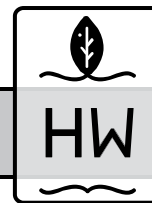


CARE GUIDE:

Camellias



THE BASICS

Camellias are stunning, fabulous, and easy to grow. This classic Southern features incomparable, often pristinely gorgeous, flowers in fall or in late winter/early spring with lustrous evergreen foliage. They make

excellent accent plants, specimens, or low privacy screens. Winter/Spring blooming Japanese camellias (*Camellia japonica*), fall-blooming camellias (typically *C. sasanqua*), and tea camellias (*C. sinensis*) as well as a few hybrids, are typically available in our region.

LIGHT



Morning sun; Afternoon shade; Avoid afternoon sun.

WATER



First 3 years, regular watering; Mature plants drought tolerant

SOIL



Well-drained; Acidic; Include organic matter.

LIGHT

Camellias are adaptable to a range of light conditions but they prefer morning sun and afternoon shade, or bright dappled light all day. When planting, avoid scorching afternoon sun, and windy sites. Some camellias are more sun tolerant than others (typically the fall-blooming *sasanqua* types). Those grown in sun usually look a bit sunburned when young. Tolerant plants will become accustomed to their site.

PLANTING

Camellias like well-drained, acid soil with plenty of organic matter. When planting, amend soil with a pine bark soil conditioner, Permatill, or a mix such as Daddy Pete's Plant Pleaser Plus Permatill. See our Planting Guide for Trees & Shrubs for specific directions and diagrams on planting (available in store or on the website Garden Tips page). Never plant camellias so that the base of the trunk is below the soil line. Do not permit soil or mulch to wash over the base of the trunk and cover it. Do mulch over the root zone area with mulch of choice to a depth of 2-3".

Camellias are also excellent container plants. Put plants that came in 3 or 5 gallon pots into half-barrel or 20"-24" pots. Use a planting mix heavy in pine bark fines, or make a mix that is 50% regular fluffy potting soil and 50% pine bark soil conditioner. Avoid soil mixes containing fertilizer.

WATERING

Camellias need regular water for the first three years in the ground. Young plants can and will die if they get too dry. "Regular water" means watering enough to soak the root ball 1-2 times a week in spring and fall, and 2-3 times a week in summer for the first year. It's good to water newbies during winter dry spells, too. Once established they can survive on natural rainfall. Old camellias are quite drought tolerant.

FERTILIZING

Fertilize up to three times a year (at least once) but take care not to over-fertilize, as this can predispose the plants to winter injury. Use a complete commercial plant food formulated for "acid-loving plants" such as Holly-tone and don't use more than called for on the label. Apply in early March, early May, and early July.

PRUNING

Prune after flowering. You can prune to get the form you want. Cut back tops to make lanky shrubs more bushy. Thin the bottom to form a patio tree. Shorten lower branches to promote upright growth. It's always a good idea to remove dead or weak wood. Thin branches, if plants become too dense for flowers to bloom properly.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Camellias don't have many problems when planted properly and given enough water, but here are a few things to look out for:

TEA SCALE: The most common pest on camellias. Small brown/gray insects that look more like scabs than bugs (female) on the leaf underside, often with many white males and cottony, web-like accumulations. The upper surface of the leaf can show yellow blotches and pale speckles. Prevent by spraying with horticultural oil spray after blooming. This spray will also control existing infestations, as will a systemic insecticide labeled for scale insects. Oil spray has an added benefit of smothering eggs. Avoid using oil sprays when temperatures are above 85°F.

CAMELLIA PETAL BLIGHT: A serious fungal disease that lives in soil and causes flowers to turn brown. Brown areas rapidly spread to the center of the flower, and the flower drops within 24-48 hours. Sanitation is the best control for this. Pull off and destroy infected flowers. Rake up and remove all leaves, flowers, debris, and mulch. Replace mulch. For serious infestations, spray with a fungicide such as liquid copper. Can be confused with cold damage.