

# Bougainvillea

Info Sheet  
*Bougainvillea* spp.

Bougainvillea is a colorful, large, sprawling shrub or vine which is native to South America. Each sprawling stem consists of alternately arranged heart-shaped leaves and also thorns. Although the tiny white flowers are inconspicuous, brilliant colors are produced after new growth emerges on specialized leaves called bracts. In Brevard County, two species of Bougainvillea are commonly used. *Bougainvillea spectabilis* the most frequently used, growing as a very large, sprawling shrub or vine, to a height or spread of as much as 20 feet. Many varieties are available with colorful bracts, ranging in shades of red, pink, purple, orange and white. *Bougainvillea glabra* is more of a shrub-type, with leaves slightly smaller than the *B. spectabilis*; bract color is available in shades of lavender or purple. The *B. glabra* reaches a maximum height of 10 feet with equal spread. Both species of bougainvillea are tolerant of the various soil types here in Central Florida, but they do require good soil drainage for successful growing. Plants require plenty of sunlight for growth and color. All bougainvilleas are considered tropical and are sensitive to freezing temperatures. If cold damage occurs, in the spring cut back to promote new, healthy growth and increased color. In addition, plants have a moderate salt tolerance and can be grown on dune lines.

## PLANTING

Although bougainvilleas grow in a variety of soils, best growth can be expected when plants are set in a well-drained, improved soil, in full- or half-day sun. Plants should be placed in the ground at soil level. Mix Espoma Bio-tone Starter in soil when planting. This will promote healthy roots. Water plants two times a week for three weeks, then water only as necessary to prevent wilt. Do not overwater.

## FERTILIZING

Bougainvilleas should be fertilized three times a year, February, May and September, with Espoma Flower-tone. Apply one cup per plant, more on larger specimens, distributing the fertilizer lightly over the entire root zone.

## PLANT PROBLEMS

*Caterpillars:* Chew and eat large sections of, or even entire leaves. *Solution:* Apply Thuricide at proper application rate as specified.

*Failure to bloom:* Not enough sun, or too much nitrogen or too much water. Bougainvillea flowers best in some-what harsh conditions of hot sun, dryness between waterings, and fertilization with low nitrogen fertilizers.



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