

Cultural Details: **Fuchsia**

Growing Fuchsias from seed results in a self-branching plant, with plenty of flowers, with no risk of importing pest and disease. They are relatively straightforward to raise, but note they take around 5 months from sowing to commencement of flowering.

Variety Selection

The Fuseedia Series shows improved seed germination and uniformity compared with the earlier seed-raised varieties. Plants make good bedding subjects, producing plenty of small, single blooms, and can be incorporated into mixed hanging baskets. They are upright rather than trailing in habit. The variety Swing has larger flowers and a good base-branching habit.

Programming the Crop

Sow December-January for sales of flowering plants in June. They can also be sown in October and overwintered at around 5 °C, in a similar way to seed-raised geranium.

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow the small seeds (3,700 per gram) onto the surface of a free-draining, open, seed sowing compost, which should be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide prior to sowing (to prevent damping-off diseases), and the trays allowed to drain. Sow into plug trays to prevent root disturbance, or into seed trays. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes around 21 days at 20-22°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

When large enough to handle, transfer into large-celled trays, filled with a standard potting compost. Grow on at around 18-20 °C, then when large enough, move the plants into 9 or 10cm pots or baskets as required. Use a moderate strength liquid feed programme when roots are visible at the base of the pot. Plants are self-branching and should not require pinching out of growing points, which tends to delay flowering.

Pest and Disease

Maintain good air movement through the crop, and water in the morning rather than the evening to keep the foliage dry and lessen attack by Botrytis. Pay good attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, pots, compost, water and clean bench tops to avoid damping-off diseases, and check for the presence of insect pests such as aphids and whitefly, spraying accordingly.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.