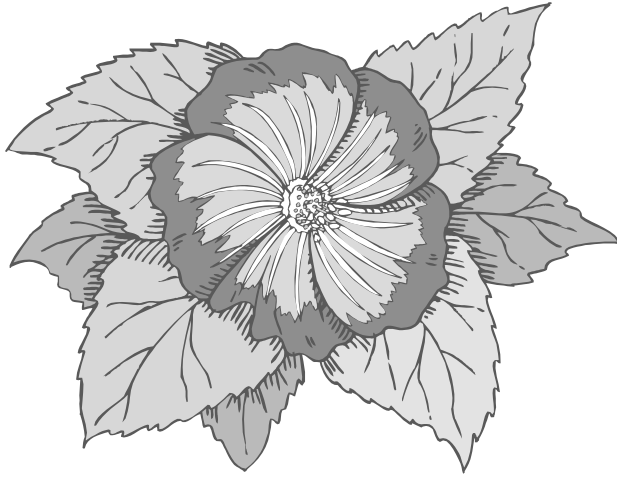


HIBISCUS CARE



Tropical Hibiscus are good performers indoors and out. With a little care they can reward you with beautiful blooms through all the seasons. In this brochure we are assuming that you will be bringing your hibiscus in and out at the right times, due to our climate conditions.

It is very important to realize that they are tropical plants and for best results they prefer **temperatures between 60 and 90 degrees**. Higher or lower temperatures for short periods may not injure them, but they may shed leaves or drop buds. Plants tend to shut down when temperatures reach over 90° F. due to a combination of temperature, water and humidity.

If the temperature drops below 50 degrees at night most growing and blooming will stop until temperatures rise. Flower size will become smaller and occasionally deformed. **Hibiscus should be moved indoors before they freeze**. The best recommendation is at least a week before the first predicted frost.

Tropical hibiscus experiencing below freezing temperatures may be injured or even killed. Age and condition of the plant and length of exposure will determine the degree of damage done to the plant. Freezing temperatures should be avoided.

Temperatures over 95° degrees can cause buds to drop off. Hibiscus can survive temperatures as high as 115° degrees, provided they have adequate water. Your hibiscus really wants a stable environment, with steady even and mild conditions.



WATERING

In hot weather, water the plant more often but do not let it stand in a saucer full of water for extended periods. If the leaves droop in hot weather, provide enough water for leaves to regain their crispness. Several waterings a day in the heat of summer is better for hibiscus than one saturating watering in the morning. The thought behind this is that in late afternoon the plant becomes stressed and begins to shut down sometimes even wilting. The plant must then put some energy into recovery that it would have spent on growth had it not suffered.

In cold weather there is a danger of fungal diseases attacking the roots. Prolonged exposure to cold and wet conditions caused by over-watering is the primary cause.

Root rot is the number one enemy of hibiscus. Indoors in winter can also be very dry, so try misting the leaves each day or placing a tray with gravel under the pot. Fill the tray with water. This will help to increase humidity around your hibiscus. Humidifiers are a more expensive option, but can be beneficial to hibiscus and other tropical plants. **It is better to let the plant dry a little between waterings than to over-water.**

FEEDING

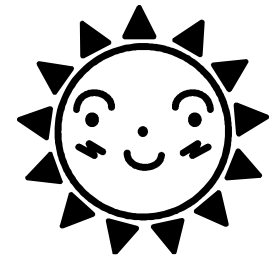
Feeding your hibiscus is very important to promote blooms and a good over all healthy appearance. Fertilize when pots are moist, not dry. Hibiscus like to be fed at regular intervals, not overfed occasionally. Look for a fertilizer that lists iron, copper, manganese and other minerals, as they are good for hibiscus. A water soluble fertilizer is best, and used with a time release fertilizer you can get even better results. We recommend Nature's Source Natural Fertilizer along with Osmocote slow Release Fertilizer. Miracle Grow can also be used. Please follow all label instructions.

Nitrogen is the first number in the formula. Nitrogen promotes good green leaf color and foliage growth. **Too much nitrogen can cause your hibiscus to grow**

foliage and not flower.

Phosphorus is the second number in the formula. A fertilizer with **low or medium** amounts of phosphorus is best for hibiscus. Fertilizers high in phosphorus are not recommended for hibiscus as they inhibit the plants ability to take up and use minerals such as iron, copper and manganese that it needs to perform at peak levels. Avoid fertilizers labeled Super bloom because they are high in phosphorus.

Hibiscus needs a fertilizer high in potassium (the third number in the formula) to produce the best flowers. You may have heard that plants shouldn't be fertilized in winter. Not true for the hibiscus. It does not go dormant and needs regular feeding. You may cut back to half strength if your plant is in a darker place, otherwise feed it as normal.



LIGHT

A sunny window is ideal. Your hibiscus requires sunlight to develop buds. Artificial light will be necessary if you want your plant to bloom all winter. In either case, some **leaves may yellow** and drop and some buds may fall **during the adjustment period**. In lower light conditions expect less bloom and growth from your hibiscus.

Prune to control plant size, shape, invigorate old plants, and get rid of dead, or damaged wood. Using only sharp clean shears, make a clean cut just above an eye or leaf junction. For shaping purposes, try removing the longest third of branches and in 4 to 6 weeks prune the next longest third if necessary. To keep getting blooms, think of your plant as having three sides. Prune one side at a time and the other two will produce blooms. Return in 4 to 6 weeks and prune the next side.

During the hot summer months, Hibiscus may be grown outdoors in sun to partial shade and a cooling spray of water in the afternoon may be needed to help revive overheated plants.

INSECT PESTS

Insects such as aphids, thrips, spider mites and whiteflies can be a problem. Many can be hosed away in summer with a good spray from the garden hose. Most insects do not like humidity so daily sprayings in summer can be a deterrent. In winter, place your hibiscus in the shower.

APHIDS, also known as plant lice are about 3mm long with long legs and antennae. Some have wings. They are usually found on the undersides of new shoots and buds. They come in many colors, live in groups and often you will find empty white cast off shells among the living insects. Aphids suck the juices out of plants causing stunted growth and distorted leaves. Buds left untreated will cause the affected area to curl and die. Their excretions referred to as honeydew can also attract a black sooty mold.

Control: Earth-tone Insecticidal Soap. Apart from pure water it is the softest approach. Direct contact is necessary. Natural Guard Neem RTU (Ready to Use) works as growth regulator and repellent as well. Also available as Natural Guard Neem Concentrate. Earth-tone 3n1 RTU contains Sulfur and Pyrethrum. For larger areas use Pyrethrin Garden Insect Spray. (Concentrate).

TIP: You can hose off with water most of the insects prior to other insecticide spraying. After the plant surface is dry spray both the plant and the ground for optimum effect.

THRIPS are yellow, tan or black, they also suck the juices from your leaves causing pale spots. A severe infestation may lead to the yellowing and dying of leaves. They like hot dry climates.

Control: Earth-Tone Insecticidal Soap Borer, Bagworm, Tent Caterpillar & Leaf-miner Spray. Works on the young larval stages. Triple Action Plus RTU is also available as Concentrate.

TIP: It is necessary to repeat the treatments several times with 3-5 day intervals between because the eggs are laid inside the plant tissue. Cutting down the plant before treatment will help recovery.

WHITEFLIES are tiny insects that resemble dandruff, they have two pair of wings and are covered in a powdery wax. Younger whiteflies are wingless and do the most damage living on the undersides of leaves and sucking the juices. Adults will live on the underside of leaves and may be induced to fly by the tapping of the leaf.

Control: Garden Insect Killer, RTU Earth-Tone Insecticidal Soap & Triple Action Plus (also available as RTU.)

TIP: Most of the eggs will be on the underside of the bottom leaves of the plant. In addition to spraying, removing bottom leaves will both reduce the amount of pests and shorten the time of treatment needed. It will also give easier access for treating the rest of the plant on the underside of the leaves. Repeat the sprays few times because of the long life cycle of the pest.

SPIDER MITES, are related to crabs and spiders, having eight legs rather than six. They are tiny spiders with bristly backs, almost invisible to the naked eye. Try placing a white paper under a leaf and tapping it; the mites will look like fine sand that is crawling around. They spin small webs which are clearly visible on the undersides of leaves. Small yellow or brown spots make appear on the tops of plants, and a severe infestation causes a dusty look. Plants with infestations of spider mites should be isolated away from other plants. Spider mites dislike humidity.

Control: Dusting Sulfur can be applied as dust or spray. Horticultural Oil Spray Triple Action Plus. (Also available as RTU.)

TIP: For Spider Mite control make sure to hit the under side of the leaves where both mites and their eggs will be. Removing the most effected bottom leaves of the plant will bring quickest control.



POTTING & PRUNING

Don't over pot your plant. If it is in a one gallon pot the next step is a two gallon. Use a good potting soil that will provide excellent drainage and aeration. We recommend the Ultimate Potting Mix for hibiscus. Prune the roots. It is very effective in stimulating growth. New roots seem to stimulate new top growth. If you are planting your hibiscus out into the garden make sure water will run away from the base of the plant and not build up around the roots.

Following these tips we hope you will be successful in your efforts and have many years of enjoyment from your hibiscus.

Home Care for Your TROPICAL HIBISCUS



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