

Forsythia Care Sheet



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online sources.)

*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if
you were to live forever."*
—Mahatma Gandhi—

The Forsythia

(*Forsythia sp.*)

General Information: Forsythia (*Forsythia spp.*) is a deciduous spring flowering and hardy shrub. It is a genus of 7 species of semi-evergreen shrubs found in open woodlands in E. Asia. They bear opposite, simple, toothed or entire leaves.

Forsythia are best known for their buttercup yellow flowers (also a pink variety) that form on bare branches in Spring. Forsythia will be the earliest blooming flower in your garden. A true indicator of "Spring Has Arrived". Flower buds emerge at the side of the leaves; it also produces new shoots in areas where there have been flowers.

All Forsythia species are suitable for use as bonsai; they are however quite coarse growing and are primarily grown for their flower display in Spring.

If you are starting with a stump that has been collected from your yard, select the shoots that you want to become future branches and let them grow totally wild rather than pinching them. Once the bases of the branches that you want to keep get thick enough, you can cut them back short to one or two nodes and start growing the final branch out, pinching back to create ramification. You may still want to let sections grow wild depending on how long you want the branch to get. If you start pinching back right from the start the branch will never thicken up. It may take a year or two or three to get them thickened up sufficiently. If the branches are too long to get the tree into winter storage, cut them back as necessary, but still leave them long, and then continue to let them grow unchecked the following year.

Once you get your forsythia in a pot be sure to give it plenty of water. It will be one of the first, if not the first, of your trees to start drooping at the end of a hot summer day.

Caution should be used; this plant is considered poisonous.

CARE

Temperature: Zone 5-9. Fully hardy to -10°C. The flowers are frost resistant but the leaves are not.

Lighting: This tree grows in full sunlight but will also tolerate a partial shaded area. Must be in full sun to get a good flush of flowers.

Watering: Water well, likes a moist soil but let the surface of the growing medium dry out in between watering.

Fertilizing: Feed bimonthly during the growing season. If using a slow release organic fertilizer, feed every two months during the growing season.

Pruning / Training: The leaves don't seem to reduce all that much, but they do to a certain extent if one keeps on top of pinching new shoots. They will develop pretty good ramification as well if new shoots are kept pinched back.

One needs to pinch the new shoots back to one or two leaves as they start to elongate and are still soft. You really need to stay on top of this in the spring after flowering. Clean up the branches and wire in the middle of winter, right around January first or thereabouts and trim and wire branches as necessary. If you wait until spring the buds start to swell and get soft and you will end up knocking off a lot of flower buds at that time. At that time of year the new buds are hard and tight and you can clean off old flower debris and wire without damaging them.

Insects / Pests: Aphids. Forsythia gall can affect some plants; birds may eat flower buds in early Spring.

Propagation: Root greenwood cuttings in late Spring or early Summer. Root semi-ripe cuttings in Summer. By division in Winter and early Spring. Air Layering in spring or summer. Plants often self-layer.

Seed best sown in spring in a cold frame. The seed usually germinates within 2 months. When they are

large enough to handle, prick the seedlings out into individual pots and grow them on in the greenhouse for at least their first couple of winters. There after move outdoors in spring after last frost. Forsythia cross breed easily so many not be true from seed.

Repotting: Forsythia should be repotted every year or every other year. They will push themselves up out of the pot after two years. It produces a ton of roots, so repotting every year isn't a bad idea. They are fairly thirsty, so use a reasonably deep pot and don't fail to water in the hot weather. For soil use either straight lava rock, or 2/3 lava rock and 1/3 Turface. Repotting can either be done early spring before flowering, or after flowering. If you repot before flowering, this is very early in the season since Forsythia is one of the first to bloom.

Design and Styling: Informal upright, cascades, slanting and clump.

There are varieties of Forsythia that you can select, pure and hybrid types and the famous one is the Weeping Forsythia. If you want the dense foliage and low shrub type, select the Arnold Forsythia Dwarf.