



## CAMELLIAS

*Camellias are large, attractive, broad-leaved, evergreen shrubs that are highly prized for their flowers, which bloom from winter to spring. There are more than 2,300 named cultivars registered with the American Camellia Society.*

### **Mature Height/Spread**

Common Japanese Camellia (*Camellia japonica*) is a broadleaved, evergreen shrub, which may grow to a height of 6 to 12 feet. It has a spread of 6 to 10 feet. The dark-green leathery leaves are 4 inches long. The flowers, which range in color from white to pink and red, are 3 to 5 inches in diameter. They flower on different varieties from September until April. The flowers may be single, semi-double, or double.

*Camellia sasanqua* is a broad-leaved evergreen shrub, varying in form from upright and densely bushy to low and spreading. Heights range from 1½ to 12 feet tall. The leaves are dark green, shiny and about 2 inches long. They are usually darker green and smaller than the leaves of *C. japonica*. The flowers are mostly single, 2 to 3 inches in diameter, and some are fragrant.

### **Growth Rate**

Camellias grow very slowly. They can grow to be quite old. Some hundred-year-old plants may reach 25 feet high or more and as wide, but most gardeners can consider camellias to be 10-foot-tall shrubs. Many are even lower growing. *C. sasanqua* varieties are faster growing than *C. japonica*.

### **Landscape Use**

Camellias are used as large specimen shrubs, shrub borders and screens. The main ornamental feature is their showy flowers.

### **Cultivation**

Camellias need well-drained soil rich in organic material for establishment. Because camellias are slow-growers, they are slow to get established. Competition for water is the one critical thing in establishment. They thrive and bloom best when sheltered from full sun and drying winds. Older camellia plants can thrive in full sun when they are mature enough to have their roots shaded by a heavy canopy of leaves.

Camellias can be planted any time of the year (preferably in the fall or early spring) provided they are properly planted, mulched and checked for water frequently. Camellias are shallow-rooted plants. To ensure proper drainage, plant camellias slightly above ground, with the top of the root ball 1-2" above grade. In clay or poorly drained soils plant 1/3 of the root ball above ground and fill in around the exposed root ball with topsoil. The hole should be twice the diameter of the root ball. After setting the plant in the hole, fill with a prepared soil mixture (your native soil mixed with amendments). Our Flower Bed Amendment works well with sandy and loam soils, Clay Buster or Flower Bed Amendment combined with gypsum and Osmocote work best for clay soils.

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Soil moisture should be conserved by using a 2- to 3-inch layer of mulch. Camellias prefer a slightly acid soil and light applications of slow release Azalea/Camellia fertilizer may be used to maintain dark-green, attractive foliage. Follow the instructions on the fertilizer label. Be careful not to over fertilize and water well before applying fertilizer to avoid injuring the plant.

Some flower bud dropping may be a natural phenomenon. Many camellias set more buds than they can open. Bud drop can be caused by under watering in the summer.

Camellias require very little pruning except for the removal of damaged branches and long shoots that detract from the attractive form of the shrub.



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