

LA County Arboretum Plumeria Grove
Self-guided Walking Tour #5
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Growing your own Plumeria

Plumeria are easy to grow... if you live in a warm, tropical climate. If you live anywhere else, Southern California included, here are some important tips on cultivation and care.

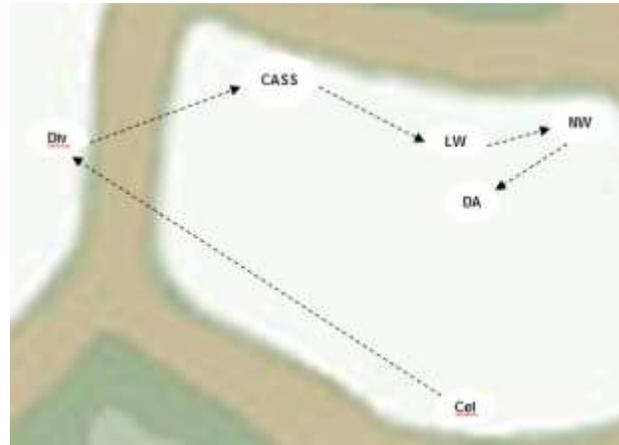
Basic plumeria care

- The number one killer of plumeria is overwatering, especially when the plant is young and lacks a good root system. Plumeria are adapted to porous, well-draining soil, and needs air pockets around the roots. Good drainage is very important, since cold, wet roots will rot. Get a water meter, and water only when partially dry. A well-established plumeria is quite drought tolerant.
- Plumeria love heat, sunlight and humidity, but sunburn can scorch both leaves and bark, particularly on young plants. Slowly introduce new plants to full sun.
- Plumeria always grow and bloom better when planted in the ground due to consistent temperatures and moisture.
- Once a month during growing season, fertilize with a standard NPK fertilizer (NOT so-called bloom buster, high phosphorus blends). Micronutrients, found in products such as organic fertilizers or seaweed / fish emulsion, enhance blooming. Epsom Salts (1 tbl per gallon, once a month) help the plant absorb nutrients.
- Just because there are leaves, it doesn't mean there are roots. Even a dying plumeria will bloom. Concentrate on developing a good root system the first season.
- All plumeria drop their leaves and go dormant when temperatures drop below 60, even non-deciduous ones. During this time, they don't need to be watered or fertilized. In the spring when temperatures rise above 70F, and your plant will push new leaves, called claws, from the branch tips. Don't water until those new leaves are at least an inch long. It's ok to mist the plant to keep it from drying out. Don't water a young plant unless it has leaves; well established plants can tolerate some dormant season water.
- Frost will damage your plant, a freeze will kill it. You must protect your plant from cold weather, and have a warm, dry location to store it during dormancy.
- Join a local plumeria society or one of the many online plumeria forums. It's a great place to learn from local experts and other growers in your climate.

When selecting your new plumeria, think about the overall plant characteristics, not just the pretty flower photos. Learn about each one online, or ask other growers in your area for suggestions.

What you need to know:

- What's the growth habit? How well does it branch? Where can I plant it?
- How well does it bloom? When does it bloom? If you live in a short season climate, early bloomers are best.
- Do the flowers need heat to create the gorgeous colors? Since many colors are driven by high temperatures, you want a plumeria that performs well and looks great in your local climate.



Important – start with easy to grow varieties! Let's compare a few.

- **Celadine:** an inexpensive, very forgiving, easy to root, profuse bloomer over a long season, with excellent, very fragrant, long lasting flowers.
- **Divine:** a miniature plumeria with very fragrant white pink blooms, she grows quickly and flowers early and profusely. Her dwarf growth is a perfect choice for growing in an easy-to-move pot.
- **California Sunset:** fast compact growth, producing gorgeous peach-scented yellow red blooms over very long bloom season.
- **Nellie's White, Large White, etc.:** in general, white flowered plumeria are vigorous, easy to grow, root quickly, and produce very fragrant blooms. These two are just an example of the many white plumeria available.
- **Donald Angus:** a beautiful red flower, but cuttings are almost impossible to root – he should be purchased as a grafted plant. Most red varieties are hard to root, so choose your next one carefully.

Deadly problems that kill plumeria trees

- **Overwatering:** plumeria are similar to tropical succulents. Overzealous watering, soggy cold roots, or poorly draining soil kill their roots, especially if the plant is young.
- **Cold:** frost damages leaves and tips, and a freeze will kill the plant. If the root system is well established, the plant may recover even if cut to the ground.
- **Branch theft:** plumeria are marketed as easy to grow – just stick a branch in soil and it will root! In reality, they need specific conditions to root. Thieves steal branches, and end up with dead sticks. Vandalized trees lose their vigor, and slowly die.

Please don't break off branches! Some plumeria are difficult to grow, and damaged trees die when uncaring visitors snap pieces off. An abused tree is sad sight, especially when plumeria are readily available in stores or from friends.

Take your time and stroll through the rest of our grove, and enjoy the many blooms. As more trees are planted, mature and bloom, this walking tour and other, more in-depth tours will be expanded. Enjoy!