



**Celebrating 21 Years!**

**ask** the landscape professional  
Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

**Welcome to my weekly series!**

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

**EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:**  
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### **QUESTION THIS WEEK:**

**Hello Linda,**

**For the past two summers, I have put two hibiscus plants outside after wintering them inside. Unfortunately, I have had no luck getting many blooms - maybe 3 at most. I have tried putting the plants in the ground in a sunny location as well as keeping them in pots. No matter what I try, nothing seems to work. How can I get my plants to bloom? Thank you...Gary**

### **Linda's Answer:**

Hi Gary,

1) Hibiscus need lots of full sunlight (6-8 hours per day); anything less than this will diminish the number of flowers produced.

2) You will need to fertilize with the correct fertilizer at the correct time in the correct amount. Use a water-soluble fertilizer formula manufactured specifically for hibiscus, or a 7-2-7 fertilizer. If you fertilize with too much phosphorus the flower buds will drop and if you do not use enough potassium, the flowers will be small and have poor color. After you water the plant, fertilize it with half-strength fertilizer and feed it every 2-3 weeks beginning in May through the end of August.

3) Make sure to plant the hibiscus in a planting hole 2 - 3 times the size of the roots on the plant and make sure there is lots of good organic matter such as leaf mold or compost and good top soil in the planting hole. The organic matter holds water near the roots, keeps the roots cool, provides air pockets for the roots and supplies a variety of microbes in the soil that help fertilize the plant. Cover the soil with no more than 2" of natural mulch. Do not use dyed mulch. The chemicals in dyed mulch can greatly affect the health of the plant.

4) Hibiscus pruning needs to be done correctly. The best way to encourage new blooms is to allow new stems to grow to 2 inches in length and then pinch the tips off of them. This promotes new stems to grow underneath the pinched stem. Then pinch the tips of the new stems when they grow to 2 inches in length. If you repeat the process throughout the growing season you'll have flowers into the fall. When doing minor shaping of the plant, use sharp pruning shears and make all clean cuts just above where a new branch comes out. New growth from these cuts should bloom within three months of pruning. Never do any major pruning on the hibiscus. Enjoy it!



***Hibiscus rosa-sinensis***

*Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 22 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects.*

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