

## **My Fuchsia Watering Learning Experiences**

By Rodney Bergquist

As AFS Bulletin Editor we very seldom get new articles for our next issue of the bulletin probably because most of our members have already contributed articles about what they know & understand. Which leads me to this article, I'm not a writer, I'm not a gardener per say because I spent 20 years in the Navy. We had plants in the Navy, but they weren't grown in potting mix. We had a steam plant, hydraulic plant, and an electric plant. So, anything I mention in this article container plants is purely my understanding of my fuchsia learning experiences. In beginning of my fuchsia learning experiences, I once commented that I can't write articles for the AFS bulletin because I'm not sure that anything I write would be technically correct. I was advised to write about my learning experiences.

I want to start with my bottom line thoughts regarding over watering plants, particularly fuchsias. I think fuchsia growers are much too hard on themselves regarding over watering fuchsias, because correctly watering plants in general is very difficult because of all the variables. My experience has been that no matter what watering method I try to follow, I will lose about 10% of my plants. As I tried to answer my learning questions, I learned a lot.

Question: One question I had for many years was, why is it you can start cuttings in water, yet you can over water your fuchsia? It took me a long time to understand the answer. Basically, plant roots take in air and breath just like we do, so it's not the water that's killing your plants, it's the lack of air in the potting mix. Excess water is filling the air pockets, so your plant suffocates because the roots cannot breathe in air because the potting mix is holding water, which leads me to potting mix should be moist, not wet.

Potting mix: Fuchsia culture requires or advises a well-drained potting mix, moist not wet. As I have mentioned earlier, I've really have had to try everything my mentors told me so, I'm going to share with you one of my best learning experiences. How do I get my potting mix to be moist, not wet? Before I continue with my learning experience, I need to mention my moist not wet learning experience. We were visiting another fuchsia members garden when I did the old, put your finger in the potting mix, to test for moist, does plant or container needs to be watered or not. I said to myself, wow this container is dry, needs to be watered. As I tried to learn & understand watering I asked someone who had much more fuchsia experience to also put his finger in the potting mix & tell me if the plant needs to be watered. He put his finger in the potting mix and said that's moist, doesn't need to be watered. You see how hard it is to correctly water a plant. As individuals we don't have the same understanding of moist. It was dry to me & moist to him. Since then I've come to the understanding that you should not be able to squeeze water out of your potting mix. Another example I use when I give a program is, wet a sponge & then squeeze it until no water runs out, that's moist.