

BASIC FUCHSIA CULTURE CALENDAR

Part III

July-August: Summer Care

By Rodney Bergquist

Watering is an important part of summer care. As temperatures rise, water evaporates from the potting mix and the plant uses more water in plant production. Check containers often. Most growers use the lift test to determine if the plant needs to be watered. Just lift the container to determine if its heavy or light. If the container is light it may need to be watered. If the container is heavy it more than likely does not need to be watered. Another test some growers use to determine if the plant needs to be watered is putting your finger A half inch into the potting soil to feel for moisture. If the potting mix is moist, it does not need to be watered. If its dry, then you may need to water. Depending on your potting mix and location, you may need to water daily or possibility twice a day on extreme hot days in Sacramento, while in Vallejo close to the Napa river, I may only water twice a week. Another variable is how you water. If you deep water with a hose (water until the water runs out the bottom of the pot) the potting mix will hold more water than if you water with a drip system which only releases a limited amount of water several times a day. On hot, dry windy days, hanging baskets can be lowered closer to the ground and the surrounding area watered or dampened to put moisture in the air and help compensate for low humidity.

WILTING FUCHSIAS: *Are often misunderstood.* Wilting or (drooping fuchsia leaves & flowers) may be the plant signaling you that it is taking a production time out, because it is hot out here. We go inside and turn on the air conditioning but the plant must endure the outside hot temperature. It should be noted that many fuchsias will do a slight wilt (leaves & flowers look kind of limp) during the afternoon on hot dry days. Keep in mind, hot days is not the fuchsias preferred climate. To be safe, do not water, check your plant to see if it needs water. Normally a wilting fuchsia on a hot day, means the plant feels threatened, because the plant realizes it cannot provide continuous water from the roots to the leaves and flowers in these extreme temperatures, so it closes the leaf openings temporally to prevent water evaporation through the leaf openings. If the plant is dry, move the it to a shaded area, mist the leaves and when it cools down, then if needed water the plant. **Note:** Because water is not being supplied to the flowers during the wilting process, the current batch of flowers may be lost. When temperatures cool down, the plant will usually perk back up and start the process of making the next round of flowers.