



CHINESE HIBISCUS

The tropical hibiscus is a large shrub or small tree which can grow up to 15' in frost-free areas. In cooler climates, treat this plant as an annual or container plant, which can be wintered inside in a sunny location.

Chinese hibiscus can produce large, showy flowers year round if grown in a conservatory or sun room. Hybridizers have produced an astonishing array of cultivars, varying in flower size and in colors, from white through pinks, reds, yellows, apricots, oranges, and lavenders. The newest hybrids include striped and splotched petals that almost appear to have been tie-dyed. Flowers may be single or double, smooth or scalloped. They have a long central tube with stamens and pistil at the tip.



LIGHT: Hibiscus prefer a sunny location, with protection from strong winds. The more sun, the more flowers.

TEMPERATURE: USDA hardiness zones 9-12; will tolerate low temperatures of 45-50°F.

WATER: Water thoroughly, allowing the soil to dry partially between waterings. Over- or under-watering can discourage or delay flowering. Good drainage is important.

FERTILIZER: Apply a flowering formula fertilizer every two weeks during warm seasons; fertilize in winter only if the plant is in a very sunny, warm location.

POTTING MEDIUM: Grow tropical hibiscus in containers, using a well-draining medium rich in organic matter. Hibiscus purchased in 10" pots or smaller may require transplanting into a container one or two sizes larger if plants will be exposed to high levels of sun and heat.

PRUNING: Regular pruning will control size and shape. Since hibiscus bloom on new growth, heavy pruning just before summering the plant outside will delay flowering. It is usually preferable to prune just before bringing the hibiscus inside for the winter, reducing the stress on the plant from the lower light and drier air indoors.

TIP: Hibiscus flowers do not need to be placed in water to prevent wilting. They will keep for several hours if picked just after opening. To keep flowers open until evening, place a freshly picked flower in the refrigerator until just before using.