

Overwintering Tropical Hibiscus & Mandevilla



Getting Tropical Hibiscus & Mandevilla Ready to Come Inside in the Fall/Overwintering Indoors

If you want to keep your hibiscus & mandevilla and grow them again the next season, you will need to bring them indoors before the night temps drop much below 40° F. They will need a bright or sunny area, or under fluorescent lights if you want them to “grow”. The optimum temperatures indoors seem to be between 50 and 70. The cooler end of that temperature range will produce far fewer insect problems later in the winter.

Ideally if you want to bring these indoors to over winter them, they should be grown in pots outside all season, not planted directly in the ground. They can be kept in relatively small pots for years (10-14" in diameter is fine).

- Before you bring them inside, spray with an insecticidal soap or horticultural oil, then cut back your plant(s) quite a bit, to within 4-5" of the main stems. This does a few things: it will help eliminate the bugs and insects that hide in the plants BEFORE they get inside. They like to hang out in the tips of the branches, in the newest growth. You also give the plant less to have to worry about-not as much growth to feed.
- If you want the best chance of having healthy, vigorous plants with flowers next summer, your plants need to rest indoors during the shorter days from October till April. DO NOT push them to keep blooming indoors and leave them full of old foliage as this will exhaust the plant, create spindly growth and invite bugs. As with any houseplant, do not fertilize at all during the winter (fertilizer says “grow”).
- Once inside, the leaves will probably turn yellow and fall off - this is normal. They will re-grow when they are ready. In the meantime, water very sparingly! If you want to try to preserve the leaves that are on it, give it 3 or so hours of sun or direct light (fluorescent) otherwise, place in a cool dark room like the basement and only water when it is very dry. This will put them into a semi-dormancy (they don't go dormant). Do not keep the soil wet. It is best to let the soil become almost bone dry before soaking it again. Do not let any water sit under the plants in saucers, etc.
- Your plants will rest and may not produce new leaves until late February or March. This is normal too. In the early part of April we will bring it outside and begin to fertilize once we see some new growth. At that time we will repot if necessary.
- Realize that many times, hibiscus never bloom well again after the 1st winter inside. There is not much you can do about this. But the little effort here can save you \$20-\$40 next year.

Good Luck!