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# How to Grow a Plumeria Tree

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# Planting, Growing, and Pruning Plumerias

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

Last Updated: April 17, 2025



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colder climates, you can grow plumerias in pots and bring them inside in the fall! They make great sunroom or patio plants. Learn how to plant, grow, and care for plumeria plants.

## About Plumerias

### ADVERTISEMENT

Also known as frangipani, *Plumeria* is a genus of flowering tropical shrubs and small trees. Most are deciduous, but a few species are evergreen. They are found naturally in Mexico and Central America but have been exported to many tropical areas, including Hawaii, the South Pacific, and Southeast Asia.

Leaves of plumeria grow in clusters at the tips of the branches and are alternate. They are elongated, with prominent veining, and can be either rounded or pointed at the tip. Flowering begins in early summer and continues into autumn.

Blooms can be in any color you might consider tropical, from soft white to coral, pink, yellow, orange, and pastel hues. Each flower has five waxy petals that typically overlap. The original native color is white with small

## ADVERTISEMENT



Plumeria. Credit: A. Aloysis/Shutterstock

The flowers are fragrant, even more so at night, to attract their pollinator, the nocturnal sphinx moth. Check this page from the University of Wisconsin Extension for detailed [information about frangipani flowering.](#)

You may be familiar with plumeria blooms as a common ingredient in leis. They have long been incorporated into this traditional offering of love and peace but are not native to Hawaii or the Pacific islands.

branching habit. They are tolerant of salt and wind but not cold.

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## PLANTING

Plumerias are tropical and won't tolerate any freezing temperatures.

If that's not your location, don't worry. They can be grown well in large containers, as long as you can rustle up the muscle to move them inside in autumn—when temps reach the 40s—and back outside in spring.

Whether in a container or in the ground, they prefer fertile, well-draining soil and full sun.



Plumeria may be purchased at nurseries in spring and summer; however, they may not be offered if you live farther north. Rooted cuttings can be purchased online. Expect a plant grown from a cutting to bloom in 1 to 3 years.

## When to Plant Plumerias

If you are planting your new frangipani out into a bed, do so in late spring, early summer, or early autumn. Deciduous varieties, in particular, need to be planted early enough to establish their root systems before going dormant for the winter.

## How to Plant Plumerias

Plumeria can be planted in the ground for warm climate gardeners, in planters, or in containers that are seasonally buried in the ground and dug up in fall.

## ADVERTISEMENT

- Especially for containers, good drainage is essential. Sitting in wet soil can cause root rot.
- Plant outdoors in the same manner as other shrubs. Prepare the site by digging a wide, saucer-shaped hole.
- Place the plumeria in the hole after cutting any girdling roots. Adjust the height to match the new soil level with the old potted level.
- Backfill with native soil and topdress with compost. Tamp in lightly but firmly to avoid large air voids. Mulch to suppress weeds and condition the soil.
- Water in well, and then again weekly if rainfall was insufficient. Once the shrub is established, it should only need watering during dry periods.
- Plumerias planted in containers need an excellent draining potting mix. Try using potting soil intended for palms or cacti, or make your own by adding perlite to regular potting mix.

## GROWING



Bright, warm sunshine, good drainage, and frequent admiration are all your plumeria needs to make fragrant, gorgeous blooms.

- Plumerias enjoy tropical conditions. Water deeply with periods in between to allow the soil to slightly dry.
- Plumeria can be fertilized with a high phosphorus fertilizer–bloom booster–during the growing season.
- Prune plumeria for size and shape in late winter.
- Container-grown plumerias will need repotting as they grow. Don't plant a small one-foot-tall shrub in a ten-gallon container. The roots won't be able to adequately use the moisture in the soil, and wet, soggy conditions could result. Instead, upgrade one pot size each time.

## Overwintering

Plumerias in containers must be brought inside to overwinter if you live in an area where it freezes.

As the day gets shorter and the sunlight lessens, your deciduous plumeria will go dormant. The leaves will turn yellow and fall off. Don't worry, that's okay. You can speed this up by snipping the petioles.

- Once dormant, store in any location—light or no light—that will remain above 40 degrees.
- Although they should not need watering while dormant, do still check. Dry winter air can cause dormant plants to die of desiccation as the soil in the pot dries too much. The soil should feel neutral, not bone dry, and not damp. Add a little water if needed.
- In spring, once temperatures have warmed, reintroduce your plumeria to the outdoors. Begin watering again, but take care to adjust. Your plant won't use much water until it sprouts new leaves.

## Types

- *P. rubra* ‘Aztec gold’ blooms in dreamy yellow-peach colors with large 3-4 inch flowers.

ange, yellow and white.

- *P. rubra* ‘Vera Cruz Rose’ is another deciduous variety with highly overlapped and folded petals that transition from light pink to white with deep golden centers.
- *P. alba* is an evergreen with white flowers, yellow centers, and striking foliage.

## HARVESTING



Want to learn how to harvest plumeria flowers for a lei? Check out this pamphlet by the University of Hawaii.

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## WIT AND WISDOM

- Plumeria flowers don't produce nectar. Their strong scent, especially at night, tricks the sphinx moth into popping by for a visit. Finding no nectar, the disappointed moth moves from flower to flower, ever hopeful but never finding dinner.

Poor moth!

- The genus *Plumeria* was named after the

who traveled to the New World cataloging

and bringing back many plant samples.

- *Plumeria alba* is the national flower of Nicaragua.

## SHRUBS AND TREES

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture. [Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)

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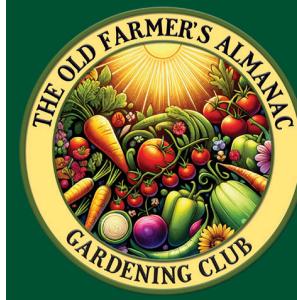
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## COMMENTS

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**Frank B (not verified)** 1 week 6 days ago

I live in south Florida and have a Hawaii lei in a pot.  
But I would like to know how the roots when  
planted in the ground grow, whether they spread  
outward or deep. This is my o ly concern. Thank  
you.

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**Grier Lemme (not verified)** 6 months 2 weeks ago

Just hit by Hurricane Milton; outdoor large  
Plumieris really took a hit! Almost all leaves are  
gone. What do I do now to save my trees?

[REPLY](#)

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**nibor (not verified)** 9 months 1 week ago

I want to plant a small 5 ft plumeria pudica in a  
large pot next to my balcony. How can I keep it  
from growing too large? The current height is just

[REPLY](#)**The Editors** 9 months 1 week ago

Sounds like a great addition to your outdoor space. To keep it to the size you would like, you should prune your plumeria in very early spring to maintain the desired height and shape. If you are diligent about yearly pruning, you won't need to put your plant through a drastic prune, which could affect growth during that season.

And as for planting, make sure you use the right size container to give your plumeria's roots room to grow, but at the same time isn't too large. You will also want to use a well-draining potting mix.

See above for more tips for planting.

Hope this helps!

[REPLY](#)**Debra (not verified)** 10 months ago

My plumeria is tall with flowers only on tips (in

well now in the LG pot it's much happier but a bit  
scraggly looking.

**REPLY**

**Nancy mclennan (not verified)** 9

months 3 weeks ago

Main stem of plant is 3 ft. Tall with 2  
branches full of leaves, originally.  
  
Had 3 I died during dormant season last  
year was first year it bloomed. Also is be-  
ginning to get a. White sun Stan

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 9 months 4 weeks ago

Usually flowers at the tips is a sign that  
the plant lacks sunlight, which is why it's  
reaching up to find more light. Also, do  
you have a big enough pot? Plumeria need  
large pots to encourage optimal growth.  
  
Finally, encourage branching by making a  
shallow perpendicular cut above the  
branch at the first leaf node. Hope this  
is helpful.

**Cynthia Rowsey (not verified)** 1 year ago

How can you revive a completely broken limb of the plant?

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 1 year ago

Hi Cynthia,

If it's a recent break, you could try to graft the branch back on, or try and root the broken branch. Either way, you'll want to neaten up the branch's jagged edge if it has one before using rooting hormone. You should also attend to the scar on the mother plant.

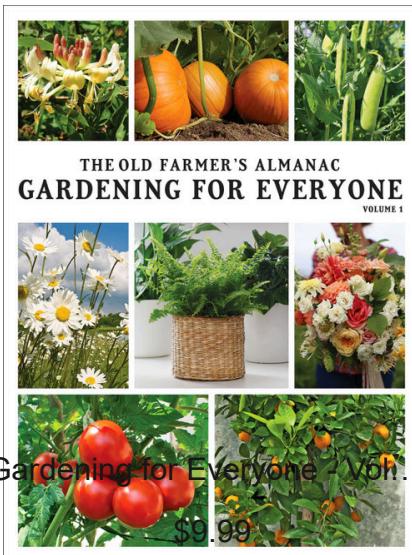
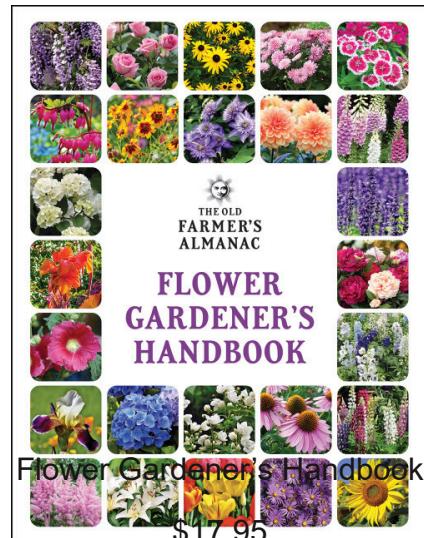
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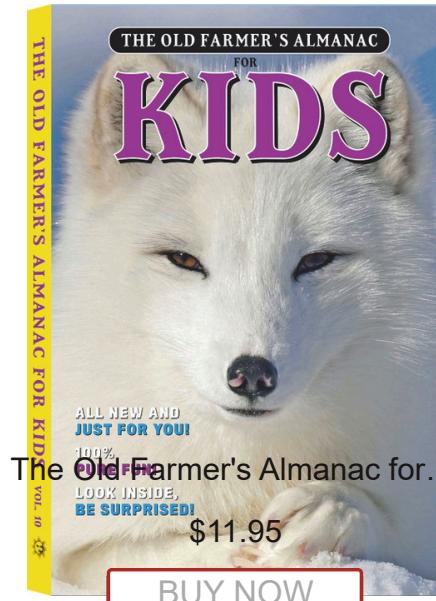
**Tom (not verified)** 1 year 5 months ago

P. alba might be evergreen in Cuba or P.R. but it is most definitely deciduous in Florida.

**REPLY**

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