

Fuchsias in May
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The Fuchsia Fan Editor

Fuchsias in most areas should be growing well by now. The longer and warmer days should have helped to bring out the new growth and new roots. If you have not already done so, get your plant outside, in areas where possible, and hang or set them in filtered sunlight. If they have been kept in the house or greenhouse and have not had direct sunlight, do not set them in full sun. The foliage is still very tender and will burn easily; adjust them to the sun gradually. Then don't just forget about them. Remember the nights can still bring some frost so be prepared to protect them in some way or bring them back inside for the night should the temperature suddenly drop.

Here in the Pacific Northwest we could have another very wet spring and early summer again this year. Don't hang fuchsia baskets or set potted plants under the outer edge of the eaves where rain water can be constantly pouring into them; don't drown your plants. Check containers for assurance of good drainage. Open clogged drain holes if plugged. If soil is washed out by heavy rains, be sure to replace with new soil to original level. Feed your fuchsias regularly. They are heavy feeders and will show their appreciation by producing lush foliage and larger beautiful blooms if cared for properly. Keep pinching the tips of new growth as necessary until your plants are full and well-shaped. Blooming will be a little later but the results will well make it worth the waiting.

As the weather becomes warmer and the plants more mature, more watering, and perhaps misting, will probably be necessary. But don't just pour on the water because the day is hot. Check the soil for dryness and water as needed. Too much water can do as much damage or often more damage than understeering. Hot days, often accompanied by drying winds, can cause your fuchsias to wilt, even if the soil and root ball are moist. If this is the case, usually a light misting will perk up the foliage in just a few minutes but don't mist if the sun is directly on the foliage. Fuchsias will also wilt from allowing them to become too dry, or keeping them too wet. Don't just assume a wilted plant is dry; check it first to be sure! If soil is moist, don't water, if dry, water and water thoroughly. Each container should be checked; don't assume that because one plant is dry that they all need water. Light porous soil will dry much faster than will a heavier soil. Large full baskets, etc. will usually require more water than smaller plants that are just getting established.

Keep an eye out for any pests that may attack your fuchsias. Try to get rid of any insects as soon as spotted, before they have time to breed and multiply. Once out of hand, these pests try to take over the whole plant. Whiteflies, aphid and perhaps some red spider mites cause the most problems here inland in the Pacific Northwest. Along the coastal areas rust can be a big problem, too. The only rust I have found on my plants was on one brought from the coast. I carefully removed and destroyed the leaves infected, and found no more rust problem. I have had no fuchsia mite here and to date, I have had no reports on any in this area. Keep your fuchsia containers clean and free of debris such as old leaves, seed pods and wilted buds and blooms, and you have removed on more hiding place for insects.

As weather becomes warmer, your fuchsias will appreciate a good mulching. This protects the roots from the heat, keeps the plants cooler and the soil will remain moist longer, too. Cuttings started in March and even early April may be ready to pot into small containers this month. Don't overwater these small containers. Check these small rooted cuttings

regularly because good healthy fuchsias will grow rapidly; repot into large pots when there is a good showing of roots. Don't let them become root bound, which can stunt their future growth.

With Easter just passed and Mother's Day soon to arrive, the nurseries should have a good supply of fuchsia plants. This is a good time to look over the perhaps buy some new plants. If you do purchase some fuchsias, get them home and set out in a shaded area as soon as possible. Don't leave them sitting in a hot car. Let them adjust to your surroundings before placing them in their final showplace.

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