

The First All-American Fuchsia
By Barney Gonsalves

Well! It's finally happened—after 60+ years we have the first truly all-American Fuchsia. Who named it so? Me, that's who, I've grown 1,000+ cultivars over the years and feel qualified enough to know an excellent variety when I grow one.

Many years ago the American Fuchsia Society did give Awards of Merit to various fuchsias for characteristics deemed to be at the vanguard for existing cultivars. How they were chosen and by whom I can only guess. I think new varieties were grown by three or four persons in different areas, and the fuchsias that did well in all locations were awarded this distinction.

To my knowledge the only places that give out "Award of Merit" are all in Europe and it is doubtful these awards will make a comeback in America. Since perfection is never accomplished but always the goal, my choice for all-American honors receives a 9.8 out of a possible 10.

A few years ago I wrote an article introducing 'Florable', a seed-grown fuchsia which proved to be a total disaster. This time I can safely say my choices for All-American recognition are truly worthy. Did you notice the plural "choices" in the previous sentence? It's true, there are two 'Angels Earrings' and both are sibling of the same cross; the blooms and the foliage look very similar. What sets them apart is what I refer to as "personality" or growth habit. 'Angels Earrings' is a very large growing trailing fuchsia which will get very, very large. It's sibling, 'Dainty Angels Earrings' can grow to be one to five feet tall and grows in semi-erect or upright form. The really interesting part of the scenario is where did these two fuchsias come from? Surprise, surprise! If you guessed Europe, you'd be wrong. Last guess? Try Japan. Japan is not noted as a hotbed for growing fuchsias, but it is home to a very large conglomerate called Suntory Inc. This old established firm has been a big time player in many ventures, including beer which is not exactly in the horticulture class. Conjecture tells me they hired the best horticulture scientists and went to work. Lucky for us the larder included many excellent plants besides my two All-American choices. Verbena, petunia, and others are now well established, proprietary, plants all over North America. All their plants, including the fuchsias, are patented and only a few licensed growers are allowed to propagate them.

From what I've been able to find out, 'Angels Earrings' and its sibling were products of a cross between two Brazilian species found growing in the hot, humid interior of the country. A guess by me, one of the parents would be *F. glazioviana*, as both plants have many of the traits of this species. The flowers on both cultivars; are nearly identical, a single red and purple in the classic fuchsia form, with sepals half up. The colors are very vibrant and seem to sparkle in bright light. The stamens and pistil make the bloom much longer than wide, stretching over an inch below the corolla. Both cultivars are self-branching and have a pleasing leathery leaf structure that belies its sturdiness. Last year I acquired 'Angels Earrings' in a 4" pot. Soon I put it in the final 12" basket and placed it in the Wild Animal Park garden. The weather last year was very hot and very humid. By the end of summer the plant was 4' wide and 6' high. It blooms all twelve months here and will flower quite well even though many berries are present on the plant. What makes these two new-comers All-American is that they will take temperatures into the high 90's with nary a problem. The temperatures were 105°F most days during the

summer, with humidity in the 90's, and the plant kept on growing & flowering. They will also tolerate low temperatures into the 20's. They are quite hardy by Northwest Fuchsia society standards and will give a fine display even in Walla Walla and Spokane.

The University of Georgia has a world renowned horticulture program and they test many new plants every year to find out which will survive the heat and humidity of the Deep South. Only the best of the plants that last through a Georgia summer are presented awards in recognition of their worthiness.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me introduce you to the only fuchsia in history ever to win a Gold Medal Award in 1997. Truly we now have a fuchsia that can be grown anywhere in America and that's why I call it the first all-American Fuchsia.

Barney Gonsalves, was a fuchsia icon who grew & maintained 1000 fuchsias at the fuchsia garden, San Diego, Wild Animal Park for many years.

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