**Fuchsia** L.

**Other Common Names:** Lady’s Eardrops.

**Family:** Onagraceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Although most cultivars are not cold hardy outside of the subtropics, a few such as *F. magellanica* are hardy in Mediterranean type climates in USDA zones 8(7) through 11.

**Foliage:** Evergreen to semi-evergreen, rarely deciduous; alternate, opposite, or whorled; simple; lanceolate, ovate, to obovate; variable in length from 1 to 3 or sometimes more; medium to dark green, sometimes bronze or reddish beneath or on new growth; also a few white or pink variegated cultivars are available; the pinnate venation is often impressed above and may be purplish or red in color on some cultivars; soft pubescence may be present on some genotypes; margins may be entire to slightly serrate; tips are nearly rounded to acuminate.

**Flower:** The perfect flowers are nearly always pendent, dangling on long thin green to red peduncles; flowers may be singles or in short cluster-like racemes or panicles; flowers are seldom a single color, with the sepals and petals presenting different, often contrasting colors; the four sepals are usually fused into a more or less fleshy calyx tube with flared lobes; colors range from white, pink, fuchsia, salmon, red, purple, to blue-violet; petals in the corolla may be singles, semi-doubles or doubles; the petals and calyx lobes may be much reduced with the calyx tube the showy portion in some taxa such as *F. triphylla*, but in most cultivars the petals are often large and showy; Hodgson (2002) colorfully describes the flowers as resembling miniature dangling ballerinas in tutus with the tube as the body, flared lobes and petals forming the tutu, and projecting sigma and stamens as the legs; deadheading encourages increased bloom.

**Fruit:** Fruits, when formed, are small berries; these are not ornamental and should be deadheaded to encourage flowering.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — usually slender; glabrous to downy; often initially erect, arching to become pendent, especially as they form flowers; Buds — vegetative buds are foliose and green to reddish in color; glabrous to downy pubescent; flower buds quickly elongating after formation to develop into flowers; Bark — bark is not formed when plants are used as seasonal annuals, but it is light tan to gray-brown in color and develops variously fissured to almost corky textures on old trunks of plants when they can become established as woody shrubs.

**Habit:** Growth habits of *Fuchsia* vary from herbaceous perennials to medium size woody shrubs; mature heights vary from 6 to 10 tall; overall textures tend to fall in the medium range.

**Cultural Requirements:** Given the tropical regions from which many *Fuchsia spp.* originate one might be inclined to think that they would be heat tolerant, but this is not the case since most originate from high elevation locations with moderately cool temperatures; most taxa of *Fuchsia* decline rapidly in the combination of heat and high humidity, making them poor candidates to be perennials in most of the Southern U.S., including Texas; *Fuchsia* are much better adapted to Mediterranean type of climates and reach their maximal growth in the Continental U.S. in California; in suitable environments, *Fuchsia* bloom best in full sun, but here we often encourage planting in morning sun and afternoon shade or day-long filtered shade to increase survival later into summer; regardless of the climate, *Fuchsia* are generally intolerant of drought and hot drying winds, requiring moist fertile soils and regular irrigation for good growth; deadheading will increase bloom and branching density, but the need for this is variable among cultivars; likewise, salinity and soil pH tolerances vary among cultivars.
**Pathological Problems:** *Fuchsia* are beset by a number of disease pathogens and insect pests, but white flies are probably the most universal problem and tend to become very damaging in interiorscapes and greenhouses; other common problems include aphids, bud mites, nematodes, thrips, mealybugs, Japanese beetles, scale insects, *Botrytis* blight, and rusts.

**Ornamental Assets:** The only reason that most cultivars of *Fuchsia* are grown are for their long season of two-tone flowers; a few plants are grown for the foliage, but this is a secondary asset; the flowers are attractive to hummingbirds and butterflies.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Intolerance to cold, heat, high humidity, drought, and many other environmental stresses limit the season and/or sites in which most cultivars of *Fuchsia* can be grown.

**Landscape Utilization:** Although *Fuchsia* are suitable for a very wide range of uses in Mediterranean or moderate tropical climates, they are more limited in both timing and situations for Texas landscapes; most *Fuchsia* are incorporated into our landscapes as transition season hanging baskets, patio containers, or transition plantings in ground where small pockets of color are needed close to walkways and seating areas; flowers of most cultivars of *Fuchsia* are shown to best advantage where they can be viewed from the side or beneath, hence, from hanging baskets, raised planters, window boxes, or ledges placed at or slightly above eye level; in warmer portions of our region, *Fuchsia* may be grown as winter annuals; *Fuchsia* are also encountered at times in high light interiorscape settings.

**Other Comments:** If the flowers of this genus were not so stunning, these taxa would have been long banished from our regional landscapes because they are anything but Texas tough; however, like numerous Texas gardeners, the tantalizing blooms repeatedly lure me in and I enjoy yet another spring of beautiful flowers only to watch these beauties wither in our summer heat; the genus name honors the 16th century German physician and botanist named Leonhard Fuchs.

**Native Habitat:** The cultivars of *Fuchsia* are of garden origin, but various species of the genus *Fuchsia* can be found in Central America, South America, and New Zealand.

**Related Taxa:** Many of the cultivars known as Garden Hybrid Fuchsias or Common Fuchsias are placed under the name *Fuchsia × hybrida* Hort. ex P.L.F.L. de Vilmorin, which are purported hybrids of *F. magellanica* × *Fuchsia fulgens* A.P. de Candolle; however, this is likely not correct in many instances as a wide range of species are thought to contribute genetic material to the hundreds, if not thousands, of cultivars of *Fuschia* in cultivation around the world.

**Fuchsia magellanica** J.B.A.P.M. de Lamarck

- *Fuchsia conica*, *Fuchsia discolor*, *Fuchsia globosa*, *Fuchsia gracilis*, *Fuchsia macrostema*, *Fuchsia riccartonii*, *Fuchsia tenella*

  - **C** This species is popular in Mediterranean climates where it is used as a garden shrub reaching 4N to 6N 10N in height with a similar spread; it has smaller flowers than some of the other species, but improved cold tolerance; in colder climates it may serve as a 2N to 3N tall herbaceous perennial; the flowers have red sepals and purple petals.

  - **C** Although more cold tolerant than many other *Fuchsia*, functioning as a herbaceous perennial into USDA zone 7 and as a woody shrub into warmer parts of USDA zone 8, *F. magellanica* is intolerant of summer heat and humidity; this greater degree of cold tolerance may make it useful as a winter annual further north than some of the more cold sensitive *Fuchsia*.

**Fuchsia triphylla** L.

- **C** Many modern botanists relegate this group of plants to a subclassification below the species level within the genus; they are often referred to collectively as the Triphylla Group; this taxon has a more erect habit and tendency for reddish foliage; flowers are tubular resembling those of...
some Lonicera spp., such as Lonicera sempervirens, in that they are mostly tubular with only very small reflexed sepal lobes; the flower colors range from orange-red to red.

Plants seldom exceed 2 to 3 ft tall; some cultivars in this group appear to be more heat and bud mite resistant than many of the other cultivars grown in our region; otherwise, they are subject to most of the same cultural limitations associated with other Fuchsia; this species is thought to originate from Haiti and Santo Domingo.