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## **Tropical Hibiscus**

During the hot summer months you will want to check your hibiscus for dryness daily. Proper watering is critical with hibiscus. It likes moist, well-drained soil. A container-grown hibiscus requires more vigilant monitoring than one planted in the ground because it is more apt to dry out. When this happens, you may notice that leaves turn yellow and flower buds drop off. (Leaves may also turn yellow if plants are moved from bright light to shade, as when you bring plants indoors in the fall.)

Frequent watering leeches nutrients from the soil, which is why it's so important to keep hibiscus well fertilized. Applying Osmocote- a slow release fertilizer, at the beginning of the season and than a Bloom Booster through out the season will keep your hibiscus blooming and happy all summer. In October you should stop fertilizing until March.

While you can enjoy your tropical hibiscus outdoors in full sun during the summer, you'll have to bring it indoors when temperatures drop below 45 degrees. Lower light levels and cooler temperatures adversely affect blooming, so try to find a warm, brightly lit location for the plant.

When you bring your hibiscus indoors if it is quite large this is the time to cut it back by a third. February is also a good time to cut it back if it is getting too bushy indoors. In March start fertilizing it again to encourage plenty of blooms for the summer.

Root pruning may also be necessary every few years. When a hibiscus plant becomes root-bound, it stops growing and producing flowers. To check, remove the plant from its container and look at the roots. Are there masses of thick, encircling roots? If so, slice 1-2 inch-deep wedges through the roots, then repot the plant with fresh potting soil in a larger container. Repotting can be done anytime of the year.