



Bougainvillea

Aspectacular sight in the tropics and hot coastal areas of the Americas is the ever-blooming Bougainvillea. The shrubby vines that they produce are seen covered in unbelievable bright and gaudy blossoms having petals resembling paper, and are popularly known as Paper Flowers. Named in honor of L.A. de Bougainville, a French navigator who lived 1729-1811, Bougainvillea are native to Brazil and South America. Bougainvillea were first described and classified in 1789, but had actually been discovered in Brazil twenty years earlier.

Botanically they are classified as *Bougainvillea glabra*, *Bougainvillea peruviana*, or *Bougainvillea x Buttiana* (which is a hybrid between the previous two). There are other species, but most all of our commercial varieties are selections and hybrids of these species. Newer hybrids appear regularly, so ask a Cornelius Certified Nursery Professional for currently available varieties.

The flowers that we associate with the Bougainvillea are actually colorful bracts of red, purple, pink, lavender, orange, white, and bi-colors, and the true flowers are small, white and tubular and appear inside these colorful papery bracts.

Bougainvillea are normally thorny vines, but recent hybridizing efforts have produced some mostly



thornless and more shrubby varieties. Each year, we hear of new breakthroughs in Bougainvillea breeding and selecting. Another trend is toward plants with more compact habits for container growing.

Light

Sunlight is probably the most important factor when growing bougainvilleas. Bougainvillea need full to 3/4 sunlight - no less, or they will not bloom.

A common misconception is that Bougainvillea only bloom during the fall, winter and spring. Bougainvillea can bloom all year if properly grown in the correct light conditions.

Growth in the winter can be retarded if plants are kept too cool. A hot greenhouse seems to encourage the new growth which leads to repeat flowering.

Watering

During the blooming period, NEVER let potted plants wilt or stand in too much water. They need a "happy medium". If planting into the ground, hold back on watering a little bit after planting until they begin to root in, then water as necessary, but don't let them wilt.

Fertilizing

A top dressing with a well balanced granular fertilizer will get the growth off to a good start. Incorporating a well balanced slow-release coated fertilizer into the soil at planting time will encourage growth and blooming for a long time. **WARNING:** Too much nitrogen in the fertilizer will cause excessive leaf



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growth where blooming can be delayed or aborted. However, a higher phosphorus AND nitrogen combination is good for bougainvillea as it will promote growth and flower formation in artificial potting soils.

Iron is important to keep good green color and tends to be unavailable to plants during colder winter weather. The use of soluble or granular iron works well and will not stain leaves and blooms as sprays can.

Pruning

Bougainvillea bloom on NEW GROWTH. When your plants finish a blooming cycle, they will repeat it in about 4 weeks with proper pruning and proper sunlight and water.

A rule of thumb is to prune off one-half of the growth that ends in the bloom once the blooming is

over. For example, if the growth where blooming occurs had grown out 6 inches (see diagram), prune off the old bloom cluster plus 3 inches of that stem after blooming. Once new growth appears, blooms will repeat in about 4 weeks. Also, "pinching" the tips of your plants continually encourages new growth and new flowers and maintains a compact manageable plant.

Planting

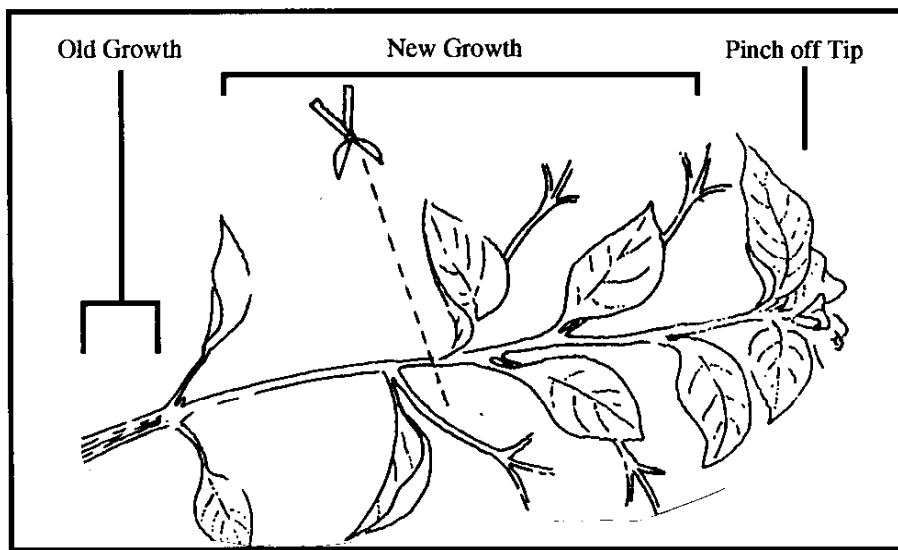
For winter protection of in-ground plants, mound or "bank" soil 6 inches over the roots and lower stems of the plant. Leave this all winter and allow the outer stems to freeze if weather dictates. In the spring once the chances of freezing have past, cut the plants back to this soil mound and wash it away, leaving the lower, protected stems. They should begin budding out and should

be in bloom in about 4 weeks with steady light, warm temperatures, and watering.

For potted plants, just keep them out of 32 degree and colder weather by moving them in only for the duration of the freezing temperatures. If the leaves burn from wind or frost, give your plant good warmth and light and it should begin growing back within 10 to 20 days, and should bloom in the 4 week time frame.

Pests

Aphids are probably the only pest which we encounter in the Houston area. If you have a problem with aphids, or with any other pest on your Bougainvillea, bring the pest in for a positive identification and our Cornelius Texas Certified Nursery Professionals will help with control recommendations.



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