

S l o a t



Azaleas, Camellias, & Rhododendrons

Azaleas, Camellias, and Rhododendrons form a distinguished botanical family with nearly 3,000 named varieties. Despite their diverse colors, flower forms, and growth habits, these plants share fundamental growing requirements, making them versatile choices for shade gardens.

Soil

Fast-draining acid soil that also retains moisture is best. Soil high in organic matter has these properties. If your soil needs improving, work in liberal amounts of Sloat Planting Mix or 'EB Stone's Azalea, Camellia, & Acid Mix.' Adding Sul-Po-Mag or Espomal Iron Tone will help acidify soil as well as provide additional minerals to keep leaves green. (We do not recommend peat moss as it is difficult to re-wet once it dries out.)

Sun

Sun tolerance varies between species and varieties. Too much sun can cause burning in the center of the leaf, though most can take full sun in cooler, coastal areas. Too much shade can inhibit flowering and cause plants to be "leggy". The best location is in filtered shade under tall trees, or on the north or east side of a structure. Southern Indica Azaleas, Exbury Azaleas, small leafed Rhododendrons and sasanqua camellias can handle the most sun.

Containers

Camellias are outstanding container plants, as are Azaleas and dwarf varieties of Rhododendrons. Gallon-sized plants need 12" to 14" containers. Five-gallon plants require 16" to 18" containers. Azaleas and Camellias can be used in mixed planters with other compatible plants: fern, hosta, cyclamen, primrose, and heuchera for larger, more stunning creations. Use Sloat Organic Potting soil or EB Stone Azalea, Camellia, & Acid Mix. Note: Use pot feet to keep the planter elevated rather than have it sit in a water-filled saucer. Feed using Maxsea Acid Food as directed.

Planting

Plant Rhododendrons, Azaleas, and Camellias with the top of the rootball slightly above the soil level. You don't want the trunk to get buried beneath the soil. The roots of these plants grow very close to the surface; they will benefit from a mulching of small Bark or Forest Mulch Plus to keep them cool and moist. Where the soil is clay, some gardeners have forgone the planting hole altogether and instead, planting is done by placing the rootball on top of amended soil and mounding up and around the roots with a 50/50 mix of Azalea, Camellia, Gardenia Mix and small bark such as Redi Gro Barkmulch.

Fertilizer

Use an acid food once when growth begins in the spring at half the recommended rate. Too much food will push leafy growth ahead of the flowers! Feed again immediately after flowering according to directions. Feed monthly thereafter until August. During late fall and early winter, use a 0-10-10 formula to help build next spring's flower buds as well as bolster the plant's immune system and cold hardiness. Yellowing foliage can be corrected by applying extra iron or Sul-Po-Mag.

Pruning

Frequent, light pinching or shearing of tip growth after blooming will encourage bushy, compact growth. Extensive pruning will sacrifice spring flowers but sometimes it is required to revitalize leggy plants. Never cut a branch back to bare wood as it will usually not resprout. Prune old flowerheads and remove spent flowers to keep plants clean.

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