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Posted by Hugh on August 27th, 2017 Mussaenda red hybrid at Biltmore Estates in Asheville, NC Mussaenda ‘Queen Sirikit’ Mussaenda (Mussaenda spp.) is a small tropical tree or large shrub. It’s a spectacular bloomer that grows to 10-15 feet tall in tropical zones (USDA zones 10-12). It is sometimes called “tropical dogwood” or “Buddah’s lamp”. In large containers it will reach 1-3 feet tall. Mussaenda blooms from late spring to mid-fall in mid-winter areas. Bloom colors range from yellow, red or creamy white with red, white or pink bracts or sepals surrounding the flowers. The spectacular blooms attract butterflies, bees and birds. Plant into a well-drained potting mix or humus-rich, mildly acidic soil and keep media moderately moist. Mussaenda grows robustly in direct sunlight, preferably 6 hours or more daily in cool regions of the U.S. Further south (zones 7b-11), expose to morning or late afternoon sun only and keep mostly shaded during the hot midday period for best summer flowering. The plant establishes quickly, within 6 weeks after initial planting. Prime flowering season is from late spring to very early fall (in zones 6 and 7). Feed with a slow-release fertilizer granules such as Osmocote® or NutriKote® at package directions. Cuttings should be collected in late summer. Flowering and growth slows down or stops once temps fall into the low 50°Fs. Overwinter in a greenhouse or a sun room. Prune back plant(s) hard before bring it indoors for overwintering. Mussaendas are relatively insect and disease free, although scale, mealybugs and mites are sometimes problems. Swallowtail on flowers Cultivars: Five different species are in cultivation and along with hybrid cultivars, ranging in height from 2 feet to 15 feet tall. *M. erythrophylla* ‘Queen Sirikit’ grows very shrub-like with pale yellow to white flowers with red centers and peach colored bracts. Their pendant flowers often appear floppy ‘flowers’ and in urgent need of water. Online store Plant Encyclopedia Blog Library Shipping Info Guarantees Privacy Policy About Us Contact form 866-897-7957 Media Outreach © Top Tropicals LLC 2003 - Mussaenda plant grow and care - shrub of the genus Mussaenda also known as Tropical dogwood, Mussaenda plant perennial evergreen or deciduous plant and used as ornamental plant for the flowers and the leaves, hedge plants and as bonsai in the right care, can grow in subtropics, tropics or mediterranean climate and growing in hardiness zone 10+ Leaves color green in elliptic, heart or ovate shape.Flower color can be: yellow, peach or white the flowers are small and grow inside of bracts the bracts are the showy part.Bracts color can be: red, pink, white, yellow, orange, purple the bracts show before the bloom and the bracts edge sometimes with prominent color. Moist soil, humidity, acid soil, rich soil, organic matter What is the best way to start growing? Plant / Seed / Vegetative reproduction - cutting take stem better before start to grow, care instructed: need to put the stem in light soil with moist, high humidity and don't let it dry also need that the water won't stay on the roots. Is it necessary to graft or use vegetative reproduction? No, but possible and can ensure the color of the flowers and the bract Difficulties or problems when growing: Can be invasive in tropical climate Recommended planting season? Spring to autumn possible but better to plant it by cold hardiness, spring to summer hardiness zone 10, spring to in hardiness zone 11 all year hardiness zone 12+ Pests and diseases: Aphids, scale Pruning season: All year, better after the blooming season How to prune: Just for design, and to create internal growth for hedge plants need to prune the inner branches that die for Size of the plant: 2-8 m, 6-24 feet Growth speed in optimal condition: Fast growing in tropical climate and the right condition / Medium growing hardiness zone 10-11a Water requirement: Average amount of water / Big amount of water Light conditions in optimal condition for growing: Full Sun / Half Shade in location with hot summer it's must, above 44°C burn in full sun, the low humidity effect on the plant, plants can be in full sun in higher temperature with high humidity Is it possible to grow indoor as houseplant? No Growing is also possible in a planter flowerpot / containers: Yes, container grow require bigger container 20-30% than the root ball, when arrive to the desirable size need to prune the roots every time that arrive to the end of the pot, care instruction: switch the soil or part of it every few years, prune once a year, regular amount of water don't let it dry, to add fertilizer and humus Blooming information Bloom season: Most of the year in hardiness zone 12+, spring to autumn hardiness zone 11, spring to summer hardiness zone 10 and 10a start after the last frost General information about the Mussaenda flower Yellow, peach or white the flowers are small and grow inside of bracts the bracts are the showy part Scientific name: Mussaenda Blooming Seasons Autumn flowers Spring flowers Summer flowers Winter flowers Flower colors Orange Flower Purple flower Red flower White flower Yellow flower Climate Mediterranean Climate Subtropics Climate Tropics Climate Ornamental parts Ornamental flower Ornamental leaves Ornamental plant Plant growing speed Average growing plants Past growing plants Plant life-form Deciduous Evergreen Perennial plant Shrub Plant Uses Hedging plants Ornamental plantings Planting Season Autumn Planting Spring Planting Summer planting Plants sun exposure Full sun Plants Part shade Plants Watering plants Big amount of water Regularly water Hardness zone 10 Hardness zone 11 Hardness zone 12 Mussaenda bushes are an evergreen tropical and subtropical shrub, which are the attractions of your garden from spring to fall, these are from the Rubiaceae family. It is quite popular and comes in colors like yellow, red or creamy white with red, white or pink. Read Growing condition of Mussaenda bush, Varieties of Mussaenda bush, Mussaenda bush care and more about this plant. This is a great houseplant and you can put it in the container also. Its ‘Queen Sirikit’ variety produces pale yellow to white flowers with red centers and pink brats. It has a shrub of about 2 to 15 feet and 5 other different hybrid species which are used for farming. Read more. Mussaenda flowers Although these evergreen tropical shrubs grow up to 10-15 in their areas, in the St. Louis areas it is 1-3 ‘tall in the containers. Large, its leaf-like showy spell 3 inches long clusters of small, tubular flowers increase floral seals in the season. Some individual flowers in each cluster will develop a large sepal, which provides real decorative performance. It's oval and bright green leaves are approximately 6 ‘‘long. Overview Scientific name Mussaendaerythrophylla Common name Mussaenda, Paper rose plant type Flower Sun requires Full Sun to part shade Flower color Yellow, red, creamy white with red, white or pink Blooming time Seasonal bloomer Soil Well-drained organic-rich soil Soil PH 6.0- 7.5 Zone 9-11 Common name It is popular with many names like Mussaenda (Red, yellow, white, pink), Mussaenda, Red Flag Bush, Tropical Dogwood, Mussaenda Red Single, Bedina, HanuRei, Vellaiyalil, MithalPhool, Encana (Dwarf Mussaenda), Mussaenda ‘Queen Sirikit’, Mussaenda ‘Capricorn Dream’ etc. Growing condition of Mussaenda bush Although it is easy to develop and care for these bushes, it is necessary to know its growing condition before planting. Soil and location It is grown in a completely fertile, dry and organic-rich, medium moisture soil. Winter hardy USDA zones 9-11 its grows well. They prefer full sun, so place it where there are less than 6 hours of sunshine. To get its shiny color, there is direct sunlight of morning and evening and shade in the hottest time. These bushes give you happiness in the hot months of the year and for a long time in the future. Propagation Mussaenda propagation can be done with soft or semi-hardwood cutting. Another way of propagating is air layering and for this, the spring and rainy season are most suitable. Seeds are rarely used. Fertilizing Plants prefer organic-rich and fertile soil which is heavily fed, these plants are regularly fertilized. Due to the lack of nutrients, the plant can be damaged. Nutrients are easily separated from the soil in high rainfall areas. Using organic fertilizers is more beneficial. Absorb from regular organic, leafy fertilizer applications. Apply liquid fertilizer early in the morning or in the evening. Watering Make sure to keep the bush water once or twice per week, it keeps moisture in the soil which is necessary for the plant, but do not let the mud. Water the plants during dry periods, the plants suffer from dryness and can be absorbed and die. Pruning Mussaenda bush is a stroller and benefits from annual pruning are beneficial. Generally, it should not be removed more than 1/3 of the development. If more removal is required, then it is better to have long-term sorting, gradually reducing its size as required. Some species and varieties become climbers, they can also be trained with fences. Removal of dead flowers and bracts is also advantageous in the flowering season. Uses Mussaenda flower Mussaendas bushes are usually planted behind the boundaries of the garden; they are tall shrubs, due to which their feet are often bare, to cover it, you can plant a ground cover plant or lower bush. For this, you select those plants that the selection of those plants is not firm and can compete with them. Over the warmer, wetter months of the year they grow strongly and provide quite a show in gardens, particularly in northern Australia. You can spot them at a distance, the shrubs being covered with showy white or pink flowers in which times obscure the leaves. While many of the showy hybrid plants dislike cool dry weather, many of the Mussaenda species are a lot harder and grow in cooler subtropical districts (such as Sydney) in sheltered spots. Mussaenda frondosa has striking reddish orange petals and white sepals All is not what it seems with a Mussaenda flower. Take a look at a ‘flower’ and what will first strike you are the large showy ‘petals’ which are in fact enlarged floral sepals. These surround the yellow, cream or white flowers. The starchy true flowers are 5 petaled and have a crepe like texture. In the species, generally only one of these large floral sepals is produced per flower, however in some hybrid Mussaendas there can be as many as 5 large showy sepals per flower. Mussaendas belong to the Rubiaceae family which also includes the Gardenia, Ixora, Pentas and coffee plants (Coffea arabica). Depending on the species or cultivar, Mussaendas generally grow 1.5 to 2.5 metres (5 to 8 feet) tall in cultivation. They benefit from a light annual pruning - generally undertaken just before the start of the growing season as the weather starts to warm and the soil is moist. In the wild, many species grow as rambling climbers and can grow up trees to heights of 10 metres (30 feet). Plants are generally in flower from November to May in Australia and throughout the southern hemisphere (May to November in the northern hemisphere) although many of the species can flower almost all year round in ideal climates. The species there are over 200 species of Mussaenda which have a very broad distribution from West Africa, through the Indian sub-continent, Asia and down through New Guinea to the western Pacific. One species is native to the Far North Queensland and the Torres Islands. Some 5 species are widely grown in warmer Australian Gardens. Pseudomussaenda, a related genus, once included in Mussaenda, also contains one popular species, Mussaenda erythrophylla has striking red sepals Mussaenda erythrophylla (Ashanti Blood, Red Flag) is native Angola, Burundi, Cabinda, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanganyka, Togo, Uganda and Zaire. This is a sprawling shrub with brilliant red sepals and white flowers with red centres. In the wild it can often climb up surrounding trees. In the garden it can be used as a sprawling shrub. 1 to 1.5 metres (3 to 4.5 feet) high by 2 to 3 metres (6 to 9 feet) wide, or trained as a climber up a support or an open foliated tree. Mussaenda erythrophylla flava a spreading shrub Mussaenda frondosa (Dohi Tree) is native to India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia and, Indonesia. It has white sepals and reddish-orange flowers. It is a smaller shrub 1.5 to 2 metres (5 to 6 feet) tall by 1.5 to 2 metres (5 to 6 feet) wide. The foliage is a lighter green than many other species. Mussaenda frondosa is subtle and elegant Mussaenda incana (Dwarf Mussaenda) is native to India and Malaysia. It has bright yellow flowers and creamy yellow sepals. This is a low growing shrub 300 to 750 mm (1 to 2.5 feet) tall by 1 to 2 metres (3 to 6 feet) wide. It looks great if mass planted as a groundcover and deserves to be more widely grown. Mussaenda philippica ‘Aurora’ has layered multiple floral sepals Mussaenda philippica (Tropical Dogwood) is native to the Philippines, Indonesia and New Guinea. The flowers have white sepals and orangy-yellow flowers. It grows 3 to 5 metres (9 to 15 feet) tall in the wild, but in cultivation is more commonly seen as a shrub 1.8 to 2.5 metres (6 to 7 feet) high by 1.2 to 1.8 metres (4 to 6 feet) wide. This species is less widely seen than its well known cultivar Mussaenda philippica ‘Dona Aurora’ (Dona Aurora, Buddha’s Lamp). This was a chance sport first collected in 1915 by Calixto Mabesa on Mt Makiling and then recollected by Hugh Curran and Mamerto Suit at the College of Forestry grounds at the University of the Philippines Los Banos in 1930. This cultivar has multiple floral sepals (often 5 per flower) instead of just one. This was propagated and dedicated in 1930 to Mrs Aurora Quezon, wife of the Philippines President. This plant is the parent of almost all hybrids. Pseudomussaenda flava Pseudomussaenda flava (prev. Mussaenda luteola, Mussaenda glabra), (Dwarf Yellow Mussaenda) is native to Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria. This shrub has white floral sepals and creamy yellow flowers. While no longer in genus Mussaenda, it shares many traits and is the hardest species, tolerating more dryness and cooler temperatures. You will see it growing vigorously as far south as Sydney. This plant blooms all year round in the tropics and subtropics. The flowers also produce a faint perfume. The hybrids Hybrid Mussaendas are probably those most popularly grown in warm climate gardens. Hybridisation started in the mid 1940s at the University of the Philippines at Los Banos. Much of this work was undertaken by Dr Dioscoro Umali, Dean of the College of Agriculture, and his wife using ‘Dona Aurora’ crossed with Mussaenda erythrophylla. ‘Dona Aurora’ does not set viable seed but produces viable pollen. Many of the popular shrubs growing in Australia date from the early days of this hybridisation. Work at the University on the genus has continued to this day, however you will have to travel to Asia to see some of the more recent cultivars. Mussaenda ‘Queen Sirikit’ has pale pinkish sepals with a darker edge. Mussaenda ‘Queen Sirikit’ (Mussaenda ‘Dona Hilaria x Dona Aurora’) is named for Queen Consort of Thailand, the longest reigning head of state in the world. It is possibly the most widely grown Mussaenda in the world. It has multiple pale pink sepals which have a distinct darker edge. Flowers are bright yellow. Following heavy rain, the weight of the flower heads has been known to break branches. Mussaenda ‘Dona Luz’ (M. ‘Dona Hilaria x Dona Aurora’) is named after Philippines First lady Luz Banzon-Magsaysay. It has multiple shrimp pink sepals which are inclined to turn under at their tips. Mussaenda hybridisation has also occurred in India in recent years. One hybrid from this country is grown widely in Australia and around the world. Mussaenda ‘Calcutta Sunset’ is one of the toughest and showiest Mussaenda ‘Marmalade’ (Mussaenda Dona Luz x P. flava) is a patented shrub raised from seed in 1995 in a nursery in Alipore, India. This shrub is very hardy and vigorous - the result of having P. flava in its breeding. It grows quickly to 2 to 3 metres (7 to 9 feet) high 1.8 to 2 metres (6 to 7 feet). The shrub is covered with showy yellow and salmon deepening to yellow and orange sepals. They are smaller than many other hybrids, but they are very showy on the bush. I highly recommend this plant. It continues to grow in my estimation. In Australia this plant has been rebranded as Mussaenda ‘Calcutta Gold’ by local nurserymen, which once again causes confusion when the public try to get further information from the internet. A number of Mussaenda Hybrids have also been developed at Ostram Nursery in Rockhampton, Queensland. The first two to be released have proved to be hardy and popular both here and overseas. Further plants are to be released in the future following international plant patenting. Mussaenda ‘Capricorn Dream’ has striking scarlet multiple sepals Mussaenda ‘Capricorn Dream’ has multiple scarlet red sepals and it makes quite a show in the garden. Mussaenda ‘Capricorn Ice’ - has multiple white sepals and deep yellow flowers. Cultivation Mussaendas perform best in humid tropical and subtropical areas, although many species and some hybrids will do well in protected areas in warm temperate areas as far south as Sydney. Plants like sheltered locations in full sun to semi-shade, and a northerly to eastern exposure (southerly in the northern hemisphere). Mussaenda ‘Calcutta Sunset’ has striking floral sepals Plants thrive in organically enriched fertile soils that have been heavily mulched and where they are regularly fertilised. Like many other plants in the family Rubiaceae, they can be subject to nutrient deficiencies, particularly trace elements. This is all too common in high rainfall areas where nutrients are readily stripped from the soil. I like to use biological fertiliser which includes balanced ground rock minerals. These are more likely to be retained in the soil and released over a longer period. Plants also benefit from regular organic, foliar fertiliser applications. Dilute the liquid fertiliser to ½ the recommended rate and apply early in the morning or in the cool of the evening. Irrigate plants during dry periods as Mussaendas suffer from dryness and can defoliate and die back. Mussaenda frondosa thrives at Waterfall Cottage in Sydney While evergreen in the tropics, plants can defoliate and die back in cooler or less sheltered locations over late winter and early spring. It is best to best to prune them just as the weather starts to warm and before the shrubs shoot into growth This is around mid-August to early September (February to early March in the northern hemisphere). As plants increase in size and become more established, they tend to defoliate less frequently. Many people appreciate the plants’ performance during the warmer months of the year and are prepared to tolerate ‘sticks’ during the winter months. In cooler climates, plants can be grown in pots and moved to a greenhouse or veranda during the cooler months. Pseudomussaenda flava, Mussaenda erythrophylla, Mussaenda frondosa and Mussaenda incana are the hardest species in that order and Mussaenda ‘Marmalade’ is the hardest of the hybrids. Mussaenda ‘Capricorn Ice’ and Mussaenda ‘Capricorn Dream’ are also said to be hardy, and I have seen them both flowering in sheltered Sydney gardens, but being recent introductions, time will tell. Mussaendas tend to be rambling shrubs and benefit from an annual pruning. Generally it pays to remove no more than 1/3 of the growth. If serious renovation is required, it is better to do a series of pruning sessions over a longer period, gradually reducing the size as necessary. Certain species and cultivars can also be trained as climbers, up arbors or along fences. Plants also benefit from removal of dead flowers and bracts throughout the flowering season. Propagation of these plants is from cuttings taken during the warmest months of the year. Some species and hybrids are harder than others and in the home garden they can also be readily propagated by layering. Overseas, tender hybrids are often grown on Pseudomussaenda flava as a rootstock with great success. Mussaenda ‘Queen Sirikit’ is one of the most popular Mussaenda hybrids Mussaendas are generally planted at the rear of garden borders. Being taller plants, their bases are often bare and benefit from a border of lower shrubs or groundcovers. Take care to select plants that are not too vigorous and may compete with these plants. In flower, Mussaendas can be showy, if not spectacular visible when seen from a distance. The hybrids are often covered in showy sepals to the point that the leaves are barely visible. The majority of the hybrids that have sepals that are white and shades of pink and can work well with plantings with complement pastel tones - both flowers or foliage. However a few species and cultivars have brilliant red and yellowish-orange sepals and these plants can be combined well with hot borders and brilliant foliage to create sizzling plant combinations. Mussaendas scream “tropical”, but I have seen them used in cottage gardens with “flowery” perennials. Mussaendas are generally pest free, particularly if their nutritional and climatic needs are met. They can be subject to scale, mealy bug. In turn this can lead to sooty mould growing on honey dew. This seems to be worse when plants grown up against a house where the warm, dry conditions encourage these pests. Have a think about where one of these plants might do well in the garden and earmark that spot a warm sheltered northern location where it will get sun for much of the day. Better still, how about a mass planting of your favourite cultivar or species? There is nothing like making a strong statement in the garden! These shrubs are sure to give you pleasure over the warmer months of the year and for many years if not decades into the future. The Flower Cluster Includes the True flower and the Enlarged Calyx Exotic flowers are the name of the game in our area. Beautiful, complex, and colorful flowers not only offer curb appeal, but also conversation starters that broaden the mind and your plant palette. The mussaenda fits the bill in all categories of desirability with asymmetrical design that makes you look twice. The mussaenda is a type of woody shrub in the coffee family native to the Old-World tropics where it grows from two feet to fifteen feet tall depending on the species. The leaves - arrayed in opposite fashion on the branches - are green, prominently veined, and covered with small hairs. The flowers are the real showstopper growing as tubular, five-lobed clusters with one or more enlarged leaf-like calyces emerging from the base of the flower. Different species have different flower manifestations, but all have the general form noted. Yellow mussaenda is a common species found in garden centers that tends to be on the dwarf side growing only to two to three feet tall. The flower clusters are yellow, and the modified calyx is generally white. Another species to look for is commonly known as the red flag bush. Growing to ten-feet tall, the red flag bush has the same general flower/calyx formation but is different in appearance with white flowers and multiple red modified calyces making for a truly spectacular floral show. Red flag improved cultivars and/or hybrids come in white, red, pink, and orange with huge gobs of almost poinsettia-like flower heads. I have only seen one or two over the years in local landscapes, but they were impressive requiring a double take. One cultivar of note is called ‘Queen Sirikit’ with large flower clusters of ivory to pale pink. The red flag bush has an open growing habit that must be pruned to keep within bounds or given support in the form a trellis. In general, mussaenda do best in full sun with some afternoon shade. They are not very drought-tolerant, so keep this requirement in mind. If they were planted in a designated planting bed (not just out in the landscape) organic matter could be added to improve the water holding capacity of the soil. Low temperatures that we routinely experience here can be a limiting factor as mussaenda are tender. Temperatures below sixty degrees F will slow growth, and below forty-degrees F will cause damage with leaf drop, flower injury, and general decline. Now this will likely be a common winter problem in our area. However, wait until March to prune out any dead material. Baring a heavy freeze, regrowth and recovery can occur so don't be too discouraged - by late spring things should be coming back to normal. Mussaenda as a group are interesting and colorful plants to explore. I have never grown one, but I plan on trying this exotic plant in the near future. Keep your eye out for this flowering shrub and consider adding it to your landscape in 2025! For more information on growing all types of unusual flowering plants in our area, or to ask a question, you can also call the Master Gardener Volunteer Helpdesk on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 1 to 4 pm at 764-4340 for gardening help and insight into their role as an Extension volunteer. R Ralph E. Mitchell is the Director/Horticulture Agent for UF/IFAS Extension Charlotte County. He can be reached at 941-764-4344 or ralph.mitchell@charlottecountyfl.gov. Connect with us on social media. Like us on Facebook @CharlotteCountyExtension and follow us on Instagram @ifascharco. Resources: McLaughlin, J. & Garofalo, J. (2004) MUSSAENDAS FOR SOUTH FLORIDA LANDSCAPES. Miami-Dade County Cooperative Extension Service, IFAS. CLOUD-BAILEY, C. (2020) Gardening in Florida: Dwarf Mussaenda brings flowers to South and Central Florida Gardens. Treasure Coast Newspapers. Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder (2025) Mussaenda. . Plant Profiles (2023) Mussaenda species- UF/IFAS Extension Orange County.