

*Fuchsia magellanica*

[Synonyms : *Fuchsia araucana*, *Fuchsia chonotica*, *Fuchsia coccinea*, *Fuchsia coccinea* subsp. *chonotica*, *Fuchsia coccinea* subsp. *macrostema*, *Fuchsia coccinea* subsp. *robustior*, *Fuchsia conica*, *Fuchsia discolor*, *Fuchsia globosa*, *Fuchsia gracilis*, *Fuchsia gracilis* subsp. *macrostema*, *Fuchsia gracilis* subsp. *multiflora*, *Fuchsia macrostema*, *Fuchsia macrostema* subsp. *conica*, *Fuchsia macrostema* subsp. *grandiflora*, *Fuchsia magellanica* subsp. *conica*, *Fuchsia magellanica* subsp. *discolor*, *Fuchsia magellanica* subsp. *eburnea*, *Fuchsia magellanica* subsp. *gracilis*, *Fuchsia magellanica* subsp. *macrostema*, *Fuchsia magellanica* subsp. *molinae*, *Fuchsia magellanica* subsp. *typica*, *Fuchsia macrostemma*, *Fuchsia virgata*, *Thilcum tinctorium*]

**FUCHSIA** is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to Chile, the Falkland Islands, Mexico and Peru, it has hanging, red/purple-petalled flowers with long protruding stamens.

It is also known as Drop tree, *Ffwsia* (Welsh), *Fuchsie magelánská* (Czech), Hardy fuchsia, Hedge fuchsia, Lady's eardrops, Magellan fuchsia, and *Patte-oreilles* (Channel Islander-Guernsey): and in flower language is said to be a symbol of amiability, confiding love, or taste (scarlet).

The flowers are pollinated by humming birds in their native habitat – but successfully by bees in Europe. There are many varieties in different colours.

*Magellanica* means 'of or from the area of the Magellan Straits (off the southern coasts of Chile and Argentina)'.

Fuchsia is said to have been introduced to Europe in 1788. Certainly it is believed to have been brought to the Continent from South America at the same time as another close relative (*Fuchsia coccinea*) with which initially it seems continually to have been confused. A nurseryman, James Lee (1715-1795), at The Vineyard at Hammersmith (west of London) definitely sold many fuchsia plants (incorrectly under its relative's name, *Fuchsia coccinea*) in 1793 – allegedly 300 of them at one guinea each. How he acquired fuchsia is the nub. Some tell a colourful story about a sailor's wife from Wapping in the backstreets of London, who sold Lee a plant (allegedly brought back by her husband from the West Indies) for all the money he had on him, about eight guineas. Some have claimed that this story was a cover for an unauthorised acquisition from the Botanic Gardens at Kew, and others have suggested that the plant came legally from one of James Lee's collectors.

In an anonymous poem about the flower it is apparent that the poet is well aware that in England say, it is growing in a colder climate than that of its natural habitat.

Beautiful child of a tropic sun,  
How hast thou been from thy far home won,  
To bloom in our chilly northern air,  
Where the frost may blight, or the wind may tear?  
.....  
Doth thy modest head as meekly bend  
In thine own bright clime, – or doth exile lend  
To thy fragile stalk its drooping grace,  
Like the downcast look of a lovely face?  
.....

As a shrub it is often used as hedging in mild temperate regions eg. Cornwall in south-western England or Eire, and other areas of the world with similar climatic conditions.

The boiled flowers yield a red dye.

The edible glossy berries can be used to make tarts – and in the past it had been hoped at one time to encourage a culinary interest, with the possibility of improving the fruit size and flavour to promote their acceptance as a food.