

## Fuchsias in January By Jackie Downs

It has been a wet fall and winter in the Pacific Northwest and fuchsias that have been stored away in some manner should be checked regularly to be sure that bins or trenches and pits still have good drainage. Don't let them drown. Don't forget the fuchsias that have been stored in pump houses, cool cellars, etc., to be sure they have not completely dried out. Keep the roots just damp enough to be sure the root system has the needed moisture to keep alive. Be sure to check temperatures if weather should turn colder and supply additional heat if needed for those stored in pump houses, etc. The use of only one light bulb can raise the temperature several degrees. But don't let the light bulb touch the plant or any covering you might be using.

Fuchsias growing in warm greenhouses will need the same regular care they are given in warmer weather. Careful watering, fertilizing and spraying for insects is very important for growing good plants. Pinching and shaping is very important too, and a good yearly pruning is very necessary if you want full, well-shaped plants with lots of buds and blooms. Fuchsias can be grown in houses but will need humidity. A room that is kept too dry and warm will usually cause the leaves to drop. The fuchsias should be placed near a window, where they will get the morning sun, and in a room where the temperature ranges from 50 to 60° F. Humidity can be maintained by standing the pot in a tray or container larger in diameter than the base of the pot. Fill this space with sphagnum moss which should be kept damp to provide damp air around the fuchsia, which it enjoys. The plant should be rotated one half turn each day. The lack of sufficient light or too high a temperature will produce soft, spongy growth which calls for a logical remedy. If it is possible, place the plants outside during a shower. They will benefit greatly for an hour of rain. Allow them to drain before replacing them in their containers. But never let the plants or pots themselves stand in water. Standing constantly in water will cause the roots to rot and the plant to die. Fertilize weekly with a complete commercial fertilizer and your fuchsia should remain healthy.

Of course, there is always work that can be done with fuchsias that are grown in the mild climates. Fuchsias really don't go dormant. Any warmth at all will make them want to grow. Some varieties, even after a good severe pruning, will still start producing some buds, often before new leaves are barely showing. Remove these buds and let all the energy of the plant be used to produce new leaves and growth. Pests are always around so care must be taken to keep them from attacking this new growth. Spray at first sight of pests, don't let the insects get a head start and you will have less problems keeping them under control. A few days of warm weather and pinching will be necessary. Plants pruned back in fall should be showing considerable new growth and should be fertilized regularly. Don't depend on the rain to do your watering for you. Check regularly and water if necessary. Heavy rains can cause the soil and nutrients to be washed out of containers. Replace soil if needed. Don't let the warm weather fool you. Watch for any sudden drop of temperature and protect your fuchsias if necessary. Move container plants to a warmer spot or cover them with plastic or even newspaper for the night. It is the new tender growth that will be damaged by any sudden frost. Plants hit by frost will usually receive less damage if you can rinse them off with the hose before the sun reaches them.

From: The National Fuchsia Society Fuchsia Fan of January 1984