

BASIC FUCHSIA CALENDAR

Part I

By Rodney Bergquist

January (Dormant part of the Growing Season)

Most fuchsias go dormant in January requiring only minimal care. Protect plants from freezing and cold winds. Do not fertilize and only water enough to keep the potting mix slightly damp. Remember only the top part of the plant goes dormant but the roots never go dormant.

February (Pruning Landscape & Container Fuchsias)

Fuchsias must be pruned if you want your fuchsias to do well. Each year, fuchsias flower on the end of new growth. Pruning also provides you with the opportunity to reshape plants that last year grew out of bounds. Remove all dead branches, weak twigs and crossing branches. Baskets/hanging baskets are pruned to the edge of the container. Consider growth habit when pruning upright & landscape fuchsias. Some fuchsias are aggressive growers which can be pruned accordingly. Prune the height of landscape & container plants back one third to one half of the plant's height. Prune each side branch back to 2-3 nodes from the main trunk. If the plant is a slow grower, consider pruning only for shape. Cuttings & plants in small containers only need to be trimmed for shape but not pruned. When pruning, consider replacing the potting mix and root pruning if needed.

March & April (Fertilizing, Pinching & Pest Control)

After pruning, the plant will generate new green growth and new roots. After new growth starts to appear, you can start a weak fertilizing schedule, maybe $\frac{1}{4}$ strength. Some growers use high nitrogen fertilizer to encourage rapid growth while other growers like to use a more balanced fertilizer like 14-14-14. When the new growth has made two sets of leaves and a tip, pinch out or cut off the tip. Removing the tip is called pinching or stopping. Each time the tip is removed, the plants will send out two new side shots which increases the number of branches, which also increases the number of flowers the plant will have. When the side shoots have grown two additional sets of leaves with a tip, again remove that tip. Increasing branches by pinching also creates a bushy plant. Most fuchsias not grown for show, are pinched 2-3 times. Make sure you pinch all the way around the plant, so your plant does not end up with a lot of branches & flowers on one side and only a few on the opposite side. Watch for whitefly, aphids and initial gall mite plant damage. Early detection and control are an important part of fuchsia culture. Pest control articles are on our AFS website: www.americanfuchsiasociety.org/articledirectory/. It's also a good idea to visit a local fuchsia branch and nursery for the current pest control methods available.