

The March Talk: Growing and Showing Fuchsias by Derek Dexter

The March meeting was opened by Ray Jones and over 50 members met to hear an informative talk by Derek Dexter. We were literally "*turning round*" with awe at the way he has adapted his back garden to produce prize winning plants, competing successfully with the "big boys" of large shows who have more land and glasshouses much larger than his.

Unable to spend the time growing and showing vegetables 19 years ago when he had a young family, he turned to fuchsias as a hobby.



He has a large greenhouse but erects a 7' x 5' mini greenhouse inside it for the winter. The installation takes a day and is first combined with a complete disinfection of the whole space inside the larger greenhouse.

He fleeces it and uses a small heater monitored by thermostat from the house to be turned on when the temperature drops.

He de-leafs his plants to discourage [botrytis](#).

In January, Derek begins to spray the plants with tepid water, takes them from their pots, saws off the bottom third of the roots and repots onto fresh compost. In a short time, lots of shoots begin to appear. Derek takes lots of tiny [cuttings](#), just the top bud and a couple of side leaves which he trims by half to avoid water loss. Members were amazed at the minute viable cuttings. He does not use rooting powder and in ten days there are roots. He stops the growing tips every 20 – 25 days to make bushy plants. Large plants labels are to be avoided because they stop the light.

Compost is very important. Derek sifts it to remove the plastic and metal rubbish which seem to components these days. He likes [Jack's Magic Compost](#).



[Fuchsia Gall Mite](#) is a huge problem now and we have it on Hayling Island. It dislikes cold winters, but we haven't had that this year! It came to Europe from USA in 2003 and then to the UK. It blows in the wind and can devastate areas of fuchsia. The best treatment is to cut it all off and bag it securely. Derek suggested digging a deep hole and burying the bags, but I would prefer incineration, I think. There is a glimmer of hope in that somebody has suggested that chicken mite spray will kill it.

Derek favours a brand of moss called [Big Moss](#) to line his hanging baskets. It holds a large quantity of water. He puts empty pots in his baskets to aid watering and weighs stems down with pegs and weights to achieve the desired effect.

From the last stopping, it takes the following days to flowering:

Single fuchsias: 60 days

Semi-double fuchsias: 70 days

Double and full-flowered fuchsias: 80 days

Derek brought along some of his cuttings for sale.

Derek's entries in the various classes in the [British Fuchsia Society](#) London and Southern Counties Show:

Class 13 First:- Special Award:- Crystal Candlesticks
One Pot Ornamental foliage excluding Tom West
min 13cm max 15cm pot size Cultivars:- My Stacey



Class 9 Second:- Cultivars:- Ernie
Two Pots, same cultivar judged as a
matching pair min 13cm max 15cm pot size



Class 14 Second:- One Pot Tom West as
Ornamental Foliage min 13cm max 15cm



Ray thanked Derek, and then Peter and Carol Burton conducted the raffle after which members availed themselves of welcome refreshments.

Jan Mitchell