

Fuchsias in July
By Jackie Downs
The Fuchsia Fan Editor

In most parts of the country the hot, dry weather of July has arrived. But that does not mean that you can't still have and enjoy growing fuchsias. Fuchsias can still be grown and thrive if given a little extra care and protection. Yes, it will probably mean more time must be given to these lovely colorful plants, but I assure you that it is worth the extra effort and care. The abundance of blooms and enjoyment fuchsias will be giving you for several more months will soon make you forget the extra attention you have had to give them.

Keep your plants on the cooler, more shaded side of the house, under trees that let filtered light through or under a lath protection, etc. to protect them from the hot, drying winds and direct sun. Plenty of light is essential but the burning sun will soon dry out the leaves and stems. Early morning or late afternoon sun is fine; it is the midday sun that is most harmful to most varieties of fuchsias. Basket fuchsias can be hung under patio roofs, etc. but hang the plants low enough to be sure the tops of the plants are not burned by the heat of the sun against the roof. A lot of heat is radiated from various types of roofs or cover even though the sun does not penetrate it. A bamboo or plastic shad can be lowered during the hottest part of the day and during hot, windy weather.

Humidity is very important to fuchsias. If you live inland, away from the coastal areas, the humidity is usually low, and it will be necessary for you to supply this extra moisture they need to help them look their best. It is well worth the cost to purchase a misting nozzle if you do not already have one. The fine mist does a good job and does not waste as much water. Always mist under and over the foliage, preferably in the early morning and late evening. If the soil is dry, give the plant a good watering. But check the soil first; don't just keep on pouring water into a container that is already moist. You are just wasting water and what is even more important, you could lose your fuchsias if the roots are constantly kept too wet.

Fuchsias are indeed moisture-loving plants, but they do not like to have their feet keep in wet soil. Roots will rot quickly, and the plant may soon be lost. It is impossible for one person to tell another how much or how often to water his/her own plants. How often can depend on how hot the temperature is; what type of soil the fuchsia is potted in (light, porous soil will dry much quicker than a heavier mix); what type of container—plastic, clay, wood, moss lined wire, et.; how good the drainage is (does the water drain through very fast or does it stand on top and in the container for several minutes before it starts to drain out). For best results, each container plant should be checked individually. Stick your finger down an inch or so into the soil. . .if dry, water thoroughly (this may mean watering several times), but if the soil feels moist, even if the top looks dry, don't pour in more water. If the soil is very light, I usually water thoroughly, let the water run out, and water again, to be sure all of the soil in the container, particularly the soil around the root system, is thoroughly moist.

Don't just pour water into a container because the plant is a little wilted looking, particularly after a hot and perhaps windy day. Check the soil first and if moist, just mist the foliage.

Fuchsias absorb a lot of moisture through their leaves and hot weather (particularly hot winds) pulls the moisture out of the leaves and therefore causes the fuchsias to become

limp and wilted. Don't mist fuchsias when the sun is directly upon them. A plant that is wilted from heat should perk up within a half hour after misting.

During hot weather, it is beneficial to wet down the area surrounding plants to help provide humidity and keep the area cooler.

Always keep fuchsias, and other flowering plants, well-groomed by removing faded blooms and seed pods. After fuchsias have had their heavy blooming and look straggly, they can have a light pruning to help promote more new growth and blooms. Don't forget to keep plants free of insects by spraying and be sure to feed them regularly. They are big eaters!

From: The National Fuchsia Society, The Fuchsia Fan of July 1984