

## *Camellia*

Camellias are very popular in our area and grow well here.

Choose this plant when you want a shrub or hedge with dark, glossy leaves and showy, cool-season blossoms. Native to Southeast Asia, two of the more common species are *C. Japonica* and *C. Sasanqua*. Blossoms (2.5-5 inches in diameter) come in a variety of colors, including white, pinks and reds.

Camellias require slightly acidic soil (Ph 5.5-6.5), and protection from direct, hot sun and drying winds. Plant in well-drained soil, amended with organic matter. Water thoroughly, but don't allow standing water. Water consistently until the roots are established and plant shows signs of growth, then soak one time per week to encourage deeper root growth. Avoid overhead irrigation.

Fertilize with an acid-based plant food spring through summer. Follow label instructions to avoid over fertilizing.

Prune annually after blooms are spent to remove dead or weak wood, thin growth in the center of the plant to allow more light to penetrate, to control size and shape of the plant and to promote next years' flower production. Shorten branches to encourage upright growth and prune top growth to make lanky shrubs bushier.

Monitor Camellias regularly to spot signs of browning of blossoms (Camellia blight), sunburn, or the presence of insects such as aphids, scale, and mealybugs. Be diligent about picking up blossoms when they drop and replacing mulch (2-3 inches) each spring to prevent fungal disease.

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