

Hardy fuchsias are easy to grow if you pay attention to their cultural requirements. If planted in containers, they will act like large annual fuchsias. In order to be hardy through the winter, they need to be planted in the open ground where they can develop a deep root system.

Hardy fuchsias like more sun than annual fuchsias, though they do not like hot southern or western exposures. A sunny site that warms up early in the spring will promote faster growth and bloom. However, avoid reflected heat.

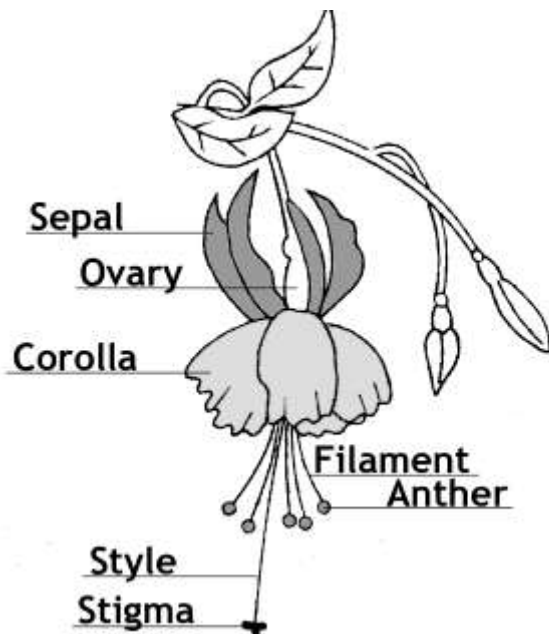
Pay extra attention when planting fuchsias into your landscape. Dig a hole approximately 16 to 18 inches across and 12 to 14 inches deep. If the drainage in that area is slow, dig down another 6 inches and mix in coarse sand, perlite or pumice. Do not amend this bottom soil with compost because it will retain too much moisture and could rot the fuchsia's roots. Mix equal parts of soil and organic matter (compost, peat moss, composted manure, etc.). Choose an organic rose and flower fertilizer; to the box's specifications, mix some of the fertilizer to your soil mix. Lightly scratch the outside of the rootball to help encourage root growth. Fill in the hole with this soil concoction and place the fuchsia in the hole so that the crown of the plant (where the roots meet the stem) is about 3 inches below the surface of the soil. See the diagram below. Do not allow soil to touch the main woody stem the first year. Soil or compost touching the stem could cause it to rot clear through. This extra room around the crown is also a great place to direct the watering can when you go to water your fuchsia. Gradually throughout the summer, add the soil mix to the hole until it is level with the surrounding soil.



As soon as the plant starts to grow, add an all purpose liquid fertilized such as a 5-5-5. Apply this fertilizer once every two weeks when the plants are young. When the plant reaches a nice size and starts to bloom, change your fertilizing schedule. Now, use the all purpose fertilizer one week and a low nitrogen fertilize the next week. Alaska® Morbloom Fertilizer is a great 0-10-10, low nitrogen fertilizer.

Groom the hardy fuchsias by removing spent flowers and seed pods (which resemble small cherries) to encourage continued flower production. Regularly clean out all dead leaves and branches. In the fall, allow the plant to gradually harden off and drop its leaves. Do not prune back at this time. Pruning now (or too early in the spring) can encourage tender new growth on the plant that will be killed by even a light frost. Once cold weather sets in, form a mound of mulch around the plant. The higher the mound, the less dieback you will have and therefore the larger your plant will be in the spring.

After the last frost in the spring, pull back some of the mulch. Once you see new shoots, remove the remaining mulch completely and allow the soil to warm up naturally. Wait to see if there is new growth on the older branches before pruning. Remove all the spindly growth from the crown, all broken or crossing branches, and any stems thinner than a pencil lead. Finally, open up the center of the plant as needed to keep it growing vigorously. When the fuchsia starts sending up shoots 2 to 3 inches long, it is time to fertilize again. Use an all purpose fertilizer as you did for the first year. Be careful not to over-fertilize; too much chemical fertilizer can burn tender roots.



The distinction between hardy and tender fuchsias is not so much a matter of botanical classification as it is a matter of winter hardiness. Fuchsias are shrubs of the genus *Fuchsia* in the family Onagraceae. Hundreds of named varieties come from about a half a dozen species and dozens of hybrids. Most hardy varieties have a bit of *Fuchsia magellanica* somewhere in the family line. There are upright fuchsias, somewhat upright, and trailing fuchsias. The flower could be a single, semi-double or double and in all shades of cream, pink, purple and you guessed it – fuchsia! The color of the **sepals** and **corolla** are usually noted in the plant's description. Sometimes the **filament** is brightly colored and may also be noted.

For more information and to share your passion about these plants, check out the local chapters of the Northwest Fuchsia Society! The Northwest Fuchsia Society has an excellent website, <http://www.nwfuchsiasociety.com>. They also offer a couple of books written by NWFS members specifically for NW fuchsia lovers.