

FUCHSIA CULTURE

FUCHSIAS: Fuchsias are outdoor plants with a preference for cool, moist growing conditions if they are planted in pots or baskets. If the fuchsias are planted in the ground they will take the full sun, but still need lots of moisture. Fuchsias need protection from strong winds. Their care is simple, but must be constant as these plants do not like to be neglected.

SOIL: Fuchsias prefer a loose rich soil. Any good commercial soil mix will do. Make sure that it is a sterilized mix.

PLANTING: Make certain that your soil is moist. Be sure your containers have good drainage. Never transplant a fuchsia any deeper than it has been growing. Containers should be planted with enough space left at the top of the container to allow for a generous watering. Plant 3 or 4 plants in a 10 inch basket or container. Plant the fuchsias toward the center of the basket so they will fill the basket and then trail over the edges.

WATERING: The most important part of raising fuchsias. Keep your plant moist at all times, watering as often as needed (sometimes twice a day). Mist the foliage if the plant looks droopy and the soil is moist. Don't over water, especially newly planted cuttings. Just moist – NOT drowned.

FERTILIZING: Feed your fuchsias with a good fertilizer at least once a week. Use a 20-20-20 water soluble fertilizer. One tablespoon to one gallon of water (it's easiest) or any good balanced fertilizer. NEVER FERTILIZE A DRY PLANT!!!!

SPRAYING: Aphids, spider mites and white flies are the biggest pests that bother fuchsias in our area. A good insecticide sprayed regularly should control these insects. Before you spray ANYTHING, make sure that it mentions that it is for that particular plant in the directions. Follow the direction exactly, as per the package. Always use a protective mask and cover your arms and legs before you spray.

PINCHING: When the plants start to grow, allow a couple of the set of leaves to develop on each branch. Then pinch out that growing tip. This gives bushier plants and more blooms. Follow this procedure at least 3 times (3 pinching sessions with your plant). Blooms will appear in 8-12 weeks after the last pinching, so you can time your blossoms by the last pinching date.

WINTERING: Fuchsias usually rest in the winter, but they must be kept slightly moist and not be allowed to dry out. They also must be kept from freezing. There are many ways to keep fuchsias over the winter if you don't have a heated greenhouse.

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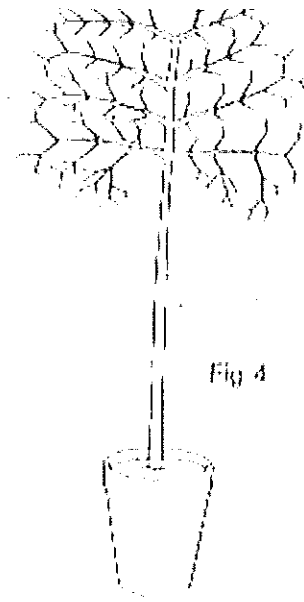
FUCHSIA TREES

The formation of a standard fuchsia tree (see Fig. 4) demands a different approach in that the growing tip is left intact and all side shoots removed. The main leaves on the stem are left until the head has been formed. When the stem length is about 12 in or 30 cm (5-6 in or 15-20 cm for quarter and half standards) under the total height required, pinching out of the side shoots stops, and four or five pairs are left to develop before removing the growing tip. Training, from then on to form the head of the standard is the same as for a bush or shrub.

FORMING THE STANDARD

The starting point is again a healthy cutting which should be rooted in August or at the latest September. A whole array of particularly growth-minded fuchsia cultivars bear their leaves as three-leaf opposites, unlike the remainder which have two-leaf opposites. The difference can be seen particularly well by looking down on to the young plants from above. These cultivars accordingly branch in three-fold manner, quickly form a thick head, and later also bear a threefold number of flowers.

If, when training the young plant to a bush shape, the tip was stopped at three pairs of leaves, when training to the standard every care must be taken that the tip is never damaged. So that the standard can grow straight and upright, from the start it is provided with a supporting stake and is fixed to this at every 5 cm. Again it is best to use the green wire ties with a plastic sleeve. When in the course of time the stem becomes thicker, the place where it is tied must be checked from time to time to see that they do not on any account get overgrown by the bark. If tying is not done, the young plant like all plants grow towards the light; through this the initially soft stem develops curves, which look unsightly later when the wood is ripe.



Constant attention must now be devoted to the speedy, uninterrupted growth of the fuchsia. Side shoots which develop on the stem are carefully removed shortly after they appear so that all growing energy can be concentrated on the main shoot. The actual leaves that belong on the main stem, however, must always be left in place until they drop by themselves one day after the head is formed. They are the only leaves that are available to the plant for assimilation at this period.

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