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FUCHSIA CARE GUIDE

There are more than 8000 Fuchsia hybrids and cultivars available at present, many of which have potential for bonsai cultivation. I would however recommend using varieties that are reliably hardy for ease of cultivation and vigour in your climate. Though leaf size can be reduced, flower size cannot, and small flowered varieties are preferable. Try to avoid variegated forms as they are weaker and have a tendency to revert in poor light.

General Cultivation:

Patience.... Allow your fuchsia to acclimatise to its new home. Remove packing and place in a semi shaded position outside for about 7 days. Fuchsia hardiness is variable depending on particular species. The miniature fuchsias are generally hardy down to around -2°C . Temperatures below this will cause rapid leaf fall and can, on occasions, cause dieback of the branches. Specimens do require a dormancy otherwise they lose their vigour. It is advisable to leave trees outside until at least the first frosts of the Autumn and then move to a light, frost-free position such as a cold greenhouse for the remainder of the winter. (Don't forget to water it even in the winter.) After all possibility of frost has passed in mid-spring, place the tree back outside in full sun (A little protection from the mid-day sun in the height of summer is advisable). Fuchsias enjoy high humidity levels and regular misting is necessary during high outdoor temperatures, however they dislike overly-wet compost and over-watering should be avoided.

Growth is not prompted in the Spring until day-time temperatures reach 10°C on a daily basis. This can result in plants not exhibiting growth until as late as May or June in cooler climates. Plants not showing new growth until this time should not be regarded as having died.

Position, Light Levels & Temperature:

Fuchsias are outdoor trees. Placement in full sun will encourage flower production at the expense of vegetative (foliage) growth; if the tree is still in training, it is worth providing some shade to encourage new shoots at the expense of flowers.

Watering:

Don't allow to dry out and don't allow to sit in water for more than 30 minutes.

Fertilizing:

A general balanced fertiliser will be fine throughout the year.

Pruning / Training:

Fuchsia require weekly pinching during the summer to slow over-vigorous shoots and to reduce leaf size and increase ramification.

As fuchsia produce flower buds on a continual basis throughout the growing season, maintenance pruning will not reduce flower numbers significantly.

It is recommended that trees requiring strong trunk or branch growth have their flower buds removed continually to conserve strength for growth.

Fuchsias have a tendency to sprout suckers from the roots and these should be removed.

Due to their vigour and prolific budding, Fuchsia require little wiring as they are easily pruned to shape. Young shoots thicken rapidly so any wire applied must be watched closely to avoid wire-marks. Once growth has hardened off it becomes very brittle and is easily broken with rough handling.

Repotting:

Fuchsia should be repotted every one or two years as root growth is very vigorous.

Use a basic soil mix.

Repotting fuchsia bonsai is best done in early Spring just as the new foliage begins to sprout.

This usually happens sometime in March in the northern hemisphere.

When repotting, do not remove all of the original soil, but rather leave a core of older soil beneath the trunk to preserve the health of the bonsai.

Avoid cutting too many roots as well, as this can often cause the fuchsia to die back in places above ground. Use a free-draining soil medium, such as a mixture of akadama, lava rock and pumice in a ratio of 3:1:1. The soil particle size should be approximately 2mm—6mm for medium and large trees, and slightly small for shohin size bonsai. In some circumstances a general good quality compost can be used with some grit in a 3:1 ratio. If in any doubt please seek professional help or advice.

Pests and Diseases:

Fuchsia are susceptible to aphids and vine weevils and regular inspection should be carried out and treatment applied as needed. Trees experiencing wet soil conditions and poor air circulation are more susceptible to attacks of mildew and should be sprayed with fungicides.

Propagation:

Fuchsias are easily propagated using several methods. To obtain thick trunks, air-layer branches from mature ground-growing specimens from May to the end of June when the new buds start to extend. Cuttings can be taken at any time during the growing season.

Happy bonsaiing!!

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