubbing alcohol after each cut, thus sanitizing it. Use an insect spray that contains endosulfan (the active ingredient in Triodan ®). For best results read the labels carefully and use the pesticide as directed by the manufacturer. During the dormant season spray the fuchsias once in November and again in December with dormant spray, such as horticultural oil. The oil smothers all eggs and larvae on the plant. Take off all leaves before spraying as this removes places for the bugs to hide.

Spray only when the plant is infected or predators are present. White Fly is a major pest that can be controlled by using liquid dish soap 1 – 2 tablespoons per gallon of water, weekly. Red Spider damage appears during hot spells turning the leaves red than yellow and causing them to drop off. Spray with Malathion and the plant will recover. Consult your Certified Nursery Professional when plants are affected by disease of the appropriate sprays.