

# Camellias

*One of our finest southern traditions*

Michael Dirr describes camellias as a "cherished plant for the southern garden," and we completely agree. A shade-loving plant that can tolerate some sun, camellias do quite well in Greensboro and can even prosper to our North if properly sited. Quirky extremes in weather can, however, have an adverse impact. For example, an early freeze during the winter of '83-'84 killed many camellias in the south and adversely affected the availability of many varieties for a long time. We have recently seen a resurgence in both the popularity and availability of many camellia varieties, nearly restoring this southern gem to its rightful status. Even now, though, demand can outrun availability for certain varieties.

Our Camellias are selected from two different "groups," and are selected for hardiness, flower color and size . . . and to ensure the longest-lasting blooms in this area. **JAPONICA** camellias have large, glossy dark green leaves and flower from November to April, depending upon variety. Japonicas as a group grow to 10' high and 6' wide (and possibly even larger over time), but can be maintained at a smaller size with judicious pruning.

The other "group" is the **SASANQUA** camellias, which usually begin to flower in September, with some varieties blooming through December and into January. Generally speaking, Sasanquas grow somewhat smaller and more upright (8' high and 4' wide), have smaller, less glossy leaves, and are considered to tolerate more sun. We recommend that both "groups" be protected from hot, afternoon sun and winter winds.

## Camellia Care

Major pruning should be completed over winter or by early spring (Sasanquas) or spring/early summer (Japonicas). While spring and summer growth develops, minor pruning can be accomplished by taking out soft new growth. Fertilizer can be applied a week or two before new growth buds begin to swell.

When using nitrogen-containing fertilizers, "slow-release" nitrogen forms are much more efficiently taken up by plants. (We like HollyTone.) Slow continuous release keeps plants well fed during the entire growing season. Early application of nutrients is essential for flower bud development in that the petal count can be related to the general growth vigor of plants.

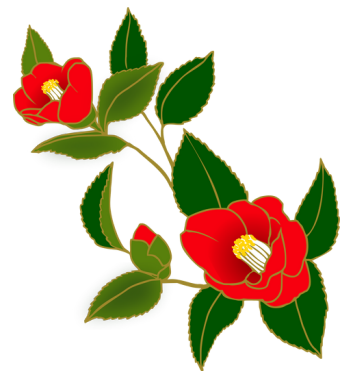
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# Camellias cont.

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Flower buds begin formation as day length increases during May. Plants should be in good growth by this time. Plants will be showing flower buds by the first part of July.

Water is not only essential for normal growth but a continuous supply ensures constant mineral uptake and maximum expansion of cells making up the new growth. Irregular water supplies interrupt the growth process which can result in stunted leaves and stems. If flower buds are formed during water stress, their quality will be affected.

Watch closely for scale insects, a major pest of Camellias-see us at New Garden Gazebo for control measures if detected.

