

Fuchsias in October
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National Fuchsia Society (Closed)

With winter coming, the question most new fuchsia growers want to know is, "What do I do with my plants during the winter months?" Protection may differ considerably, depending upon the climatic conditions of the area in which you live.

In the Pacific Northwest and similar climates, frost and freezing does occur, and container plants will need protection. Container plants can be left out until they are hit by a light frost and then pruned back and stored in some fashion. If days are warm and your plants are still blooming, they can be left out during the day and taken into a protected place at night.

Fuchsias planted in the garden can be left out, but should have a thick pile of leaves, straw, or similar covering to keep the plants' roots from freezing. Some fuchsia growers let the first frost hit the foliage and then prune heavily and then cover the ground with leaves, etc. Others leave the plants without pruning until all danger of frost is past in the spring. Both ways have been successful. Most growers feel that it is beneficial to have fuchsias receive a "hit" from frost before storing as it helps to start them into a normal dormancy. Clean out all debris and water well before storing container plants.

If you live in the Southern California coastal area, very little, if any, extra protection is usually needed. Baskets and other container plants can be left hanging or sitting right where they have been and those planted in the ground can be left undisturbed. Plants that have become straggly with blooms about gone and leaves yellowing and dropping can be pruned back for a short rest. If the weather remains warm, they will start producing new green growth in about three weeks. Should the weather suddenly turn cold with possible frost, it would be advisable to move any baskets and pots to a spot where they would have more protection. Fuchsias will take cold to a few degrees below freezing without real harm to the roots, but frost could harm the new growth and set the plants back. It might be advisable to only lightly prune garden planted fuchsias now and wait until all danger of frost is past in the early spring to do any heavy pruning.

Inland in California, where summers are hotter and winters more severe, your fuchsias will need more protection. Let the first light frost hit them, and then move them into a room, porch, garage, or basement, etc., where they can be kept at a cool temperature, but above freezing. Before storing them, most growers give them a good pruning and remove all the old leaves. Be sure to clean out all debris and then spray them and the soil with a non-toxic insecticide. Water the soil well and then only water the soil enough during the winter to keep the roots barely moist and plant alive.

In severe cold areas, all fuchsias should be stored in some manner. Garden fuchsias can be dug up and the roots and soil balled in burlap bags or similar material. Then they are stored in some area, kept above freezing, where it is dark and cool with the rest of your plants.

If you are fortunate to have a warm greenhouse, you can prune heavily and then let your plants start growing again whenever you wish. Wherever you live and whatever types of fuchsias you grow, just remember that all fuchsias need and should have a good, severe pruning once a year to keep them well-shaped and full of foliage. Baskets that have not been pruned yearly will soon have long bare branches and only new growth further down the end of the branches. You want to keep lots of new foliage in the baskets as well as down the trailing branches. Fuchsias bloom only on new growth, so the more you pinch the tips,

of new growth the more blooms you will have next year. Many beginners are confused about pruning and are afraid to cut back the plant severely enough to keep them well-shaped. The various Fuchsia Society's hold mini fuchsia culture classes at their meetings showing how to prune, pinch, make cuttings, repot plants, etc., so if you get a chance visit a local branch. It is the best way to learn: See how rather than read how!

Edited by AFS bulletin editor to fit available space.