



Growing Plumeria

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Plumeria, also known as Lei Flowers or Frangipani, are a fragrant, deciduous shrub or small tree native to tropical regions. Related to Oleander and Jasmine, there are hundreds of named and registered cultivars.

Growing Conditions: Plumeria generally prefer growing conditions that are hot and humid with 6+ hours of full or mostly sun. They will survive in the shade, but will not bloom. They can be grown in the ground or in containers, from seeds or cuttings.

Plumeria thrive when planted in the ground but overwintering them can be a problem. Potential damage occurs when the temperature drops below 40°F. Young and stressed plants should be protected even earlier. Hybridized cultivars are also typically more sensitive to colder weather.



Container Planting: When selecting a container, you should select one with several drainage holes (you can add these). Plastic or resin pots are the most recommended. A general rule of thumb is a 1-gallon pot for every 12 inches of trunk or branch length.

If you currently have your plumeria in the greenhouse, garage or covered, wait until the temperature (day and night) is consistently above 40°F before you take them outside.

Strong winds from thunderstorms can also damage the plumeria. If branches are knocked off, look at it as an opportunity for more cuttings. Hail can also damage the plant, but it's usually cosmetic. The leaves and/or trunk can get sunburned by the hot summer sun. To correct, add mulch, reposition, or cover the plant. It's okay to remove sunburned leaves.



Water Needs: Watering your plumeria is determined by the season, temperature, and soil mix. While plumeria don't like wet feet, they should be watered deeply when irrigated and then allowed to dry out before watering again. If the soil is dry at a depth of 2 inches, it's time to water. Generally, you need to water 1 or 2 times a week in the spring, daily or 4 to 5 times weekly in the summer, and twice a week in the fall. The plants do not need water during their winter dormancy.

Fertilizing: A proper system of fertilization will help keep your plumeria healthy and promote blooming. Differences in which type of fertilizer to use appeared in my research. The Plumeria Society of America Inc and others recommend using a product that is high in potassium, like 1-6-1. Others, like a Master Gardener from Jefferson County, and a member of the San Antonio Plumeria Growers, recommend using a balanced 13-13-13. Just make sure to fertilize using manufacturers' directions.

Pests: Insects and diseases are not as common to plumeria as to other tropical plants, but a few exist. When a plumeria is attacked, it is usually because the plant is stressed. Spider mites, mealy bugs, thrips, and scale are the usual culprits. Rust, black tip, powdery mildew, and leaf spot disease occasionally happen.



Inflow

Propagation: The flowers and seeds develop on the inflow.

Flowers last for several days, but the seed pod takes at least 6 months before it opens and the seeds appear. A plumeria planted from seed will usually take 5 or more years before its first bloom, and the seedling might have different characteristics from the parent plant. It will take 3 blooming cycles to confirm bloom appearance.



Seed Pods



Seeds

But cuttings can bloom the first season and will be true to the parent plant. Cuttings are best grown in spring/summer. Make sure to have a clean cut, let the cut dry, add rooting hormone and plant. Cactus Mix Soil, Rose Garden Soil or Sandy Soil Mix should be used. Use of a heating mat will help with growth. When propagating by grafting, general grafting rules apply. Select similar growth habits for root stock and graft.



Cuttings

I have several plumeria that I enjoy caring for. I'm hoping that the two I planted 5 years ago will finally bloom!

Photo credits: Klaus Shoenfeld