



Gorticulture News

November/December 2007

Camellias have been a part of the southern landscape for almost 200 years. They are native to the Orient and were introduced into the U.S. near Charleston, South Carolina in 1786. The common name camellia refers to varieties and hybrids of *Camellia japonica* and to the less known varieties of *C. sasanqua* and *C. reticulata*.

The climatic conditions of north Florida are well suited for many camellia varieties. Camellias are grown less extensively in central Florida and even less in south Florida. Special care in regard to exposure, soil modification, and watering is necessary to have successful growth and flowering of camellias in central and south Florida.

Camellias can serve several functions in the landscape including foundation plantings, screens, accent plants, background

groupings and hedges. Maximum benefit can be achieved by mass plantings or groupings. Single plants scattered throughout the home landscape create a busy or cluttered feeling.

Camellias flower in the fall and winter when their display of colorful blooms is most appreciated. During the remainder of the year their evergreen foliage, interesting shapes and textures, and relatively slow growth make camellias excellent landscape plants.

Camellia plants can be selected for size and form ranging from small and irregular to large and upright. Texture and foliage color also differ among varieties.

Midseason flowering varieties that bloom from November through January are best suited for Florida conditions. Warm fall temperatures may prevent early varieties from flowering properly. Late-

blooming selections may reinitiate vegetative growth before the end of the flowering period which results in "bullnoses." Bullnosing is characterized by poor quality flowers which do not open fully and may even drop while still tight buds.

Camellias perform best in partially shaded locations which are enhanced by good water drainage and air movement.

Fertile soils high in organic matter are preferred. The soil must be well drained because camellias will not grow in wet areas. Do not plant camellias in areas having a high water table and/or hardpan. This will result in a shallow root system which is more susceptible to injury during dry periods.

Camellias should be located in areas where cold air can move in and out freely, but the area should be protected from cold winds. Plantings under

pine trees or on the north or west side of buildings are usually injured less by cold temperatures. This is true because the plants can gradually thaw or warm in the morning before being exposed to direct sunlight. Dense shade may result in sparse foliage and poor flowering. Plants exposed to full sun may appear yellow-green, but may yield more flowers than plants in heavy shade.



Program Announcements

Neighborhood Stormwater/ Landscape Program

Provide your neighborhood with information about proper landscape and pond maintenance practices that will protect Florida's natural waterways. St. John's River Water Management/WAVE Representative Paula Staples and Rebecca L. Jordi, University of Florida / IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent will come for a free consultation.

Troubleshooting Florida Landscapes

Do you and your neighbors need a personal consultation on how to solve landscape problems?

Rebecca L. Jordi, University of Florida/IFAS Horticulture Extension Agent and Nassau County Master Gardener Volunteers will come for a free group consultation. These programs must have a minimum of fifteen (15) participants.

Landscape Matters

There will be no programs in November or December.

These programs are free to the public, so please call us at 904-548-1116 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu if you plan to attend. If response is too small, the program will be canceled.

Read Horticulture News in Color!

Horticulture News is available in color online and via e-mail!

To receive this newsletter in color via e-mail, contact Rebecca Jordi at rljordi@ifas.ufl.edu.

Current and past issues of Horticulture News may also be viewed in color

online in the horticulture section of the Nassau County Cooperative Extension web site at <http://nassau.ifas.ufl.edu/horticulture/newsletter/newsletter.html>.

Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to open these .pdf documents. You

may download the FREE software from the Adobe web site at (www.adobe.com).



Creature Feature - Mealybugs

Plants brought inside for the winter are prone to sudden outbreaks of scale, mealbugs, and whiteflies because of crowding too close together. Mealybugs are part of the scale insect family, Pseudococcidae. They are

the least scale-like of the group, mainly because they are soft-bodied, without an outer shell. Mealybugs have sucking mouthparts. Feeding weakens and stunts plants, causes leaf distortion, yellowing, and even total leaf

loss. In some cases, plants can be killed. Be on the lookout for these and spray if a problem develops. A safe spray for inside use will be labeled for house plants. Insecticidal soaps also work.



November Checklist

Flowers: Sow seeds of larkspur, bachelor's buttons, sweet peas, and California poppies in full sun for a colorful spring show. Set out hardy plants such as sweet alyssum, petunia, dianthus, and snapdragon.

Lawns: Allow grass to go dormant from October through February. Check mower. Sharpen blades, change the oil, and clean mower of debris.

Perennials: Plant now for fall color. Mexican bush sage has spikes of purple-and-white flowers that will wave in the wind. Pineapple sage has brilliant red blooms and leaves that smell of pineapple. Firespike with its red bloom spikes is great for partial shade. Philippine violet brightens fall days with its lavender flowers. The brilliant yellow of swamp sunflower will stop traffic a block away. Cigar flower has an abundant display of small orange-and-yellow, tubular blooms.

Trees: If you are planting a new tree, staking may not be necessary. New trees become stronger if some movement is allowed. Planting too deeply causes future problems for the tree. Plant your tree so the top root is just at soil level.

Vegetables: Keep crops picked to encourage new production. Irrigate during morning hours (6-10am) with drip irrigation to discourage disease.



December Checklist

Annuals: Plant carnations, digitalis, pansies, petunias, shasta daisies, and snapdragons this month.

Bulbs: Check for declining plant portions and pests. Examine bulbs in storage and remove adhering soil or damaged portions.

Herbs: Anise, basil, bay laurel, borage, caraway, cardamom, chervil, chives, coriander, dill, fennel, ginger, horehound, lemon balm, lavender, lovage, marjoram, Mexican tarragon, mint, nasturtium, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme and watercress can be planted now.

Lawns: Do not apply fertilizer or any nitrogen this time of year, wait until March or April. Keep mowing height the same year round. Water 3/4 to 1 inch every 7-10 days.

Trees and Shrubs: Late December is the ideal time to begin transplanting plants if the weather has turned cool. If there hasn't been much cold weather, do not begin to transplant until the plants are dormant. Prune roots two to three months before digging by severing roots with a spade just inside the intended root ball to generate new root hairs and reduce transplant shock. Be sure to keep plants out of the ground as little time as possible.

Vegetables: Choices for this month include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, Chinese cabbage, English peas, onions, and radishes.



Selected from Florida Vegetable Guide by JM Stephens, RA Dunn, G Kidder, D Short, & GW Simone, University of Florida and Month-by-Month Gardening in Florida by Tom MacCubbin

Nassau County is proud to provide you with this information. Horticulture News is a joint project with contributions by county agents and Master Gardener Volunteers.
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Rebecca L. Jordi,
Environmental Horticulture Agent II



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Herb of the Month - Rosemary

Often used in the kitchen as a seasoning because of its aromatic leaves, rosemary also makes a great perennial cut flower. With its pretty pale blue flowers starting in winter and continuing through spring, rosemary can be cut and added to any arrangement. It looks quite handsome in any herb garden. The prostrate varieties make lovely ground covers.

To grow, start your plants from cuttings or buy layerings. Rosemary can be started from seed, but germination rates

are very low and it takes up to three years to produce a bush suitable for harvesting. Plant in a sunny location where you want it to grow. Rosemary does not transplant well. It can be grown in containers, but the roots sometimes develop root rot.

Harvesting can be done throughout the year. Cut 4 inch pieces from the tips of the branches. Do not remove more than 20 percent of growth at one time. You may use both the flowers and leaves for cooking and as garnishes.

Crush or mince the spiky leaves before using in recipes.

