



Fact Sheet

Camellias



History:

Camellias are named after Georg Josef Kamel, a Jesuit botanist and missionary who travelled through South East Asia during the 17th Century. It is thought that he never saw or ever wrote of them so he could be considered fortunate to have Linnaeus name the genus after him.

They were introduced into the western world in the late 18th Century, most of them originating from Japan, Korea and China. The first varieties to be sent to Australia came from England in 1831 to be planted at the Macarthur property at Camden Park. Some of these have survived to this day, one of the original cultivars planted 'Aspasia Macarthur', has resulted in many sports which are still very popular, such as 'Lady Loch', 'Can Can' and 'Margaret Davis'.

Camellia sinensis leaves provide the basis for the world tea industry. In Japan the seeds are used for edible and cosmetic oil.

Culture:

Camellias prefer an acid well drained soil with a ph of 5.0-6.5 and plenty of added humus. One of the major causes of death in young plants is lack of moisture and planting too deep. It is most important to keep up the moisture levels and to plant at the same level as in the pot purchased from your nursery. Positioning of plants is important as most varieties (except sasanquas) prefer some shade during the hottest part of the day however many flowers particular lighter coloured ones can discolour if exposed to early sun while still wet with dew. They need protection from strong winds which can cause browning.

As roots are shallow, mulch is essential to prevent drying out. Sheep and cow manure is especially beneficial. Blood & Bone with added potash or regular liquid feed (e.g Phostrogen) is recommended during the growing season.

If planted in the right position pruning is not usually necessary apart from shaping. If pruning is needed do so straight after flowering before new growth commences in spring.

NEVER use wood ash near camellias as this will kill them. Lime is generally deleterious though small applications of Dolomite has been used to check dieback in terminal shoots.

Propagation is usually either by seed or from cuttings of new seasons' growth taken after Australia Day (January 26). Insert cuttings in sand and keep damp. Hormone treatment is beneficial.

They have few disease problems, occasionally virus may result in leaf discoloration but will not affect flowering. If drainage is poor root rot can occur.

If aphids are a problem pyrethrum will be effective.



Flower Types:

For exhibition purposes the Australian Camellia Research Society has divided flower types into 6 main groups for judging blooms.

- (i) Single** - One row of not more than 8 petals e.g. Spencers Pink.
- (ii) Semi Double** - Two or more rows of petals and conspicuous stamens e.g. The Czar.
- (iii) Anemone Form** - Flat flower with one or more rows of large outer petals, the centre a convex mass of intermingled petaloids and stamens e.g. Grand Slam.
- (iv) Peony Form** - Deep rounded flowers with several rows of outer petals, the centre a convex mass of long twisted petals and petaloids with some stamens, e.g. Lady Loch.
- (v) Rose Form** - Several rows of imbricated(overlapping like roofing shingles) petals opening in a rosebud form but showing stamens e.g. Purity.
- (vi) Formal Double** - Fully imbricated, many rows of petals becoming smaller towards the centre, never showing stamens e.g. Water Lily.

Species:

Japonica

Most popular varieties, commonly seen garden types. Excellent for containers or espaliering. Most cultivars grow to good size shrubs. Popular varieties include: The Czar, Laurie Bray, Drama Girl.

Sasanqua

Early flowering species with open graceful habit and scented flowers that tolerate more sun and poorer drainage than other species. Excellent for informal hedges, containers or espalier. Flowers are less durable but are replaced quickly. Popular varieties include: Hiryu, Plantation Pink, Mine No Yuki.

Williamsii

Named after late breeder J.C. Williams who bred many of these cultivars by crossing Japonica and Saluensis varieties. Mainly pink flowers. Include: Water Lily, Donation, E.G. Waterhouse.

Reticulata

Large shrub/tree some of which date back to 900A.D. Large flowers of up to 20cm across. Originally mainly single flowers have been bred to doubles and other types. Include: Francie L, Clifford Parkes.

Our Top Twelve:

Donation, Water Lily, Margaret Davis, The Czar, Margaret Waterhouse, Mine No Yuki, Shiro Chan, Guilio Nuccio, Brushfields Yellow, Lady Loch, Hawaii, Magnoliaeflora.

