

PLANT OF THE MONTH: BOUGAINVILLEA

Source: San Diego Union-Tribune, May 4, 2008

To many San Diego-area gardeners, the mention of flowering vines will bring one plant to mind – bougainvillea.

This handsome plant is a most versatile addition to local landscapes. The plants make a beautiful color display as a covering for a wall or trained on an arbor. They are also a good bet for patio and terrace areas. The new, small, shrubby types are fine container plants.

Bougainvillea loves warm weather and when planted this month it usually makes quite rapid growth.

Bougainvillea requires a warm, sunny growing area and a soil that drains well. Bougainvillea plants come in a number of exciting shades. Keep in mind that the striking colors come from the bracts surrounding the flowers, not from the small flowers themselves.

Most bougainvillea varieties grow very

quickly. The plants should be trained to walls or other supports and pruned in the spring. Unpruned plants make an excellent, sprawling ground or bank cover.

Although mature plants can get along on less water, plants should be watered on a regular basis, especially during hot weather. Fertilize each spring with slow-release fertilizer tablets, or in both spring and summer with a general-purpose fertilizer.

Perhaps the biggest problem with bougainvillea occurs at planting time. The plants are easily damaged, or even killed, if the roots are disturbed when the plants are transplanted from their containers. The root ball absolutely must be kept intact during the transplanting process. Check with nursery personnel for the correct transplanting procedure when you purchase your plant.



Judy Sidnam

Some favorite bougainvillea varieties include:

- Barbara Karst – Showy sprays of bright red bracts provide continuous color during warm season. Fast growing vine.
- California Gold – A big producer of beautiful golden bracts. Plants start

blooming at a young age.

- Cherry Blossom – Beautiful rose-pink bracts with light green centers; vigorous grower.

- Crimson Jewel – Low, shrubby plants that feature brilliant red bracts; good as ground or bank cover.

- La Jolla – Produces brilliant red bracts on compact plants; a good bet for containers.

- Purple Queen – A beautiful variety that is an abundant producer of rich purple bracts.

- San Diego Red – Also called Scarlet O'Hara, this is a fast growing plant with bright red bracts. Has pretty, deep green foliage.

In addition ask local nursery personnel for their recommendations for varieties to fit your particular landscaping requirements.

Although the above article states that bougainvilleas should be watered on a regular basis, I've found that doing so creates too many green leaves rather than the colorful flower bracts. I've also never used fertilizer on my bougainvilleas, and the most showy plants that I've found in San Diego County seem to be those that appear to be the most neglected, i.e., they don't get water from an irrigation system and no fertilizers from caring gardeners. Examples are in the pictures below.



Seven bougainvillea bushes growing wild on the hillside in front of my home—no water, no fertilizer. This is the variety with long, sharp thorns.



Bougainvillea "Torch Glow," also on my property. This bougainvillea has stout branches with the color at the end of the branches, creating a torch effect. Thorns are small and almost harmless.



Gold variegated and white varieties, both dwarfs and also on my property. Small thorns but prickly.



Colorful bracts are very showy.



Bougainvillea trained on an arbor at The Bluffs in Mission Valley.



More bougainvilleas allowed to grow wild on a hillside with no water and no fertilizer. This hillside is located on Camino Santa Fe just south of Carroll Road in Sorrento Mesa (map code 1228-J1). Pictures taken on May 20, 2008, by Russel Ray.

**REAL ESTATE
SOLUTIONS**

provided by

RR PC
russel ray, property consultant

San Diego, California

619-341-0173

RusselRayPC@aol.com

ah
abouthomes.info

everything about homes... under one roof

www.abouthomes.info