



Berry Show – Pot Plant Education Series

Training a Fuchsia into a Standard

Creating a striking lollipop form through patience and consistent care.

Why Train a Standard

A fuchsia trained as a standard has a strong single stem topped with a rounded canopy of flowers — elegant, balanced, and impressive in any display. Training a fuchsia into this form showcases your gardening skill and adds height variety among other potted entries.



What You'll Need

- A healthy, young fuchsia plant (preferably a single-stem or upright variety).
- Soft plant ties or twine.
- A support stake around 30–45 cm high.
- A sharp pair of scissors or snips.
- Patience — the process can take 12–24 months from start to show-ready form.

Starting from a Cutting (The Full Journey)

Training a fuchsia into a standard from a cutting takes time — usually 18–24 months — but rewards patience with a perfectly shaped, long-lived plant.

Take a Cutting:

- In late summer or early autumn, select an intense non-flowering shoot around 8–10 cm long. Remove the lower leaves and insert them into a mix of 2 parts potting mix to 1 part perlite. Keep moist in a bright, sheltered spot.

First Season:

- Once rooted and growing, choose one intense, upright shoot to become the main stem. Remove any side shoots and lightly stake it.

Overwintering:

- Keep in a frost-free, bright position. Water sparingly.

Second Season:

- Continue to remove all side growth on the lower stem and keep tying the main shoot upright. Once it reaches 45–60 cm, pinch out the growing tip to form the head.

Final Season:

- Focus on shaping the crown through pinching, feeding, and balanced watering. By the following summer, the plant should be well-formed and ready for flowering and display preparation.

Quick Start Option: Choosing a Plant from your Garden

If you're starting closer to show time, choose a fuchsia from your garden with a single strong upright stem about 20–30 cm tall. Avoid bushy plants with multiple soft stems or hanging types — they're harder to train into a standard shape. Repot the plant into a slightly larger container and insert a stake beside the main stem for support.

Over the first few weeks, gently remove side shoots on the lower half of the stem, tying the main stem upright as it grows. When the stem reaches the desired height (around 45–60 cm), pinch the tip to encourage branching.

Training Process

Stage 1 – Selecting and Training the Stem

- Select an intense, upright shoot and remove all lower side shoots as the plant grows. Tie the central stem loosely to a stake, keeping it straight but not under strain.

Stage 2 – Forming the Head

- Once the stem reaches 45–60 cm, pinch out the growing tip. This triggers side branching — the beginning of your fuchsia's rounded head.

Stage 3 – Developing Shape

- When new side branches appear, pinch again after every two to three pairs of leaves. This creates dense, symmetrical growth. Remove any shoots forming on the main stem.

Stage 4 – Potting and Feeding

- Repot gradually as roots fill the pot. Use a high-quality potting mix with 20–30% perlite for drainage. Feed every two weeks with a balanced fertiliser early on, switching to a bloom formula by mid-summer.

At-a-Glance Care Calendar

Month	Key Tasks	Purpose / Notes
August	Select your plant. Choose a young, vigorous fuchsia with a strong central stem — avoid bushy, multi-stem types.	Varieties with firm, upright stems (e.g. Swingtime, Beacon, Margaret, or Dollar Princess) make the best standards.
September	Begin training the leader. Remove all side shoots except the top two pairs of leaves. Insert a bamboo stake to guide the main stem vertically.	Encourages strong upward growth; secure stem loosely with ties.
October	Continue staking and pinching. Keep removing side shoots along the main stem until the desired height (~40–50 cm). Allow 3–4 pairs of leaves to form at the top.	Builds a clean trunk and healthy head structure.
November	Form the head. When the target height is reached, pinch out the growing tip to encourage branching. Allow 4–6 lateral shoots to form and pinch them once again.	Establishes a symmetrical crown for flower display.
December	Shape and feed. Feed weekly with balanced fertiliser (e.g., 20:10:20). Continue pinching tips to balance the crown. Maintain even moisture.	Promotes dense growth and steady bud formation.
Late January	Final grooming. Remove the lower leaves on the trunk, check the ties, and replace any that are tight. Clean the pot and remove any suckers at the base.	Presentation stage: the head should be full and symmetrical.
Week of the Show (February)	Clean and condition. Water thoroughly the day before. Wipe the pot and stake. Add fresh mulch or moss.	Keeps the plant hydrated and fresh for judging day.

Maintenance and Longevity

A well-trained standard can last for years. After flowering, prune back by one-third to maintain shape and remove weak growth. Overwinter in a sheltered, frost-free area with moderate watering.

Common Mistakes

- Allowing more than one main stem to develop — always retain a single leader.
- Overfeeding nitrogen, resulting in soft growth and poor flowering.
- Neglecting to stake or support the plant during early training.

Companion Resources

- Fuchsia in Flower

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