

crop culture report:

Fuchsia Fun Times Series

With tube-like flowers and an upright, branching habit, these new fuchsias are sure to perform well in landscapes as well as combination planters.

By Paul Gaydos



Top to bottom: 'Fun Times Pink'; 'Fun Times Rose'; 'Fun Times Salmon'.

Fun Times is a new series of *triphyllea*-type fuchsia now available from GroLink. They were bred in Brazil by GroLink/Athena. There are about 100 species of herb- and shrub-type fuchsia in existence; most are native to Central and South America as well as New Zealand. There are three varieties in this series — Rose, Pink and Salmon — giving consumers more of a selection than the red that was previously offered. Fun Times have dark-green foliage with a soft, velvety appearance. They produce long, slender, tube-like flowers on a plant with an upright, well-branching habit, making them ideal for the landscape.

Variety Information

Fun Times varieties grow to 18-36 inches tall and 18-24 inches wide, performing well in the sun with some shade. Best of all, they are day-length neutral and heat tolerant. This allows growers to finish them in early spring and extend sales into the summer. Growing in 1-gallon containers is ideal for landscape use, but they also work well in small and large pots and combination planters. When planting in combos, grow the fuchsia out in a 4-inch pot first, then replant into the finished container.

These fuchsias really attract hummingbirds — and consumers — thanks to their floriferous habit. Growers in the South kept asking for a fuchsia that would bloom in late fall and early winter when consumer demand is highest. These *triphyllea*-type fuchsia are fast becoming an important landscape crop in Florida and all over the South during the winter months. GroLink first delivered with the Fantasy line last year and now with the Fun Times series for 2008-2009.

Availability

Fun Times, as with all the products GroLink offers, is available all year as unrooted or rooted cuttings. You can order rooted cuttings from GroLink in California or from Knox Nursery in Florida through your favorite broker.

Fun Times fuchsia can be produced year round and need three to four weeks to root in a 100-cell tray. To finish a 4- to 5-inch pot from a rooted cutting, six to seven weeks are needed, eight to nine weeks for a gallon pot and 10 to 12 weeks for larger containers using one cutting. As fuchsia is an inexpensive cutting, I recommend using two to three cuttings in 1-gallon containers and larger. This will reduce finishing time, allowing more finished turns through

the greenhouse and increased gross sales. It will also reduce the need to hand pinch or use chemical pinching with a finished pot.

Propagation

Although fuchsia ship very well as an unrooted cutting, it is always important to remember to unpack, inspect and stick the cuttings as soon as possible. Once stuck, put them under mist for 10 seconds every 10 minutes for the first five days, then 10 seconds every 15 to 20 minutes for the next five days. On day 10, feed them with 75-ppm nitrogen and start to mist eight seconds every 45 minutes to an hour until plants are rooted. Then, syringe only as needed.

Try to maintain a soil temperature of 70-74° F while rooting. When transplanting into finished pots, be sure to plant rooted cuttings at soil level — and not below — to prevent crown rot. Planting too deep is a surefire way to lose this crop. Keep liners moist in the finished pot, but when the roots have formed in the new pot, begin to let the media dry out between irrigations. Do not allow plants to dry completely down and wilt heavily.

Growing On

While growing on to finish, maintain a temperature of 68-72° F day and night. Maintain a pH between 6.0 and 6.5 with an EC of .06 to .09 (using a 2:1 extraction method). Constant feed with a well-balanced fertilizer at 150- to 200-ppm nitrogen. Pinch one time in the liner stage after well rooted and again four to five weeks later if using only one plant per pot. A low rate of Florel (ethephon) can be effective but not necessary if pinching. Growth regulators are generally not needed when grown with proper water and temperature management, but B-Nine (daminozide) can be used at a rate of 1,250-2,500 ppm.

A normal preventive insect spray program should be followed with special interest shown for aphids, spider mites and whitefly. Botrytis can be a problem in greenhouses with poor air flow but very easily controlled. Pythium and Rhizoctonia can also show up if soil is not allowed to dry between watering. Water management is important in growing any crop but vital when growing fuchsia. **GPN**

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