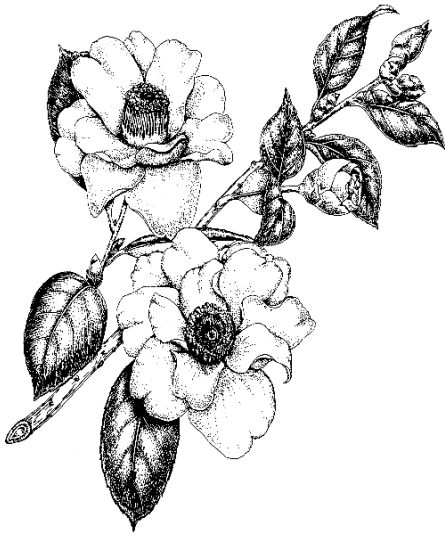


## *Plant Health Care Recommendations for Camellia*

Japanese camellias (*Camellia japonica*) are wonderful large shrubs or small trees for southern and western gardens. They provide a beautiful display of color in November through April when few other plants are blooming. Camellia work well as focal point plantings in small gardens, and in borders or mixed plantings for most locations. In addition to flowers, the coarse, glossy, evergreen foliage provides year-round appeal.



Camellia grow best in fertile, acidic, moist, well drained soils with high levels of organic matter. In alkaline soil, plants do not prosper and may suffer from iron deficiency. Mulching heavily, especially in heavy clay soils, will greatly improve the level of organic matter and conserve soil moisture. Never allow soil or mulch to contact the trunk. In wet areas, drainage systems should be installed or camellias should be planted in raised beds. The site selected should also provide partial shade. Either too much or too little sun will reduce flowering.

Cold winter temperatures are the limiting factor to camellia growth. Depending on variety, camellia can grow in climate zones 5 through 9, from eastern Massachusetts, southeastern Pennsylvania and central Indiana, south to Florida and Texas, including all of California. Subzero temperatures kill most varieties, so when planting north of North Carolina (zone 8) great care must be taken in variety selection and placement in the landscape. Locate plants out of windy areas on the north side of buildings or garden walls. Flowers are killed by temperatures less than freezing.

When young, on good sites, camellia will grow quickly, putting on up to two feet of growth a year. As the plant matures, growth slows. Maximum size, which is dependent on variety, ranges from 10 to 25 feet with a spread from 6 to 10 feet.

Several diseases can damage the appearance of camellia. Flower blight causes the premature browning of flower pedals. Symptoms are similar to cold temperature damage, however flower blight can be managed with proper mulching, removal of fallen pedals, and fungicide treatments. There are also a number of foliar diseases including anthracnose that causes leaf spotting and premature defoliation. Cold winter temperatures are the limiting factor to camellia growth.

Viruses will cause ring spots on leaves and variegation of flowers. Several root rots can cause death of the entire plant. The most serious of these are *Phytophthora*, black root rot (*Chadara elegans*) and *Armillaria*.

Scale insects can cause a reduction in growth and accumulation of black sooty mold fungi growing on the honeydew excreted by these insects. Camellia is susceptible to a wide variety of scales including tea scale, cottony scales, and Florida red scale. Other insect pests include mealy bugs, thrips, and weevils.

Camellias are affected by many physiological disorders caused by unfavorable environmental conditions. They include:

winter injury; bud drop caused by excessive flowering, low humidity, over or under watering, leaf bleaching caused by excessive sunlight; edema - brown patches on the leaves caused by excess water; marginal burn caused by salt, high winds or soil moisture problems; and chlorosis or yellowing of the foliage due to lack of nutrients.

### **Recommended Monitoring for Camellia**

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Treatment</b>
Winter	Treat for flower blight if there is a history of disease. Remove fallen flowers.
Late winter	Prune after flowering to remove dead, dying, and diseased limbs and to correct structural and aesthetic problems. Collect soil sample for nutrient and pH analysis.
Late spring	Inspect for winter injury, remove dead branches. Treat soil nutrient and pH problems. If plants are declining, collect soil samples for nematode analysis, and root samples for root rot analysis.
Early summer	Monitor soil moisture, scale insects, and other insects and diseases. Treat as needed. Treat soil nematode and root rot if needed.
Mid summer	Monitor soil moisture, scale insects, root rot and nutrient deficiencies. Treat as needed.
Late summer	Monitor soil moisture, scale insects, root rot and nutrient deficiencies. Treat as needed.
Fall	Soil apply systemic insecticide to reduce the next years infestation of scale and mealybug.