

# Camellia Care



Camellias in a Japanese bowl, making a beautiful table arrangement.

## Queen of the winter flowers.

Camellias are one of the oldest cultivated plants in the world, originating from eastern Asia. Their original boundaries run roughly from Korea in the north, Japan in the east, Vietnam in the south and Nepal to the west. The "Chinese rose" as they have been known are now one of the most widely grown plants in the world.

Camellias were imported into Europe around 300 years ago, with the main species being *Camellia sinensis* - Tea. After realising that the climate wasn't suited for tea production in Europe further species were grown and hybridised to arrive at the beautiful range of colours and styles available today.

### Camellia species and varieties

There are over 200 species of camellias found in the wild, with all so far coming from Asia. Camellia varieties are cultivars raised from one or more species. There are over 30,000 different cultivars that have been catalogued with more being released each year. We will cover the main varieties in this care brochure.

### Camellia types:

#### Camellia japonicas:-

With their large full flowers *C.japonica* must be the most well known and requested variety of camellia. Flowering from July to September they come in an amazing range of colours (excluding orange, blue and a true yellow) and sizes. Most are double and come in a number of flower styles. Some are fragrant but albeit very mildly.

Grown mainly in a protected location in the garden, they prefer dappled light and can burn in our hot summers in more open positions. *Camellia japonica* is more tolerant of cold conditions.

#### Camellia sasanqua:-

Heralding the arrival of autumn, *C.sasanquas* are the first of the camellias to flower. Their usually single to semi double fluted and ruffled flowers are generally small but produced in profusion. The blooms are followed by an abundant crop of black seed pods, which when pressed produce a very aromatic oil, once used in Chinese and Japanese cooking. Most *sasanqua*'s are fragrant.

*Sasanqua* camellias are the

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*If we had no winter,  
spring would not be  
so pleasant*  
...Anne Bradstreet

Ask us about our great range of camellias in stock all year round. We can recommend a variety right for you.



## Camellia Flower Types



Single: Five to seven petals, free standing stamens in the centre



Semi-double: Two or more rows of petals, protruding stamens.



Anemone-like: Large outer petals; in the centre the petals are fused with the stamens protruding.



Peony-like: Open outer petals; centre irregular with fused petals and stamens, double.



Completely double: petals overlapped with stamens hidden.

most versatile group and suited to an open garden position, often being sold as sun tolerant. They are the best choice for hedging, containers and bonsai. They can make lovely cut flowers when picked early or when floated in a bowl, though their petals can drop quickly.

### **Camellia sinensis:-**

Camellia sinensis carries one of the most interesting history of all plants, valued through time as a type of currency and the cause of many a dispute, C.sinensis is the source of the worlds Tea. The leaf buds have been brewed and drank in China 3,000 years before being introduced to Europe and the rest of the world.

It is through the trading of tea from the West India Company that the rest of the world knew about the other varieties of camellias. The majority of the worlds tea now comes from India and Sri Lanka. Anxious to control the import of tea into her colonies, Britain developed large tea plantations within suitable parts of the Empire, and still today it is a major source of income for these countries.

Camellia sinensis can be grown easily in the home garden, its small white fragrant flowers make an interesting addition to most well protected gardens.

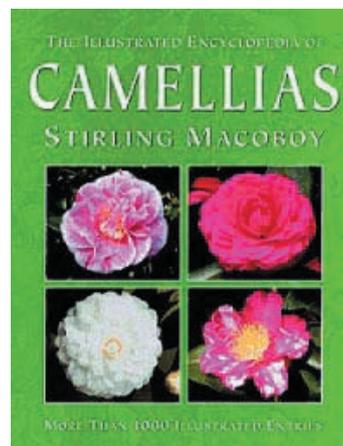
### **Camellia reticulata:-**

With their magnificent flowers C.reticulata are one of the most stunning varieties available. Introduced in the 1800's they are native to China where the pure species still exists. Hybridisation between C.japonica and C.reticulata has made these beautiful plants more widely grown, though still quiet hard to find in nurseries due to their need to be grafted. They are named after the distinctive veinature in their leaves.

### **Other species:-**

*Information on other species can be found in any good camellia text. Some of the species include: C.williamsii, C.cuspidata, C.chrysantha and many camellia hybrids.*

*Try: Stirling Macoboy's "What Camellia is That?", Lansdowne Press ISBN 1-86302-571-5*



# Camellia Cultivation

## Climate, Aspect & Soil

Camellias prefer a warm temperate climate, with summer rain and reasonably high humidity. Tolerant of light frosts, in colder areas they are best grown with some protection from the elements. When selecting a spot for your camellias take the advice of Stirling Macaboy - "Shade, Not Gloom" Most camellias prefer a dappled light position, with sasanquas more tolerant of unbroken light. You will find generally the foliage is green, healthier and the flowers richer with some shade. In frost prone areas plant your camellia where they have time to thaw before the sun's rays hit the plants. Find a spot where the sun reaches after 10-11am. This will prevent the foliage and flowers burning. White and pale coloured flowers seem to be more susceptible. Your soil should verge on acidic, with a pH of 7 or less, preferably 6.5. Keep the soil enriched with humus by adding regular quantities of compost and aged manure. Avoid soils that contain high amounts of lime (indicated by pink flowering hydrangea). Your soil should be well drained for best results.

## Fertilising & Mulch

With the addition of compost and aged manures on a regular basis (say twice a year, once in early spring and again in late summer) your soil should contain all the right elements for good camellia growth. Artificial or synthetic fertilisers aren't really necessary for camellias and in some instances may burn the sensitive roots. For poorer soils the addition of complete Blood n Bone at the recommended rate in late summer will help with flowering. The application of a seaweed extract such as Seasol will help with any trace element deficiencies. Mulch your camellias well using sugar cane or lucerne mulch keeping the material away from the trunk. With the application of any fertiliser or mulch water well before and after.

## Pest & Disease

There aren't many things that will kill a camellia! Usually neglect and under watering in dry times and over watering in heavy soils. Camellias can be prone to root rot caused by the Phytophthora fungus. This is usually caused by extended periods in wet ground, and by the time it is noticed it is too late. If you have a camellia that has died from root rot you need to act quickly, removing and destroying the plant. Drench the remaining soil with Fongarid to help prevent its spread.

## Watering

Commercially grown camellias are generally shallow rooted plants and as such require careful attention during extended dry periods. Although tolerant of drought they will benefit from additional watering during long periods without natural rainfall. The use of seep hoses under the mulch is a great way of getting water where it's needed at the roots.

## Planting

Preparation is the key to successful camellia growing. Prepare the hole with plenty of compost, digging a hole that is twice as wide as the pot and at 1 1/2 half the depth. Camellias don't like being disturbed and can take a while for the roots to extend beyond the original root ball. Don't plant your new camellias too deep, keeping the top of the root ball at soil level, planting too deep can suffocate these shallow rooted plants. Stake in windy areas to prevent the plant from toppling out of its new home.

## Pruning

Although naturally requiring no pruning, camellias do respond to a regular trim. Used as hedges and formal screens in many gardens the best time is to prune after flowering has finished and before the new growth commences. When pruning remove only to where the last season's growth began. You will notice the difference in the stem colour. Removing too far back into old wood can cause the plant to sit idle. As with most plants it is best to start pruning and shaping when the plant is young to promote bushiness and vigor.

### Contacting & Visiting Us:

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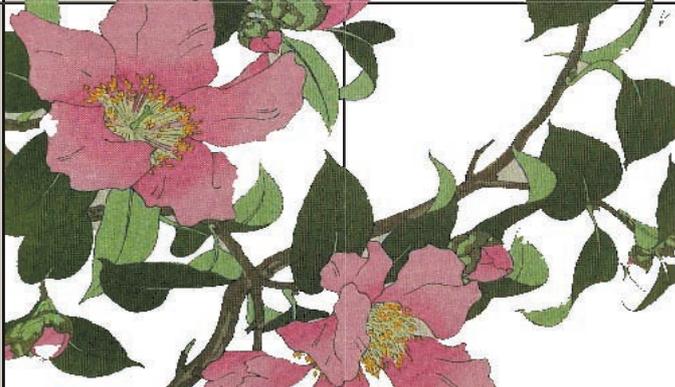
Location: 100 Queen Street, Berry, NSW 2535, Parking at rear

Email: [countrygardener@optusnet.com.au](mailto:countrygardener@optusnet.com.au) | Website: [www.countrygardener.com.au](http://www.countrygardener.com.au)

Open 7 days:

# Camellia Care Calendar.

The complete guide to camellia care by month

<p><b>Continue to water</b> camellias deeply during warm weather.</p> <p>jan</p>	<p>feb</p>	<p><b>Prepare</b> ground for new season camellias and hedge plantings refer planting tips</p> <p>mar</p>	<p><b>Feed</b> with and organic fertiliser at the recommended rate, water in well. Re-apply mulch.</p> <p>apr</p>
<p><b>Sasanqua</b> camellias begin their flowering, now is an excellent time to chose new varieties</p> <p>may</p>	<p>jun</p>		<p><b>Japonica</b> camellias begin their flowering, now is an excellent time to chose varieties for your garden.</p> <p>jul</p>
<p><b>Annual</b> Winter camellia and flower show, Berry</p> <p>aug</p>	<p><b>Lightly prune</b> camellias that have finished flowering. <b>Transplant</b> camellias now.</p> <p>sep</p>	<p><b>Feed</b> with blood n bone at the recommended rate. Apply compost and aged manure as mulch.</p> <p>oct</p>	
<p><b>Mulch</b> camellias with sugar cane or lucerne mulch, keeping away from the stems, to help insulate during summer.</p> <p>nov</p>	<p><b>Water</b> camellias deeply during warm weather.</p> <p>dec</p>		

## Perennials suited to planting with Camellias.

There are many beautiful perennials suited to providing a natural, living mulch beneath your camellias. All are tolerant of competition from the camellia roots and are shallow rooted themselves. Ajuga, Alchemilla, Hellebores, Mondo Grass, Viola hederacea, Rehmania (Chinese Foxgloves), Aquilegias, Campanulas, Hostas, Clivias, Anemone nemerosa, Cyclamen, Primula, Solomons Seal, Heuchera, Tiarella, Geraniums. Other plants that can be used in between plants include Acanthus and Hydrangea.