



GROWING CAMELLIAS IN CANBERRA

Camellias have so much to offer the garden, it's no wonder they are great favourites. Beautiful glossy green leaves year round, tough and cold hardy, and to top it off a cheerful display of flowers from autumn to spring in a wide range of colour shades from white to pink and red - and even creamy yellow.

Hailing mainly from China, Japan and Korea, there are almost 300 species found in the wild, plus about 3,000 named varieties. For the home gardener, however, two main groups of Camellias are normally available:

- 1. Sasanqua Camellias** - These really light up the autumn-winter garden with single to semi-double blooms that also shatter and form a colourful carpet around the base of the shrub. Many varieties have a scent too.
 - They have smaller glossy green leaves making them suitable for either sun or semi-shade.
 - They can be grown as a great hedge - space them 50-90cms apart.
 - Or trim to a shape, or just leave to eventually become a large evergreen shrub or small tree of up to 3-4m+.
 - Their long, flexible new growth also make them a perfect choice to espalier on a wall or fence.
 - Fast growing, expect growth of up to 30cms per year with good care until mature.
 - The colour range is from white to dark pink, red and two-tones.
 - Classic varieties include 'Hiryu' (dark pink); 'Setsugekka', 'Asakura', 'Early Pearly' (all white); 'Paradise Pearl', 'Pure Silk' (white/pink blush); and 'Jennifer Susan' (Mid Pink).
 - 'Yuletide' (red) is a compact later-flowering variety great for tubs and smaller spaces.
 - Look out also for the new 'Flowering Fence' series - a great choice for screening or hedges.
 - *Camellia x hiemalis* and *Camellia x vernalis* are very similar to *C. sasanqua*, for garden purposes.
- 2. Japonica Camellias** - These more formally shaped Camellias open their spectacular flowers in late winter to spring and they make great centrepiece shrubs that look good all year round.
 - Highly prized for their large showy blooms so suitable for the vase.
 - With their big glossy leaves, these Camellias grow steadily into shapely compact medium shrubs of about 2-3 metres.
 - Best suited to shaded or dappled sun situations, so the large flowers and leaves don't get sunburn.
 - Colours range from pure white to red and even creamy yellow.
 - Classic varieties include 'Lovelight' (white); 'Black Lace' (deep red); 'Debbie', 'E.G. Waterhouse', 'Desire' (all pink shades); 'Buttons and Bows' (two-tone) and 'Brushfield's Yellow' - to name only a few!
 - *Camellia reticulata* and *Camellia williamsii* are very similar to *C. japonica*, for garden purposes.

WHAT DO CAMELLIAS LIKE?

- A slightly acid soil - just what you find naturally around Canberra. Avoid lime.
- Shade, semi shade or early morning sun for the Japonica group. Semi-shade to sun for the Sasanqua group.
- A reliable supply of moisture, especially when young and also when forming buds and opening flowers.
- A soil with good drainage and added compost or organic matter.
- Regular fertiliser, applied when the soil is moist. We recommend *Healthy Earth* fertiliser.
- Pruning just after flowering is finished helps to keep them compact and allows a full season to form next year's buds.

PLANTING YOUR CAMELLIA

Planting in the ground: For the basics of planting into the ground, see our leaflet "Planting Your New Tree". If you are planting a hedge, see our leaflet about the best method for hedges.

Planting in a pot: Best suited to Japonica Camellias or dwarf varieties in the Sasanqua group, like 'Yuletide'. For an eye-catching formal look, try a Camellia trained on a standard into a "lollipop" shape - this training keeps the plant and roots small and suited to a large pot. Use a high quality potting mix.

Special tips

- Avoid planting white or pale coloured Camellia japonicas in morning sun - they will brown or burn
- Very early flowering Japonica varieties need protection from frost burning their flowers.
- Look out for special varieties like the groundcover 'Marge Miller'; the compact 'Night Rider' (dark red & red new growth); the stunning miniature flowers of 'Tinsie' and the Camellia that tea is made from, *Camellia sinensis*.