

How To grow Camellia Japonica & Other Species

Camellia Japonicas are robust, strong and handsome. Their dark green foliage looks good all year and adds a wonderful foil to surrounding shrubbery. In Winter and Spring you'll be absolutely delighted with an amazing display of flowers. Now, there's a good range of 'species' and 'Miniature Flowered Camellias' available too, so do see the range.

BRIEFLY:

Position: Semi-shade to filtered Sun

Height: 2 - 3 metres *

Width: 1 1/2 - 2 1/2 metres *

* depending on variety.

Camellia Japonicas are easy to grow and have been popular plants for numerous years. 'Japonicas' are very adaptable plants as too are the 'species' and 'Miniature Flowering Camellias' that are covered briefly later.

Where to Plant?

Some Camellia Japonicas, such as Emperor of Russia and Great Eastern, will take a fairly open spot but generally C. Japonicas do need some protection from the sun. A well drained soil is essential, or else grow them in large containers.

When to Plant?

You can plant C. Japonicas any time at all but the best range is available from March to September.

Prepare your Soil for Planting

As with any plant, you'll have better success if you prepare your soil before planting. Water your plant in the pot several hours before planting.

C. Japonicas like an acidic soil, pH 5.0 to 6.0. Garden Centres can test your soil pH level at no charge if you are not sure about yours.

Dig in some compost to improve the soil and to assist drainage in clay soils or water retention in sandy soils.

Dig a hole twice the width of the root ball and slightly deeper than its depth. Blend the soil you removed with

Planting Compost, 2/3 compost to 1/3 soil and partially fill the bottom of the hole with compost enriched soil.

Remove your plant carefully from the pot and look at the root system. The roots may need to be loosened gently from the root ball to help them grow into the fresh soil. Place your plant carefully into the hole, positioning it with its best side to your advantage. Make sure that the top of the root ball is level with, or slightly below, the existing soil level. Fill compost improved soil back into the hole and firm down to exclude any air pockets.

Water straight after planting and add **Plant Starter or Liquid Seaweed** to help your plant to a better start in life by gently stimulating the root system.

N.B. Do not dig below the clay line in heavy soils as you may cause a drainage problem. Build up the soil level instead.

How Much Water?

Camellias need deep, regular watering in the drier months and particularly in Spring as new growth forms. Frequency of watering will depend on soil type, climate and position but once or twice per week should be enough in warmer times. Constant, even moisture is needed for formation of buds and prolonged flowering. Camellias, with their fine root system, will really benefit from an efficient sprinkler system.

Feeding and Mulching

Camellias are not heavy feeders. The main time to feed is early Spring, after flowering, with **All Purpose Plant Food** and again around January. As the buds begin to form an application of **Seaweed Fertilizer** will be beneficial. If you have a lot of plants you will find that one of the hose-end sprayers, such as the Handy Feeder, will make liquid fertilising easy. Camellias have a shallow root system and should **not** be over-fed. Mulching with about a 5cm layer of Pine bark or similar is very beneficial as Camellias do enjoy a cool root system.

Can You Prune Them?

Certainly, but little if any is normally needed as they're naturally bushy. You can shape them for hedges, containers etc. and this is best done in early Spring after flowering.

Grow Them in Containers

Camellias are brilliant container plants. They will need a fairly large container ultimately so do ask staff for advice when you purchase. There really are no tricks to container growing but good Potting Mix is a must. We recommend you use the best possible.

As with any container plant, you will need to water and feed regularly for best results.

'Species' & 'Miniature Flowered Camellias'

For many years these sought after plants were not freely available but now, in the season, they are. They generally require the same conditions as C. Japonica but there are differences in growth habits.

Many of the 'species' Camellias are quite dwarf in nature e.g. 'Baby Bear', whilst the **M.F.C.s** grow to about the same height and width as C. Japonicas but have miniature flowers. **M.F.C.s** tend to exhibit a more angular growth habit providing a distinctly oriental feel. Foliage colour varies and many have graceful, arching branches that add to the fascination of their Winter foliage.

'Species' Camellias are great in small tubs whereas **M.F.C.s** are ideally suited to Topiary or tub culture.

Good Companion Plants Include: Azaleas, Ericas, Daphne, Rhododendrons, Gardenias etc.

Camellia Japonicas make wonderful hedge or privacy plants. They're great in background areas as foundation plants and fit in beautifully with formal gardens. They really do suit any garden.

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