Fuchsias are one of the most widely cultivated plants in the world. They are easy to grow and boost plentiful exotic blooms from spring to fall. Fuchsias are available in a variety of colors and forms offering gardeners the chance to feature them in hanging baskets, as hedges and even trees. The purpose of this handout is to cover everything there is to know about fuchsias. Should you need more information, we invite you to see one of our associates here at McShane’s for details.

Fuchsia History
Fuchsias originate from South America, growing wild there and in New Zealand. The first fuchsias arrived in London from Brazil in 1788, and were a huge hit. Ferocious breeding all over Europe meant that by 1848 there were more than 520 cultivars - a number that has swelled to a staggering 8,000 today.

Basic Fuchsia Culture
The fuchsia growing cycle along the Central Coast starts in the late winter or early spring when the weather begins to warm and the frost period is over. The cycle ends in November or December when the fuchsias go dormant. In milder climates they may not lose all of their leaves. These general culture rules will increase your plant’s beauty and number of blooms it produces.

Pruning and Repotting
Container plants are repotted and pruned at the same time either in January or early February depending on whether you are inland or near the coast. Prune trailing plants back to the edge of the pot leaving at least two leaf nodes for new growth back to two nodes from the main stem. Cut away one inch or more of the old soil all around the outside of the root ball and replace it with new potting soil.

Potting Mixtures
The essential elements of any planting mix must provide good drainage and aeration. Fuchsias also require a slightly acid potting medium. We recommend Mater Nursery Gardeners Gold or Green All Potting Soil. Fuchsias like good drainage, if need be, add perlite or micro-bark. Always start with a good starter fertilizer like Master Start. We sell it in 5lb, 10lb, and 20lb bags.

Watering
During the growing season, keep plants moist, but not over-watered. Water them whenever the soil appears or feels dry below the top layer. Soak potted plants until water flows freely from the drainage holes. In warmer climates hanging containers may need watering on a daily basis, best done in early morning. Mist the foliage on hot or windy days, if the plants are in the shade. Foliage burn marks are caused when a plant is watered or misted while it is exposed to the sun. Mist, do not water, the plant if the temperature is above 80°F, as the fuchsia roots do not take up water at this temperature. Fuchsias stored in the winter, during the dormant stage, should not become bone-dry.
Light and Sun Exposure
Avoid planting fuchsias in full sun or deep shade as they need filtered sun to bloom. All-day, high filtered sun from tall trees, lath structures or shade cloth is ideal. The fuchsia will tolerate early morning sun until 10:00 a.m., but not mid-day sun. Some types of fuchsias, such as singles in the shades of orange, are heat resistant but heavy frost will damage them. Large doubles perform poorly in hot, dry weather due to the heat and lack of humidity. Heat will reduce the size of the blossom and plant. White blooms when exposed to the sun turn slightly pink.

Fertilization
Fuchsias are heavy feeders and potted plants must be fertilized weekly. We recommend applying Master Nursery Rose and Flower Food at half strength until the plant is well leafed out. Then apply the same fertilizer full strength until the plant sets buds. Use the fertilizer at half strength during the blooming season. The most important element of feeding is to establish a routine and stick with it regardless of which fertilizer you use. This method produces a plant with abundant growth and blossoms. Plants in the ground do not require as much fertilizer as the soil holds the nutrients. Late September or early October apply, Master Bloom, 0-10-10 to harden the plant off for dormancy. Leave on the seed pods (berries). Late fall is the only time when, Master Bloom is used.

Pinching or Shaping
Pinching tips off encourages lateral branches and more blossoms. When new growth is about three inches long or has two sets of leaves, pinch out the center tip. Two new branches will form from this pinch. Continue pinching all the tip growth in this manner until the desired size and shape is attained. It will take six to ten weeks for blossoms to mature after the last pinching. Single blossoms develop in the shorter time. During the growing season remove the seed pods.

Pests
The Fuchsia Bud or “Gall Mite” is the number one problem for fuchsia growers in North America. The growing tips and blooms on the affected plant shrivel and curl, looking similar to peach leaf curl. The best way to control this pest is to cut off all affected foliage and dispose of it. Dip your cutting tool into rubbing alcohol after each cut, thus sanitizing it. Spray with Captain Jack’s Dead Bug Brew Insect Killer, for best results. It is an excellent environment friendly control.
During the dormant season spray the fuchsias once in late December and again in January with dormant spray, such as All Seasons Horticulture Oil. The oil smothers all eggs and larvae on the plant. Take off all leaves before spraying as this removes places for the bugs to hide.

Aphids, Whiteflies, and Red Spider mites also attack fuchsias. Spraying with All Seasons Horticulture Oil or Neem Oil Spray during the growing season as needed will control these predators. Spray only when the plant is infected or predators are present as these are contact sprays. These are nontoxic sprays. Consult one of the many friendly McShane’s Nursery Professionals when plants are affected by disease for the appropriate sprays.