

CAMELLIA

Camellia japonica



Characteristics

- Type: Evergreen Shrub
- Zone: 7 to 9
- Height: 7.00 to 12.00 feet
- Spread: 5.00 to 10.00 feet
- Bloom Time: Seasonal bloomer
- Bloom Description: white, pink, red, yellow, and lavender
- Sun: Part shade
- Water: Medium
- Maintenance: Medium
- Flower: Showy
- Leaf: Evergreen

Culture

Camellia japonica and most of its cultivars are considered to be winter hardy to USDA Zones 7-9. Even where winter hardy, unusually cold temperatures in winter (below 10 degrees F), particularly when occurring as a sudden temperature change, can damage or sometimes kill these plants. Where winter hardy, *Camellia japonica* should be grown in moist, acidic (5.5 to 6.5 pH), loose, organically rich, well-drained soils in part shade. Consistent and even moisture is important. Avoid wet soils. Plants require protection from direct afternoon sun and wind. Best location may be sun-dappled part shade. Best with a root mulch. Fertilize monthly in spring and summer. If desired, remove all but one bud from each cluster to increase the size of the flower. Prune immediately after flowering.

Noteworthy Characteristics

Camellia japonica, commonly called Japanese camellia, is an evergreen shrub that typically grows to 6-12' tall on stems clad with oval, leathery, glossy, dark green leaves (3-4" long) with finely serrated margins. It is native to China and Japan. It is the most commonly grown camellia species comprising thousands of cultivated varieties. It is the state flower of Alabama. Flower buds begin to form in mid-summer. Buds appear in clusters. Removing all but one bud per cluster will increase flower size. Flowers (3-5" wide) bloom in mid-late winter (December to March) when grown outdoors in warm winter climates. Species plants have single flowers, but cultivars with semidouble, anemone, peony, rose-form double, or formal double flower forms are available. Each single flower has 5-8 petals. Flower colors are most commonly white, pink or red with yellow anthers. Flowers are borne at the tips of shoots or from lower leaf axils.

Problems

Camellias are susceptible to a number of fungal diseases including leaf spots, black mold, flower blight, canker and root rot. Scale can be a troublesome insect pest. Aphids, thrips, mealybugs and mites may appear. Yellow leaves may mean too little acidity in the soil. Some flower bud dropping may be natural, but sometimes may be caused by overwatering or underwatering. Limit pruning to removal of dead or damaged wood, unproductive branches, and disproportionately long shoots. Prune immediately after flowering or in early summer to stimulate branching. Pruning later in the year can remove flower buds.

Garden Uses

Excellent flowering shrub for lawns, shrub borders, backgrounds, informal hedges and around homes in mild winter locations.