

Contact details

For more information, visit any of our Info centres or email us at info@gardenshop.co.za

For details and further information, visit GardenShop's friendly Information Centre at any of our branches or call our Contact Centre on 0861 G-A-R-D-E-N (427336). Alternatively, e-mail us at info@gardenshop.co.za or log on to gardenshop.co.za.

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Camellias and Azaleas

GardenShop's guide to the planting and care of Camellias and Azaleas

Introduction to Camellias and Azaleas

As shrubs, both Camellias and Azaleas are colourful additions to any shade garden. They are also excellent companion plants as they enjoy the same growing conditions. Furthermore, both originate from the same areas, China and Japan.

Planting

The best spot for these shrubs is a lightly shaded area. Both plants require a few hours of sunlight each day in order to flower to their fullest potential. Bear in mind that the Sasanqua Camellias will thrive in a sunny spot with an acid soil with a high iron content. Be careful not to plant too deeply in the soil, as the roots will suffocate.

If the plants are planted in a location that receives severe frost, you might have to protect the plants in the winter or the buds and flowers could be damaged. It is a good idea for the plants to be well mulched to prevent the soil from drying out. This layer of mulch will also keep the roots cool in summer. A fresh layer of mulch should be applied every 6 months.

When planting these shrubs, add half a bag of acid compost or peat moss in place of normal compost. A good handful of bone meal and 2:3:2 will help the plants to establish themselves quickly.

Watering

Camellias enjoy a regular deep soaking, especially when the buds are forming. If the plant dries out the buds will drop off. When you water your plants try to hose them down, as this will increase the humidity around the plant.

Azaleas also love to be watered regularly. They do best if the area is kept damp and the air is humid. Although the plants enjoy deep watering, they should be well drained. If the area around the plant is constantly wet, no oxygen can penetrate the soil and the roots will rot.

If your plants are growing in pots, you will have to water them more frequently.

Fertilising

As soon as signs of growth appear, it is time to start fertilising. It does not matter if the plant is still flowering. There is an excellent product by Wonder, specially formulated for acid loving plants, called Wonder Colourburst Azalea. Its composition is a 3:1:2 (42) but it also contains micronutrients. This can also be alternated with 3:1:5. Never let the fertiliser touch the stems of the plants. The benefits of regular feeding are easily seen but bear in mind that it is also detrimental to overfeed. Follow the instructions on the products.

Pests and diseases

The only pest likely to attack Camellias is scale. Scale is brought by ants and is only likely to become a problem if the camellia is already struggling.

Azaleas tend to be attacked by red spider mite in the hot dry spells of summer. If the leaf colour changes from deep green to a speckled yellow and olive green colour, it is likely to be red spider mite. Treat with Margaret Roberts Organic Insecticide. By increasing the humidity around the plant the mite will not thrive.

Positioning

Some Camellias need more shade than others. Those Camellias with white and pale pink flowers prefer the shade. The Sasanqua Camellias will grow in full sun.

Varieties

Flowering time depends on the cultivar, but mostly flowering begins in April and plants will flower well into September.

The most common Azaleas are the indica and karuma. Both varieties come in various colours.

Camellia varieties include japonica, sasanqua and reticulata. Various colours are available.