

## Fuchsia News Spring 2015

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Dear All

As usual a few notes before we start!

- As ever, please feel free to use any article etc from any edition of Fuchsia News – they are there for your newsletters etc.
- A quick reminder – Affiliation fees are due £20 please! Most Societies are paid up to date but if not please can you send me the order for show awards by the end of June – so that it is not too much of a rush
- My thanks to everyone who sends their newsletters and lets me use their articles for Fuchsia News, it my makes life – so much easier!
- Please don't forget to check on your Society details on the BFS website, we do try and keep it up to date as much as possible, but we do need your input! Let me know and I will update your entry. If we are advertising your show on your entry – please don't forget to include a postcode – so many of us use a satnav and a postcode makes it so much easier.

### Top Ten 2015

It is that time of the year again and I do need your help!

A special request to all show managers. Please can you send me the results of the 3.5", 5", 6.5" or the metric equivalent, and any size pot classes. Listing if possible the cultivars that came first, second and third - it helps with my points system. Also I would like if possible the results of the basket, half basket and hanging pot classes.

I really appreciate that it makes a lot of extra work on show day there is always such a lot of interest in the final results. I do hope that you can help - please can you send me your results by the end of September. My address is at the front of this publication or why not email it to [carol@thebfs.org.uk](mailto:carol@thebfs.org.uk) Also if you want to tell us all a little bit about your show then please feel free!

Are you trying anything new for your show this year – a new venue or format – we would all love to know.

I look forward to hearing from you

### Arthur's Articles!

#### A touch of Nostalgia:

Reading Carols article in the BFS Spring Bulletin took me on a journey down Memory Lane. There was a listing of 23 fuchsias from the top tens fuchsias from 1969 to 1978. I can remember growing all but two of the cultivars listed there, the two that I never grew being *Icecap* & *Mr A Huggett*.

Some I remember with some fondness because at one time or another they brought me red cards, especially *Celia Smedley*, *Display*, *Snowcap*, *Tom Thumb* and *Rufus*. I grew *Celia Smedley* as a full standard and had considerable success with it and actually retained it (yes the original plant) until only two years ago when it failed to return over one winter. *Display* I remember growing as a quarter standard and taking it to the Harrogate show when it won me a second place card. Harrogate was a two day show in mid week and I made two trips up to stage my entry and to fetch the plants back.

Two of the plants listed I still grow, *Beacon* & *Rufus*. *Beacon* I grow in the garden as one of my hardies. *Rufus* I grow as a pot plant because even after all these years I like the slender red flowers and its very vigorous growth habit.

Over the years I have grown or tried to grow standards of *Cloverdale Pearl*, *Joy Patmore*, *Tennessee Waltz*, and *Snowcap* without ever achieving what I desired in a show standard but all of them went onto the show bench at society shows over the years with indifferent success.

The one cultivar listed there that I tried and tried with was *Flirtation Waltz*; I could never get a good shaped plant without marking the blooms. I only had to look at it the wrong way to get damage on the blooms and I think most exhibitors had the same problem. The only time I saw a perfect plant on the show bench was at the Northwest Fuchsia

Festival many years ago when I judged the Show with Peter Holloway. If I remember correctly it was staged by Pat Rogers.

Thank you, Carol for taking me on this walk down memory lane. It has certainly brought back some memories of people, fuchsias and times long gone.

### **The unpredictability of growing fuchsias:**

I have been growing fuchsias for a considerable amount of time (on and off since I was about seven years old so say 25years!!) and I cannot remember one year when I have not heard the phrase "It's not been a very good year this year" followed by some comment on our unpredictable weather and its adverse effect on a certain aspect of the cultivation. I must admit this comment is usually coming from a showman.

The best one I think I have ever heard was the late Ken Pilkington one year at a BFS Northern Show when it used to be held at Sale Town Hall. When asked why he had no fuchsias on the bench replied "They got all burnt up by the sun" Now we know Ken lived just outside Blackpool and with the weather in that area being what it is, that was to my mind a classic.

But the point of my comments is based on my own experience. I grow fuchsias to stage on our Fuchsia Friends display at the Malvern Spring Festival which this year is the 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> May. In the past I have always struggled to get my fuchsias in bloom for the display. This year I am struggling to hold the blooms back. Apart from lowering my growing lights about nine inches, nothing as changed in my growing technique and I can only put the early blooming down to the bright clear days thought February and March. The other thing that has surprised me is that the double flowered cultivars seem to be blooming earlier than the single flowered cultivars. In saying that though, a single flowered cultivar by Sid Garcia, *Silver Surfer* is in full glorious bloom.

*Such is life!*

### **John's Jottings!**

#### **Growing a hanging bag of fuchsias.**

I grow quite a lot of fuchsias in hanging bags sometimes also known as hanging pouches. They are easy to grow, can be hung on walls or fences, are not so prone to damage as hanging baskets and pots when being blown about in strong winds and are relatively inexpensive. I have been surprised that some of the bags have lasted five seasons or more. So how do I do it? First you need to choose suitable varieties to use. I suggest small flowered varieties that are very suitable for hanging pots. I use the bags which have 9 slits in the front in two columns, a column of five and a staggered column of four.

In March, I take a strip of twelve cuttings in a twelve compartment strip. This is the type which has 60 cells to a standard seed tray and split into five strips of twelve. Any type can be used, what is critical is the root ball should be small enough to fit in through the slits, but not so small that it falls out again very easily. The cuttings are taken all at the same time, and as close to the same size as possible. When the cuttings have rooted they are acclimatised to the greenhouse conditions and grown on until the cells are full of root. I stop them if necessary at 3 pairs of leaves.

I plant up the bags in mid to late April. The first thing I do is to cut a cell from an old strip and make sure all the rim or lip at the top is removed. The part that remains is used as a sleeve to insert the cutting into the bag without damaging the roots. Fill the bag with your usual moistened compost up to the level of the first slit. Remove a rooted cutting from the tray, put into the sleeve and insert into the slit from the front of the bag. From the inside remove the sleeve from the root ball, adjust the position so the cutting comes out of the bag horizontally and angled slightly to the edge of the bag and make sure the edges of the slit are back to their normal position on the bag face. Fill with compost to bury the roots of the cutting until the next slit is reached in the second column. Repeat the operation angling the cutting slightly out towards the edge of the bag (opposite to the first one). Repeat the whole process until the every slit on the face of the bag has a cutting in it. At this stage I normally lie the bag down for one to two weeks to allow the roots to start to move out into the compost and mist the plants daily. After this time, hang the bag upright, top up with compost and plant two more of the cuttings in the top of the bag then water in. If the plants have not been stopped, stop all the plants at three pairs of leaves. This is usually the only stop I give the plants when grown in this way. Grow on inside the greenhouse, but start to place outside on suitable days watering when necessary.

Move outside to their final positions in late May/early June depending where you live in the country. Once established, watering is not so easy just using a watering can. When you buy a pack of these bags, included are some clear plastic pointed nozzles, perforated with holes. These fit into a one litre PET bottle used for carbonated drinks. If you fill a bottle with water and feed, fit the nozzle, quickly turn upside down and push the spike into the top of the compost, the water percolates out slowly wetting the whole bag. When the bag is established and dry, one litre of liquid is sufficient to completely wet the compost again. I normally find these are in flower by late June/early July and continue flowering for most of the summer. I feed regularly with quarter strength champak, high nitrogen (No 2) at first and then balanced (No 3).

Varieties I have used which worked well include Harry Grey, Auntie Jinks, La Campanella, Mrs Wilks, Katie Elizabeth Ann, Ernie Bromley, Emma Louise and Postiljon.

One I am trying this year is a very old hardy variety called Caledonia. Another I want to try is Marilyn Jane, but I will not get enough cuttings of my small stock plant this year!

Others which might work well are Eva Boerg, Marinka, Shelford, Brutus, Hermiena, Caradella and Zulu King.

Let me know how you get on if you decide to have a go!!

**Bits and Pieces Spring 2015**  
**National BFS Show Champion**

All you showmen (and show-ladies) in the affiliated societies! This year the BFS has started a two year trial with the National show schedules. All the classes from class 3 to class 20 are the same in all eight national show schedules.

Class	Description	Pot Size
3	One Pot - any cultivar	9cm
4	Three Pots - distinctly different cultivars	9cm
5	One Pot - any cultivar	10cm
6	One Pot - any cultivar	13cm
7	Three Pots - at least TWO distinctly different cultivars	13cm
8	One Pot - any cultivar	15cm
9	Two Pots - of the same cultivar to be judged as a matching pair of flowering plants	Min 13cm Max 15cm
10	Three Pots - any cultivar/s, one in a 9/10cm pot, one in a 13cm pot and one in a 15cm pot	
11	One Pot – double flowered cultivar	asp
12	One Pot - Hardy cultivar (see BFS Hardy list)	Min 13cm Max 25cm
13	One Pot - Ornamental foliage excluding Tom West	Min 13cm Max 15cm
14	One Pot - Tom West as Ornamental Foliage	Min 13cm Max 15cm
15	One Pot - Triphylla type (see exhibitors note h)	15cm
16	One Pot - Encliandra type	Min 13cm Max 22cm
17	One Pot - Species (see BFS Species list)	asp
18	One Mini Standard	13cm
19	Four Pots - One Triphylla (see BFS Triphylla list), One Hardy (see BFS Hardy list), One Single/Semi Double and One Double	Max 15cm
20	One Hanging Pot of fuchsias only	Min 15cm Max 25cm

Points will be scored as follows.

Classes 3, 5, 6, 8, 11,-18 and 20; First 5 points, Second 3 points and Third 1 point.

Classes 4, 7, 9, 10 and 19; First 8 points, Second 5 points, Third 2 points.

The exhibitor gaining the most points in all shows over the show season in these classes will become the National BFS Show Champion. There was some discussion at the AGM that the maximum number of shows taken into account should be limited to 4. However the proposal made and accepted by the BFS committee was points from all shows should be taken into account. We will see how it works over two years and then modify if necessary.

So come on, have a go at it!

**Composts**

In this ever changing world of composts I find many of the composts based on recycled materials tend to be a bit inconsistent from bag to bag, and many contain strange components such as shredded conifer wood.

I am still trying to use mainly Peat based compost and I am always on the lookout for suitable composts. Currently my normal mix consists of;

LIDL Multipurpose	100% Peat	4 parts
Shamrock Multipurpose	100% Peat	4 parts
B&Q Multipurpose	59% Peat	4 parts
Irish Moss Peat	100% Peat	2 parts
Cornish Grit		1 part
Perlite		1 part

A big change for me this year is switching from Vermiculite to Perlite. The cost of Vermiculite is getting too much, but I still use it in my cutting mix.

Anybody else got any thoughts or suggestions? Please let us know!

*Thanks John! I always reckon get 20 different fuchsia growers in a room and they will tell you 20 different composts and mixes!!*

## FUCHSIA BONSAI – Carol Richards

### SETTING UP

1. Springtime: select a plant that is short-jointed, small-leaved and small flowered and, at least, in its second year with a woody trunk. Ensure plant is actively growing with a good root system and leafy branches.
2. Remove plant from pot and take off moss (if any) from surface of compost and reserve for landscaping.
3. Scrape away about 50% of the compost to expose roots, keeping a good root ball. Have a water sprayer handy to rinse off grime.
4. Place a small piece of matting/netting over the drainage hole (to keep out pests) and cover with a layer of compost for height. Look at the plant and decide which is the 'front' and place slightly 'off-centre' towards the right and to the back. (Or, as would be suitable for the plant). Try and have the plant standing slightly proud of the tray with exposed roots (if any) visible. Fill in with compost.
5. Landscape with rocks/stones, etc. to give the appearance that the plant had taken root and then the surface of the terrain had weathered/eroded away. Have stones that match as in a natural setting.
6. Add the moss strategically and fill in with gravel.
7. Compost: I use basic fuchsia mix (4 parts compost to 1 part perlite/vermiculite) and, to this, add approx. 25%-30% John Innes No.2 (for stability)

Watering: In the first few weeks, keep only the root ball damp by spraying or trickling in water, allowing the roots to spread out into the compost. Thereafter, I dunk the whole thing in water (daily in hot weather).  
Feed with balanced feed 20.20.20. ¼ strength every 10/14 days

Siting: Give protection until established. An outside east-facing wall is the best situation during the summer months, so it gets morning sun but is shaded during the hot afternoons. Will tolerate light/medium rain, place undercover in persistent or heavy downpours. Frost-free winter protection.

General: To keep bonsai in shape, pinch out new growth and trim as necessary to expose the woody trunk and branches, keep reasonably thinned out. Shaping: use split canes as spreaders, not wires. The 'whole thing' should be 'dwarfed' and aesthetically pleasing to the eye. 'Cute' or 'with character', it is your creation, and it only has to 'please' **you**. Don't despair, if you get it wrong, it's like a bad haircut, it will grow back, and you can have another go!

### And More!

#### General Care:

Spring -

a) When Bonsai first starts to re-shoot after the winter rest, feed with an application of full strength Nitrogen. This will kick-start the plant into good growth. If a cool or wet spring this can be twice.

b) When growing away, remove moss and 'winter' growth of liverwort, etc. Replenish top compost and, at this time, you can re-landscape in your own style.

Summer -

a) Keep upper growth in trim, remove leggy shoots and 'thin out' to keep shape. Pinch out growing tips,

Don't despair if you get it wrong, it will grow back and you can have another go.....!

b) Do not allow to dry out, but, also, do not water-log. I dunk the whole thing into a bowl of water, (daily in hot weather). Feed with 1/4 strength, (20.20.20. balanced) approx 10/14 days, to keep nourished and healthy.

c) Remove dead flowers and seed boxes. Can be placed outside against east facing wall, i.e. in shade during the heat of the day or in dappled shade. Will tolerate light to moderate rain showers, but under cover during sustained or persistent downpours.

Autumn -

When flowering is over, trim off leaves and dead flowers back to bare stems. Give a *Systemic* spray for Rust and pests to include the top of the compost. Retain frame-work of branches/reshaping as desired. This should be done by the end of September and it will start to re-shoot. To be over-wintered just ticking over.

Winter -

Keep in **frost-free** conditions, compost just moist enough to keep it alive!

If I can help further, call.....Carol Richards Tel: - 01209 418048 Email: [carolfuchsia@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:carolfuchsia@tiscali.co.uk)

Website: [www.cornwallfuchsias.btck.co.uk](http://www.cornwallfuchsias.btck.co.uk)

*Thanks Carol for all those useful tips!*

### Show dates etc!

**Earley Fuchsia & Geranium Society (formerly South Reading)** Saturday 6th June at St Peter's Hall Church Road Earley RG6 1EY 1pm - 4.30 and Saturday 25th July at St Peter's hall Church Road Earley RG6 1EY 1pm-4.30 Both shows will have plants for sale, tombola and tea with homemade cake

**Gwent Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society** Pelargonium Show 27th June doors open 1.00pm  
Fuchsia Show - 25th July doors open 1.00pm Both shows are at Llanyravon Church Hall Cwmbran  
Gwent NP44 8RA Plant sale at both shows

**South East Essex Fuchsia Fellowship** is July 18th - 19th at James Hornby School, Leinster Road, Laindon, Basildon, Essex

**Farnborough F & PS Date:** Saturday 25 July at Cody Sports & Social Club, Old Ively Road, Farnborough, GU14 0LP

Admission: Free Time: 1.00 pm. (following judging).

**Rochford Fuchsia and Garden Society** - Hawkwell village hall, Main Road Hawkwell Essex SS5 4EH

25<sup>th</sup> July 1 til 5

**Ashted & Dorking Society** 1st & 2nd August at Squires Garden Centre Epsom Rd, West Horsley, Leatherhead, Surrey KT24 6AR.

**Hereford Fuchsia Association** Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August. at the usual site which is Hampton Park Reformed Church, Hampton Dene Road, Hereford HR1 1UJ – DOORS OPEN 2.00 PM

**NEW FOREST FUCHSIA SOCIETY** 42ND ANNUAL SHOW, Saturday 1st August 2015, Lyndhurst Community Centre, Main Car Park, Lyndhurst. 12.00pm - 4.30pm.

**Northampton FS** Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd August at Harlestone Heath Garden Centre Harlestone, Northampton.

NN5 6UJ. Large Marquee of Fuchsias Plant Sale Growing Advice Admission £1.00

Information – 07760 278332

**Woking FS** – 1<sup>st</sup> – August 1.00 - 5.00pm at The Salvation Army Church, Sythwood, Goldsworth Park

Woking Surrey GU21 3BE

**Nottingham & Notts FS** 8th & 9th August at Attenborough Village Hall, Attenborough, Nottingham, NG9 6BH. Saturday doors open at 1.30p.m till 5.00p.m and on Sunday, 9.00a.m till 4.00p.m. ADMISSION: £1. refreshments and Plant stalls and tombola. For further information Contact: **Jayne Daykin on 0115 8758928**

**Guildford FS** 8<sup>th</sup> August - 2.30 - 5.00pm at Ripley Village Hall, Portsmouth Road. Ripley Surrey

**Dundee FS** August 15th in the Ocras Hall Old Craigie Road Dundee and is open to the public from 12.30 until 3.30. Admission is free.

**Fife FS** - annual show is Saturday 15th August at the Rothes Halls Glenrothes.

We also have a new website, [www.fifefuchsiasociety.org.uk](http://www.fifefuchsiasociety.org.uk)

**Manchester Fuchsia Society** 45th Annual Show is on Saturday 15th August 2015 at The Parish Church of St John the Divine, Brooklands Road, Sale, M33 3PB from 12 Noon to 3.30 pm

**Heald Green Horticultural Society** - Annual Show 2015 is on Saturday 22nd August 2015.

**The City of Ely & District Horticultural Show**, which includes a class for Fuchsias, will be held on 29th & 30th of August 2015 in Paradise Sports Hall, Newnham Street, Ely CB7 4PQ

It is an open show. Further details from Peter Holden, email [peterholdenemservices@btinternet.com](mailto:peterholdenemservices@btinternet.com)

*Thank you everyone for the how dates so far – there will be space for more in the Summer edition!*

Last time I asked for some potted histories of your groups and here is the first!

### **A Brief History of The Nottingham and Notts Fuchsia Society**

In the early summer of 1971, several members of the British Fuchsia Society who lived locally met in one of George Roe's greenhouses. A discussion took place and it was thought it would be appropriate to have a local society. To this end, George Roe who was a BFS committee member said he would contact the BFS secretary for a list of local BFS members.

Ø First meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> August 1971 at The Admiral Rodney public house in Wollaton.

Ø First show: 1972 held at Gregory's Rose Gardens, Stapleford.

Ø First Show Judges: Leo Boulemier & Alf Thornley.

Ø First exhibitors included entrants from – Birmingham; Leicester; Derby; Chapel St Leonards and Sutton Coldfield!

Ø Annual subs were just 5 shillings (25p)!

We now hold our meetings on the 4th Tuesday of every month (except December) at the Wollaton Park Community Centre, Harrow Road, Wollaton, Nottingham NG8 1FE. Our membership is approximately 30. We hold several Sales events during the year to help fund the society as well as promoting our society. We also have stints at local Garden Centres, where we freely give advice and guidance on how to care for our favourite plant..

Your ideas on unusual classes that work in your Society show:

Nothing too unusual, we've recently included a Bonsai class which is proving popular as well as a hanging wall pot class which was well represented at last year's show. We have a children's class, as we support a few beaver's groups in the area in an attempt to encourage the youngsters to become interested in growing fuchsias.

### **What unusual meetings do you have – how do you cope with a sudden gap in the programme?**

We hold a 'Four Corners' meeting once a year. This is when the members split themselves up between the 4 speakers. The 4 'volunteers/speakers (usually committee members) talk for 15 mins. and when the whistle blows, they move on to the next talk. (A bit like speed dating, I think!)

*Thanks Jayne – so who will be next?!*

*One of the main problems of any summer can be the dreaded Red Spider mite, which causes so many problems at the shows, at home etc. Here is an article from **John McDonald**, a keen fuchsia and bonsai grower! This is taken from an old edition of FN – with some editing for modern thinking!*

### **Red Spider Mites**

I can think of nothing more soul destroying than getting Red Spider mites on your plants. Horror of horrors... how could anyone who has been growing plants for a couple of years not know of this terrible affliction? Easy, Very Easy! Mea culpa, Mea culpa. I brought a plant to a show that had evidence of these mites on the leaves. How could you do such a thing you may well ask? The answer is simple... I had never seen them, didn't know what they looked like, was unaware that my insecticide was little or no use against them, and despite asking more expert growers than me, was still as ignorant of the pest as when I started. I have become an outcast in my own Club. Previously friendly folk now dip their eyes or look away, when I pass. Suddenly, Red Spider has become a topic of hushed conversation, in corners, as heads turn and shiftily raised fingers point in my direction. Speakers bring it up, and all those knowing heads nod, and I can feel the eyes glancing across at me as my neck tries to draw my head down below the level of my collar. Oh, the shame! I just want to die... Then I wake up. Does anyone else know about this pest? So I ask a question... and lo and behold there doesn't appear to be anyone who knows the answers, or who are prepared to admit to knowing about it. Perhaps they are afraid of the stigma that I now feel, lest others will think they must have the pest in their greenhouse. Maybe they are just like me - ignorant of the problem.

I have, therefore, done some research, which members may find of interest. I hope so. It may help to get people talking to me again.

### **What are Red Spider mites?**

They are tiny, crawling, wingless, insects (well actually they are arachnids for those who like to be pedantic about semantics) that have 6 or 8 legs depending on the stage of the development. Juvenile mites have 6 legs and the adult 8. They are so small that they are invisible to the naked eye, and a magnifying glass is needed to see them. If you imagine the full stop that I have just used they are more difficult to see than that.

### **The BIG question... what colour are they?**

Most people would say RED of course. Some say they are black, some say green. Therefore if you are checking your plants you will know what you are looking for... or will you? This has got to be one of the biggest misnomers guaranteed to mislead the unwary. A RED SPIDER MITE is only RED at a certain stage of the year, after hibernation and in the springtime. The newly hatched mite is almost white (off white/buff coloured); the adult can be almost white (but in varying degrees through to green) with two spots on its back, looking like a saddle. These spots are said to be very dark green or very dark red, so dark that it could be taken for black. But these are only spots and not the whole insect. It is also known as the Two Spotted Spider Mite. There is also another mite who is sometimes found on plants indoors and that is the Carmine Spider mite, but I haven't seen that one yet, so I don't know how it develops.

### **What is the Breeding Cycle?**

Adults can lay eggs from only 36 hours old!!! The eggs are more easily seen with the glass as they are laid in small clusters, usually close to the veins of the underside of the leaf. You may also see the Adult two-spotted female close by, as she will lay about 5/6 eggs every day. However, as I mentioned it speeds up dependent upon temperature. One account that I have read suggests that at 60 degrees she produces 20 offspring, at 70 degrees she and her offspring number 13,000 and at 80 degrees she represents a potential 13,000,000 individuals, and all within one month! This is clearly a major problem in the making, as the short breeding cycle (as little as 8 days from an egg to an adult breeding pest) combined with the early ability for the young to procreate, means that a massive infestation can arrive in a very small space of time. Hence the reason for the paranoia surrounding this pest!

### **How does the hot dry dusty atmosphere increase the likelihood of infestation?**

Simply speaking, the heat of the greenhouse speeds up the life cycle. It can be as short as three days in hot places, and as long as a month in cool weather. So clearly temperature is key to the proliferation, along with a dry dusty atmosphere. As Greenhouses tend to be warming up considerably from April it is about this time that the breeding really gets going. It will go on until autumn given the conditions when it tends to slow down as plants begin to take on dormancy. The remaining females will now turn RED (described by some of being more Orange than red) and find places to hibernate. This is likely to be in the soil or compost of the host plant, or in the bark of mature plants, or in the wood or brickwork of the building itself. Bear in mind they are extremely tiny so no crevice is too small for a winter home for them. They will re-emerge in the spring and will be bright red (or Orangey red). A cooler temperature and moist atmosphere is thought to slow down their metabolism and slow the reproductive rate so misting and capillary matting may help in control.

### **Where should you look for them?**

As with most pests they will be found on the underneath of the leaves so they have to really be looked for regularly. But you can't see them can you? On close inspection you will see the effects of the eggs from above. The hatching young will eat away at the underside of the leaf, sucking the life out of the plant and this sometimes leaves a visible mark through and onto the top of the leaf. This may be yellowish or silvery and will be a small cluster of spots, each about the size of a full stop, and only by the fact that they are clustered does the mite give itself away. Most of us don't notice mites until the infestation is established and the plant has been damaged. Leaves of affected plants seem to be drying out very quickly, which they are, as the mites suck the very life giving sap from them. Dead and dried out leaves fall and the plant begins to fade away. As the adults colonise the plant they may also spin a very fine web over the leaf and from branch to branch,

and alas from plant to plant. At this stage you must take drastic action. This also enables them to walk down the host plant across the compost, over the bench or floor and up onto the next victim. Real serial killers these are. The webbing also tends to act as a shelter for the young underneath the leaf so that the effectiveness of sprays is considerably reduced.

### **Where do they come from, you may well ask?**

I trust most people know about the Birds and the Bees, so I won't go into that except to say that insects bring in more disease and infestation than any other method, and big bees can do considerable damage to your carefully tended show plants in a very short space of time. You may be aware that the wild honeybee is itself under threat of extinction by a "mite" which is attacking them. Therefore as the bees fly from plant to plant they are well capable of spreading other mites or viruses from infected to clean plants. Personally, I believe that white fly and aphids are the biggest cause of the spread of rust among plants, along with bees and wasps.

### **What can you do about the problem?**

1) Most importantly prevention is better than cure, as I have found to my cost. If you can cut off the source of supply then you are on your way to preventing and outbreak of whatever sort in your greenhouse. Place "bug screen" over open windows and doors to stop ingress of pests, whilst still allowing air to circulate. You will almost certainly become aware very quickly of how effective this is in keeping down the number of insects getting at your plants in the first place. I replace whole sections of glass with this screen and this helps to keep the temperature down and the airflow up! Replace the glass in the greenhouse door with screen and you can ignore the advice of "leave the greenhouse door open on hot days". This will only let the blighters in. Keep the bees out and there is less chance of getting a Red Spider infestation.

2) Remove any infected plants immediately... and if you can afford to lose the plant then burn it or get rid of it... don't throw it into your compost bin as this may lead to re-infestation. You may be fortunate enough to get a "clean "cutting or two" before disposing of the plant, but let that be a lesson to you, and think of it as part of the learning curve.

3) Check your plants regularly for any tell-tale signs... Pick the plant up and look underneath the leaves using your magnifying lens and you may see the Mites moving about, or eggs clustered. You will be on the lookout for other insects anyway so now use the magnifying glass and check for Red Spider as well. It may seem obvious but don't buy infected plants. And DON'T bring infected plants to the plant sale. Do not be afraid to get out your magnifying glass and really check out any plants you are about to buy! It will save you a lot of time, effort, and expense in the long run. I, for one, will always carry my glass to plant sales in future.

4) Keep a generous space between plants to prevent mites dropping from one plant to the next... This is true for most crawling pests too... This is probably the biggest fault that us "space restricted" amateurs have. We always cram too many plants into our small greenhouse, or growing space, and thereby bring most of our problems upon ourselves. So how many plants is it possible to have in a 12 x 8 greenhouse? Good question. How does about 30 or 40 sound? One "Expert" I know tells me that you shouldn't have more than a dozen, and perhaps that is too many. As a broad rule of thumb, one 5" pot will contain a plant 15" in diameter. If you leave a 3" gap between plants you will need about 18" square for each fully-grown specimen. Hence a 12 ft Greenhouse will take about 8 x 5" pots along the length. A 6" pot therefore requires 21" square, and a 7" pot will need 2ft square, and so on... Easy to see how the space is quickly used up...

5) If you are lucky, you will find the problem early and have a good chance of eradicating the problem... by simply squashing the mites and the eggs between finger and thumb, but I find that this always tends to damage the leaf.

6) You could try washing them off with a strong water sprayer. Some people use soapy water for this...but you should cover the surrounding area under the plant to catch any mites that fall from the plant as they could infect other plants.

7) Improve the conditions in the greenhouse with more misting and cooler temperatures... this may be a bonus for Fuchsia growers as the harder you can grow the plants the better they seem to like it. If you can afford it, install a watering and misting system. Together with capillary matting & increasing humidity by hosing down the hot greenhouse floor you will almost certainly keep mites at bay. Be careful about increased humidity as this can lead to botrytis if allowed to cool down too much, particularly at night. A cold humid atmosphere will certainly lead to increased botrytis problems. You need to strike a balance with regard to heat and humidity.

8) Introduce Biological controls – predatory mites. These can eradicate red spider mites PDQ provided they are introduced early i.e. before the infestation is out of control. Other predatory mites feed directly on the Red Spider mites and will devour them at a rapid rate. The predators should gain control in about 4 weeks by which time they will have eaten all the Spider mites and then they become cannibals and eat each other until they too have all gone. A bit expensive I understand, but worth it if it puts you back in control. The secret here appears to be to introduce the predators before the problem gets out of hand. If you do use predators you will almost certainly have to stop using insecticides, as they will kill your precious beneficial insects as well. There is also a period to wait between your last spray and your first introduction of predators.

9) It may be possible to place sticky paper traps cut into strips around the pots to prevent the mites emigrating from plant to plant.

**10)** How many times have you ignored a mark or blemish on a leaf because there was no easily identifiable cause? I have. Sometime the culprit has gone and is now doing damage elsewhere. Or is he... Perhaps he is just too small to spot. If you have a marked or damaged leaf take it off without too much disturbance. Chances are you will be getting rid of a major headache about to unfold.

**Lessons I have learned:**

Prevention is better than cure.

Don't just pick up a plant and bring it to the show to help fill the benches. If you haven't properly prepared the plant – leave it at home!

Take your magnifying glass with you when you are going to buy plants – no matter where from – and check them thoroughly.

Keep the Bees out of your greenhouse.

Try not to move plants in and out of the greenhouse as you could be carrying in the latest infestation. Perhaps replacing sections of glass with Bug screen will increase airflow and keep temperatures down whilst also keeping the insects out.

This is a difficult one, as most of us do tend to carry plants into the greenhouse even to just work on them. Perhaps a separate area is needed

*A lot of John's points apply to a lot of pests and potential other problems and can give us all food for thought!*

**And Finally...**

**One sentence or phrase that sums up your philosophy on Fuchsia Growing!**

Giving everyone a chance to turn their dead sticks into show stopping plants!

Spread the message "Fuchsias are fun!"

Dedicated vine weevil chasers.

Addictive

Growing Fuchsias opens an all new world of FRIENDS!

Obsession bordering on madness!

If at first you don't succeed, try Pelargoniums

A beautiful plant that will return your love and attention with a cascade of floral brilliance, usually before and after your show dates!

You have a future with the Fuchsia, so don't let the "fuchsia" pass you by!

Strive for success, live with failure, but resolve to fail better each time – but don't take it too seriously!

I will cut down this year, but when I see a new plant – I JUST HAVE TO HAVE IT!

"Where are you going to put it?" comes from my frustrated husband

**Feed them**

**Understand them**

**Cosset them**

**Handle them**

**Show them**

**Interest others in them**

**Above all – always enjoy them!**

I couldn't have put it better myself!

Best Wishes

Carol, Arthur and John