

Fuchsia FAQ By Verna Berger

Over the past 20 years that we have been growing Fuchsia, many questions have arisen, and most of them are the same ones over and over. It seems that from one growing season to the other, I tend to forget; cause, result, remedy for each problem and have to end up searching answers all over again. So, I thought perhaps others were like me and would like this information in an article at the beginning of the season to correct problems from the get go'.

Many times I have asked other fuchsia lovers “**why are my plants just sitting there, not growing yet not dying either?**” My answer came only recently when reading somewhere that when you are planting/transplanting your fuchsias, do not water them for a couple days, so as to give the roots time to spread out a little in search of moisture in the new soil. If you overwater a newly planted Fuchsia it tends to create a swamp like environment in the new soil (where there are no roots) which the new little roots will not venture into. Remember, Fuchsias don't like wet feet? As a result the plant will grow in its initial small root ball and the surrounding soil will rot, and work its way toward the existing root ball infecting it as well and you have a sorry looking Fuchsias. So, when you are potting/transplanting your Fuchsias, be sure the existing roots are moist and not completely dry, then wait a couple days before beginning your watering schedule. Misting the plant itself is always acceptable.

Flower and Leaf Drop are signs your Fuchsia has suffered a bold shock. This could be from a drastic change in environment, i.e. inadequate lighting, drying out, overwatering, too cold or too hot. Your plant goes into survival mode, dropping flowers, buds and leaves that use up its energy. It is wise to watch newly purchased Fuchsias carefully as you don't know what kind of soil they are in. Some nurseries use a very porous soil that dries out very quickly and you can easily inadvertently allow your plant to dry out to the point of wilting. If the plant is allowed to wilt, even once, it will drop leaves. The same symptoms will occur if the plants sit in water without adequate drainage and develop root rot. It pays to plant your own Fuchsias in soil you are familiar with. When we purchase new Fuchsias (with the exception of hanging baskets) we always transplant to our current soil medium.

Scorch Marks on Leaves are usually the result of exposure to too much sun or could be caused by chemical sprays. Never spray your plants either with chemical or non-toxic remedies in the heat of the day or when the sun is directly on them.

Pale or Yellowing Leaves can be caused by lack of fertilizer. Fuchsias are heavy feeders and need to be fed on a regular basis whether full strength once a week (according to manufacturer's directions) or ¼ strength each time you water. Yellowing leaves can also be caused by a lack of magnesium. An easy solution is to water the soil with a mixture of 1 Tablespoon Epsom Salts dissolved in a glass of hot water, then added to a gallon of water. It's pretty amazing how quickly this works to green up your foliage.

As a Fuchsia grows, becomes older and the stem becomes woody, leaves will yellow and fall off naturally.

Lack of Blossoms could be caused by lack of adequate fertilizer or by excessive heat. Once you are done pinching your plants and want an abundance of blossoms, you can switch to a fertilizer higher in Phosphate (middle number of the fertilizer formula). This should help produce more blooms.

When temperatures reach about 80 degrees, Fuchsias tend to quit blooming and a prolonged heat spell can cause severe stress. If possible during this time, try to move them to a cooler, more airy location.

Leaf Redness is usually caused by exposure to low temperatures. Many fuchsia react to drastic weather fluctuations, but the redness causes few problems, if any.

Being alert, keeping your eyes observant and your "Troubleshooting Cap" on from the beginning of the Fuchsia growing season, will make your season more pleasurable and rewarding.

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