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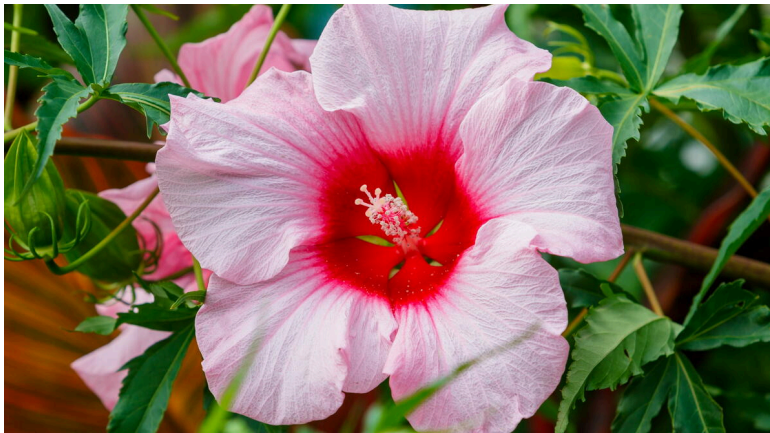
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How to Grow Hibiscus



A Lady Baltimore Pink Hibiscus.

Photo Credit: Bryan Pollard/Shutterstock

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Planting, Growing, and Pruning Hibiscus

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: September 18, 2024



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With huge, colorful dinner-plate size flowers, perennial hibiscus plants add a bold, tropical effect to the garden. They are also highly attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds! Here's how to plant, grow, and care for hibiscus flowers.

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About Hibiscus

There are many types of hibiscus. This growing guide covers perennial hibiscus grown for their strikingly beautiful, big, disc-shaped, hollyhock-like flowers that can measure up to 12 inches across!

Perennial hibiscus can grow up to eight feet tall, but dwarf varieties are only two to three feet tall.

Hibiscus are members of the mallow family, which has over [300 members](#) of annuals, perennials, trees, and shrubs.

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PLANTING

When to Plant Hibiscus

planted in the spring. Or, they can be rooted from a cutting in the spring.

If you wish to grow hibiscus from seed, sow indoors 12 weeks before the last spring frost date. Soak seeds in very warm water for one hour before sowing. Alternatively, seeds can be sown outdoors after the last expected frost date.

Choosing and Preparing a Planting Site

- Choose a site that gets full sun; they'll grow in partial sun but will not flower as well.
- Hibiscus prefers well-draining soil with plenty of organic matter and neutral to slightly acidic soil.
- To avoid breakage of the long stems, plant hibiscus where they won't be exposed to strong winds.

How to Plant Hibiscus

- Plant potted hibiscus plants so that their stems are just at the soil surface.

off lower leaves. Plant the cutting in a pot with a mix of three parts sand and one part peat. Roots should form within a few weeks. Transplant the cutting from the pot into the ground.

- The hibiscus species that die back each year can be spaced 2 to 3 feet apart. Consider the potential height and width (up to 12 feet and 10 feet, respectively) of a mature plant before planting.
- Water the plants well at the time of planting.

GROWING

How to Care for Hibiscus Shrubs

- Hibiscus needs frequent watering, especially when young and new. When watering, do so deeply and thoroughly, drenching the plant.
- Mulch around the plant to retain moisture and to provide winter protection for the roots.
- To encourage rebloom, either remove

one-third after a flush of bloom is finished.

- Perennial hibiscus will freeze back to the ground each winter; cut old stems to the ground.
- Hibiscus blooms on new wood (this year's growth), so pruning is best done in the spring.
- In early spring, remove dead stems from established plants and apply a balanced fertilizer.
- Over the growing season, hibiscus can benefit from a fertilizer that is high in potassium, medium to medium-high in nitrogen, and low in phosphorus, as the plant can be sensitive to phosphorus.
- Mature plants can be divided in the spring, not fall.

Types

Scarlet Swamp Hibiscus (*H. coccineus*):

This plant, also known as Texas Star, has 5-petaled, brilliant-red flowers. It grows to a height of seven feet each growing season, dies back to the ground every

Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*): This is the classic dinner-plate hibiscus due to the large size of its flowers. These large, fast-growing plants bloom from August to October, and each plant may flaunt several 10 to 12-inch wide flowers at once. A few of the many popular cultivars are:

- ‘Anne Arundel’ has pink flowers, nine inches in diameter, on plants five feet tall.
- ‘Kopper King’ has light pink to white flowers with a burgundy center, 12 inches in diameter, with coppery red deeply cut leaves.
- ‘Lady Baltimore’ is a popular old variety with pink flowers and red centers on five-foot-tall plants.
- ‘Lord Baltimore’ is another old variety with red flowers on five-foot-tall plants.

GARDENING PRODUCTS

Insect pests of hibiscus include aphids, whiteflies, and Japanese beetles.

- [Japanese beetles](#)
- [Aphids](#)
- [Whiteflies](#)

Clean up all plant debris to avoid fungal diseases which can cause leaf spots. Don't crowd plants, and keep mulch from touching the stems to avoid blight.

WIT AND WISDOM

- The plant has been used to soothe headaches, aching limbs, coughs, and inflammations.
- Hibiscus tea is made from parts of a different type of hibiscus, *Hibiscus sabdariffa*—also known as Roselle or Florida Cranberry. It's native to West Africa but is now grown across Central America, the Caribbean, and even Florida.
- In Victorian times, giving a hibiscus blossom to a person meant that the

- The yellow hibiscus is the state flower of Hawaii.

SHRUBS AND TREES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

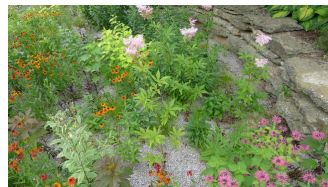
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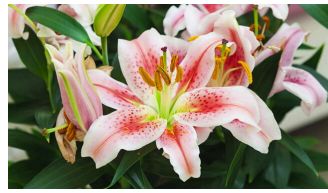
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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Jan Mueller (not verified) 6 months 3 weeks ago

My hibiscus has some yellow leaves what is this it has flours on as well. Help

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REPLY

David (not verified) 9 months 1 week ago

In Arizona. When potting Hibiscus from local nursery, plants bud but do not open. Eventually plants fail to grow. Any suggestions.

Occasionally leaves also turning yellow. Am I over- watering? Open to any suggestions. Is AZ too hot for hibiscus? Temp in triple digests for days at a time.

REPLY

how to trim my plant its 12feet tall in
a pot i should say when to trim

REPLY

The Editors 7 months ago

Hi Mary,

When grown outdoors in areas that can experience frost, hibiscus should be pruned in the spring after the the threat of frost has passed. Since it blooms on new wood (growth from that year) you should prune it before new growth begins to avoid pruning out that year's flowers. If you live in an area with no frost, you can prune in the fall after the growing season has ended or for a much larger pruning project, you should wait until early spring.

If you plan to bring your hibiscus container indoors for the winter and display in a sunny window, you

winter in a cool, dark location, like a basement or garage, you can wait until spring to prune.

Hope this helps!

REPLY

Rhonda (not verified) 1 year 5 months ago

My hibiscus has healthy green leaves and buds all over but they often die before they opening. It was almost dead when I bought the house. I trimmed it, watered and fertilized.

REPLY

David (not verified) 9 months 1 week ago

Same problem when re-potting. Buds do not open and drop off. Did you ever discover a solution?

Sonja Bauer (not verified) 1 year 8 months ago

I have 4 Hibiscus plants that I kept in the basement last winter and brought them out this spring. The plants have leaves on them but are not blooming. What is wrong with them.

REPLY

Nellie Houghtaling (not verified) 1 year 6 months ago

I have a hibiscus plant that hasn't bloomed. What can I do?

REPLY

The Editors 1 year 6 months ago

Hi Nellie,

There can be a number of factors that will prevent your hibiscus from blooming.

Hibiscus need at least 6 hours of sun-

can impact your plant. Hibiscus plants also have high water needs that should be on a schedule. An extended time without water can affect blooming, while too much water can as well. Water when the soil is mostly dry but still a bit damp because they do not like to dry out completely.

Fertilizing can also play a part because while used in the correct way it can allow your plant to thrive, it can also do the opposite if it does not get the right balance. (See above for fertilizing instructions.)

Depending on the age of your plant, pruning can also help but it may be a longer term solution. Just remember not to remove more than one-third of your plant at one time.

Hope this helps.

REPLY

I have two rose mallow hibiscus that are over 6ft tall but have no flowers, not even buds. ??

This is the second year they have done this - grow like crazy but have no blooms. I fertilize, water, etc. What else can I do?

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