

COACHELLA VALLEY PLUMERIA SOCIETY

CARING FOR PLUMERIA IN COACHELLA VALLEY

SPRING (FEBRUARY - MAY)

WAKING UP & LEAFING OUT

LOCATION:

Cuttings - Spring is the ideal time to take cuttings or trim plants. For all cuttings (unwrapped, wrapped and bag rooted), Spring is the best time to plant. Make sure that your cuttings are firm and not dehydrated, squishy or wrinkled. If they are, mist them daily for a few days and that should rehydrate them. Temperatures below 70°F is the best time to plant the cuttings you have stored over the winter. Not sure which end of your cutting goes in the soil? Leaf scars go up, making a smiley face. For cutting, planting and trimming instructions, go to [Plumeria Cuttings](#) (go to the downloads section of this page)

Pots - This is also the ideal time to place cuttings in pots. For plumerias that have been in pots over the winter, spring is the best time to "Up-Pot" into a larger container. Up-Pot plumeria every 2-3 years or when "root-bound". This will keep the plant healthy, continuing to flower. Late February to late May is the best time to "Up-Pot."

In Ground - When transplanting potted plumeria into the ground, late February to late May is the best time. For plants larger than 3' feet tall, dig a hole 24" wide by 18" deep.

WEATHER:

Plumeria have been dormant for the winter, meaning that NO LATEX is flowing in the cutting or plant. Plumeria begin to emerge from dormancy when low temperatures are consistently $>50^{\circ}\text{F}$ and daytime is $>70^{\circ}\text{ F}$. Ground and soil begin to warm up, sun exposure begins to lengthen and the chill in the air departs signaling plumerias to wake up and begin leaf production. Here in the Coachella Valley that can be as early as mid-February. Spring instructions are good until daytime temperatures are $>90^{\circ}\text{ F}$.

Cuttings – Place your newly potted cuttings in a place that gets indirect light. Once your cuttings begin to grow leaves, you can gradually give them morning sun (no more than 4 hrs.). As your plant grows, you can increase the duration of morning sun. These plants are still new, so be gentle with them.

Pots – Place pots in full sun (at least 6 hours of sun per day) on top of broken rocks or flagstones to retain heat, allow drainage and in an area with good air flow.

In the ground – Spring is also a good time to trim and shape your trees. Trimming your trees also encourages new growth. Please see [resources list](#) for additional information.

FIRST FEEDING OF THE YEAR (February 1 to March15)

Dry – Mix dry elements and spread around the base of your plant:

- Florida Colors Excalibur VI (11-11-14). Give these amounts in February, June and September: 1 tablespoon per inch of the trunk diameter; if you have dense foliage, you may increase to 2 tablespoons per inch of trunk. (Use Excalibur Boost for seedlings and newly rooted or grafted plants.)
- Sul-Po-Mag 1-2 tablespoons per gallon of soil/potting mix. For larger trees and shrubs, 1-2 pounds per inch of trunk diameter, applied by working into the topsoil.
- Worm Castings (2 pounds per 10 sq ft of area)

Wet – Mix wet elements and water thoroughly. Ideally, let tap water stand 24 hours so that chlorine dissipates (chlorine kills beneficial microbes). Apply over the dry mix so the soil is damp, not wet.

- Seaweed extract (2 tablespoons per gallon)
- SuperThrive (1/4 teaspoon per gallon)
- Fish emulsion
- Epsom Salts (Mg SO4) (1 tablespoon per gallon)
- Earthworm Casting Tea (2 tablespoons/ounces per gallon)

FERTILIZER/AMENDMENTS: The basic needs or primary nutrients of a plant are Nitrogen, Phosphorus and K (potassium/potash) in addition to air, soil, and water for immediate plant growth.

Fertilizer - *Nitrogen promotes growth and leaves; Phosphorus promotes blooms; K (potassium, potash) promotes roots. Too much Nitrogen means excess growth and leaves without blooms.*

When considering a fertilizer for your plumerias, each chemical element (N-P-K) is identified in percent amounts on the fertilizer bag, e.g., 11-11-14 (percent of total weight). CVPS recommends fertilizers “Excalibur VI” (11-11-14) or Peters “Super Blossom Booster” (10-50-10) to counteract nutrient loss in potted plants.

Amendments - *Amendments improves the physical structure of the soil, water retention, aeration, and chemical balance, benefiting plants by creating a healthier growing environment and allowing roots to take up nutrients quickly and efficiently. Some amendments add nutrients as a bonus.*

To achieve suitable plant nutrition, the proper balance of nutrients is necessary in the soil.

Macronutrients: nitrogen (N), potassium (K), magnesium (Mg), calcium (Ca), phosphorus (P), and sulfur (S) are used in relatively large amounts by the plants and are found in the soil. Carbon (C), Hydrogen (H) and Oxygen (O) come from air and water.

Micronutrients (or trace elements): iron (Fe), zinc (Zn), molybdenum (Mo), boron (B), copper (Cu), manganese (Mn), and chlorine (Cl).

All 16 of these elements are essential for plant growth. Most of the nutrients a plant needs are dissolved in water and then absorbed by the roots.

When considering amendments for your plumerias, here are some that CVPS recommends:

- Seaweed extract provides a broad range of nutrients and supports overall health
- SuperThrive (for soil or foliar feeding, adds iron) and VermisTerra Vitality - both prevent shock
- VermisTerra Earthworm Castings (cured for 8-10 years) and Earthworm Casting Tea (a solution made from earth worm castings) condition and neutralize soils, break down salts, suppress disease and aerate soil. These can be used for fruits & vegetables. Keep them in a cool, dark space.
- "Plumeria Martini" - Super-Thrive 1 tsp / 5 gallons + Vermisterra 15 ounces / 5 gallon - shaken and stirred.
- Fish emulsion
- Sul-Po-Mag (S, K, Mg) is time released and helps prevent sunburned leaves
- Epsom salts (MgSO₄) help form chlorophyl and develop roots. Use 1-2 tsp/gallon monthly or scatter on the soil. Develops roots and cambium.
- Banana peel water (K, P, Ca, Mg) – Soak peels in water for 1-3 days. Apply directly or blend as a slurry.

Other Synthetic Fertilizers:

- Florida Colors Excalibur VI (11-11-14) This formulation contains 4 types of N and is released over 6-9 months.
- Peters "Super Blossom Booster" 10-50-10 (high phosphate) - lots of micro-nutrients (Fe, Mn, Zn) to counteract leaching in potted plants
- Schultz Expert Gardener "Bloom Plus" 10-60-10
- GreenLight "Super Bloom" 12-55-6
- Carl Pool's "BR-61" 9-58-8
- Miracle Gro "Bloom Booster" 10-52-10 (not Regular Miracle Gro - holds too much water!)

Excess of one nutrient can cause a deficiency of another, so a proper balance is very important. Another factor in nutrient uptake is the **pH** (acid/base balance) of the soil. If pH is too high (basic) or too low (acidic), nutrients become unavailable to the plant.

The perfect pH for plumeria is 6.5 to 7.5 ("neutral"). pH meters are available on-line but may not be reliable. The only way of determining the soil or plant element content is by soil and tissue testing (which is not readily available).

Don't Panic, enjoy this new relationship! In time, you will learn to read your plumeria leaves and know what your plant needs. You will have become a plumeria whisperer!

For more information see:

Visible Signs of plumeria nutrient deficiencies (see [Plumeria Handbook](#), go to page 7A)

What nutrients do for your plumeria (see [Plumeria Handbook](#), go to page 8)

WATER: When watering with amendments or fertilizer, allow tap water to stand 24 hours so that Chlorine (Cl) evaporates (chlorine kills beneficial microbes). Water with amendments one to two times a month.

Cuttings - Cuttings planted in prepared, moistened soil will not need to be watered. Gently mist the stalk of your cutting every day until three new leaves are formed. Remember your cutting has no roots and you are giving the plant time to focus its energy on growing roots. This can take 4-8 weeks - be patient!

Leaves means that roots have begun to grow. Gently water around the stalk, not directly on the stalk. The roots will grow out from the stalk seeking water. Properly amended soil will allow water to move quickly through the soil. Allow your soil to dry almost completely before watering again. A water meter stuck into the soil should read DRY. Or, stick your finger in the soil – if soil particles stick to your finger, the soil is still wet and should be allowed to dry out more.

Pots and In Ground - As your plumeria begins to show new growth, water your plant with amended water until the water begins to come out of the bottom of the pot. Properly amended soil will allow water to move quickly. Allow your soil to dry almost completely before watering again.

PESTS + TREATMENTS

Common Pests:

- Spider Mites – Tiny pests causing yellow stippling, bronzing and fine webbing on undersides of leaves, leading to leaf drop or distorted growth.
- Whiteflies, Aphids, Mealybugs, Scale – Sap sucking insects that weaken the plant and excrete honeydew, leading to sooty mold.
- Tetro Sphinx Moth Caterpillars – Plumeria is their primary food source. They eat leaves voraciously, but healthy plants usually recover.
- Slugs & Snails – Chew holes in leaves and flower.

Common Diseases and Fungal Issues:

- Rust Fungus (*Coleosporium plumeriae*) – Yellow spots on top of leaves, powdery orange lesions (spores) on the underside, causing leaf curl and drop.
- Black Tip Fungus – Blackening and dieback of branch tips, especially after cool, wet conditions.
- Powdery Mildew – White, powdery spots on leaves and buds, common in humid, crowded conditions.
- Stem/Root Rot – Soft, mushy stems or wilting, yellowing plants, often from overwatering or poor drainage; usually fatal.
- Frangipani Mosaic Virus (FMV) – Causes color breaks (streaks/spots) in flowers and is incurable, spread by tools.

Control and Prevention:

- For Pests – Blast with water. Spray with insecticidal soap, neem oil, or horticultural oils. VermiTerra Earthworm Casting tea can be used as a foliar spray, to control many insect species.
- For Fungal Diseases – Improve air circulation, avoid overhead watering, provide sun, apply fungicides for rust and black tip, use sterilized tools, and ensure well-draining soil.
- For Viruses – Sterilize tools between cuts and isolate new plants to prevent FMV spread.

For more information visit:

<https://www.floridacolorsplumeria.com/plumeria-diseases-pathogens/>

<https://gardenvive.com/plumeria-diseases-pictures-and-treatment/>