

## **Hibiscus Spp.**

Family – **Mallow family**

Genus/Species – Malvaceae - Mallow



Hibiscus laevis All . Photo by Debbi Harris

**Common Names** – Scarlet rose mallow, Swamp rose, Halberdleaf rose mallow, Haberdleaf hibiscus.

**Pronunciation** – hi-BIS-kus

**Plant Type** – Annual and perennial. Shrub and small tree. Tropical and sub-tropical plant.

**Height** – 3-6' tall.

**Width** – 2-3' spread.

**Soil Type** – Rich, moist, acid-based, sandy, sandy loam, medium loam, clay, calcareous.

**Light** – Sun to part shade.

**Dormant** – In winter.

**Moisture** – High, likes a lot of water.

**Growth** – Fast growing erect stems.

**Bloom** – In mid-summer to fall (May to November). Each bloom is large cup-shaped that are 3" wide. It blooms from the axils of the leave, from the bottom to the top of the stem.

**Colors** – There are at least 232 varieties with a vast variety of flower colors with contrasting throats.

**Form** – Upright shrub that becomes woody.

**Pollination Source** – By insects and birds as well as a self pollinator.

**Additional Description** – All are stunning and showy ornamental blooming shrub that attracts butterflies to its long showy blossoms. Each have a bull's-eye pattern bloom that lead to a deep slim throat with prominent stamen and stigma to a gummy sap (it's yummy for pollinators!).

Mallows are related to okra.

**Leaves/Petal** – Deciduous, alternate and prominently lobed leaves at the base that are medium to large leaves that are wide-spread and sharp-toothed. The 5 overlapping petals open by day and close tightly at night.



Hibiscus beginning to come back **Photo** by Debbi Harris

**Maintenance** – Very little, this plant will die down at the end of season. It is best to cut back the woody stems at the end of the season for a more prolific future growth but it will come back if not cut back. Plants will spread/pop-up with new plants randomly. It grows best in wet areas/gardens or bog/pond areas.

**Propagation** – By seed pods that are collected at the end of season. Each dried seed pod has approx. 12 seeds. Store seeds in a dry area in a paper bag. Can start indoors in midwinter then transplant 3-4” deep.

**Wildlife value** – Attracts butterflies and insects.

**Diseases** – Leaf spot, gail, rust.

**Pests** – Aphids, Japanese beetles, scale.

**Legends & Folklore** – Hibiscus has so many uses from around the world! All parts of the plant, (the root, leaf juice, the flower and the woody stem) have been used for a vast variety of conditions. It has been known that when the bloom’s sap is whipped with sugar, it is the origin of marshmallow candy. The sepals are also used to make herbal teas. It is used a vegetable, food color dyes, bubble-making and as a garnish. Various cultures use the blooms for ceremonial or religious indicators. Some medicinal property uses are as a diuretic, cosmetic skin care, contraceptive, menstrual cycle, blood pressure, digestive and kidney issues, when dieting and as a shampoo to reduce dandruff. It also used as shoe polish by rubbing the flower on the shoe! The bark fibers are used to make clothing, nets and wigs.



Picture by Alice B. Russell, retired Extension Specialist, NC State University and Erv Evans, Consumer Horticulturist, NC State University.