

blooming plant of the month

Hibiscus

BOTANICAL NAME

Hibiscus rosa-sinensis (hye-BIS-kus roe-zuh sye-NEN-sis)

COMMON NAMES

China rose, Rose mallow

DESCRIPTION

Hibiscus plants are popular for their large, brightly colored, papery flowers that can grow to 4 to 7 inches across and for their beautiful, dark green foliage. The flowers resemble hollyhocks. The plants can have single or double flowers.

COLORS

Most *Hibiscuses* bloom in combinations of red, pink, yellow, orange, white and lavender. Some varieties have violet, brown and gold tones. Some are so dark they appear black.

CONSUMER LIFE

Each flower may last only a day or two, but with proper care, there will be a succession of blooms from spring to autumn, and the plant itself can last for many years. Generally, only a few flowers are open at any given time.

varieties

Popular varieties include 'Candy Wind' (pink), 'Carolina Breeze' (orange), 'Golden Wind' (yellow), 'Brilliant Red' (red), 'Pink Versicolor' (pink) and 'Sundance' (yellow).

availability

Hibiscuses are available year-round.

Some information provided by:

Exotic Hibiscus, www.exotichibiscus.com

The American Hibiscus Society, americanhibiscus.org

Hibiscus.org, www.hibiscus.org

The Chain of Life Network®

www.chainoflifenet.org

SAF's Flower & Plant Care manual

Reach "Blooming Plant of the Month"

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Images courtesy of The John Henry Company



challenge

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Hibiscuses* are sensitive to ethylene gas. Check with your suppliers to make sure their crops have been treated with an ethylene inhibitor at the farm or during transportation.

fun facts

MEANING "*Hibiscus*" comes from the Greek word for "mallow."

FAMILY *Hibiscus* is a member of the *Malvaceae*, or mallow, family. Other notables of the group include tree mallow (*Lavatera*), hollyhock (*Alcea*), flowering maple (*Abutilon*) and even okra (*Abelmoschus*).

ORIGINS *Hibiscus* plants are native to Southern China, tropical Asia and the Pacific islands.

quality checklist

BLOOMS Remove faded flowers daily.

PESTS Several insects are likely to show up on *Hibiscuses*. Check frequently for aphids, spider mites, thrips, scales and white flies.



H. ROSA-SINENSIS
'BUTTERFLY'

in-store and consumer care

LIGHT Bright, indirect light is best for plants displayed indoors. Outdoors, *Hibiscuses* can be placed in a bright location that is sheltered from hot sun, wind and rain.

WATER Keep the soil evenly moist at all times. Drying and irregular watering can cause bud drop. Avoid standing water. Reduce watering in the winter.

TEMPERATURE Keep *Hibiscuses* in rooms that are kept at a constant temperature. Warm areas (65 F to 75 F) are best. Do not refrigerate the plants because sudden drops in temperature may result in blossom drop.

HUMIDITY *Hibiscuses* enjoy constant moderate humidity, so daily misting is beneficial, especially during the winter in heated rooms.

FERTILIZER Healthy, fertilized plants are more tolerant of insect attacks. Feed weekly through the end of summer and only once a month during the winter. Be sure plants are well watered before applying fertilizer. Most growers prefer low-phosphate fertilizers. Avoid bloom fertilizers because phosphorous can build up in the soil over time and cause a general decline in the health of the plants.

SOIL *Hibiscuses* will do best in an acidic, moist, well-drained soil.

GROOMING Regularly prune *Hibiscus* plants to keep them from getting leggy and to remove straggly branches. Trimming plants in late winter will stimulate new, healthy growth and additional blossoms. **sfr**

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