

Dawson's Expert Growing Tips for Success with Camellias and Azaleas.

Getting The Soil Right

One of the real keys to successful Camellia and Azalea growing in Perth, is proper soil preparation before planting. These plants are acid soil lovers, so in Perth's limey sands it's all important to improve the planting soil with generous amounts of acidic –organic matter. An easy way to do this is to blend in Dawson's Organic Soil Improver at the rate of 2 parts Soil Improver to 2 parts existing soil (50:50 mix). If soil is too limey (alkaline), it will show up in pale or yellowish foliage, often with brown-black spots along the edges.

The time spent undertaking good soil preparation is a great investment in your plant's health.

Planting in The Garden

Camellias and Azaleas can be planted throughout the year, provided regular, daily watering is provided during the vital establishment period.

1. Choose a planting spot, with free draining soil, and preferably with protection from strong winds.
2. Before planting, thoroughly water the plant in its pot.
3. At the selected planting site, dig a hole three times the width of the pot, and twice the depth of the pot.
4. Blend in Dawson's Organic Soil Improver at the rate of 2 parts Soil Improver to 2 parts existing soil (50:50 mix). Make sure Soil Improver is well mixed in with existing soil.
5. Mix in 1 tablespoon of 6-8 month Slow Release Fertiliser (such as Apex).
6. Return about ¼ of the improved soil mixture to the bottom of the planting hole.
7. Remove the plant from its pot and plant no deeper than the original soil level in the pot.
8. Back-fill the planting hole with the rest of the improved soil mixture.

9. Gently firm soil around the plant and thoroughly water* to exclude any air pockets. *Use at least 10 litres of water per plant.
10. Newly planted Camellias and Azaleas will require daily watering until well established, this is particularly important over the warmer months.

Growing In Pots

Camellias and Azaleas have naturally shallow root systems, so they make ideal container plants and look particularly attractive in glazed pots. For best results use Dawson's Garden World Premium Potting Mix. Avoid using cement pots, as lime from the cement will cause problems. Elevate pots to ensure good drainage of excess water and don't sit pots in saucers. Remember container grown plants dry out three times faster than those in the ground. So, regular even daily watering is required over the warmer months.

Slow release fertilizers such as Apex are the best and safest option for potted plants. Supplement this with a monthly liquid feed of Seasol, a great nutrient packed health tonic for plants.

Watering

Camellias and Azaleas have a naturally shallow root system and enjoy a cool root run. They need a regular supply of water, especially over the summer months. An annual application of a Soil Wetting product in spring each year, will greatly assist water penetration. Newly planted Camellias and Azaleas will require daily watering until established, this is particularly important over the warmer months. Well mulched established plants will survive happily on 2-3 deep soaks a week. In extreme heat, extra watering is very beneficial.



FORRESTFIELD

160 Hale Road
Ph 94536533
Fax 94539520

SWANBOURNE

153 Railway Street
Ph 93849652
Fax 93832108

O'CONNOR

388 South Street
Ph 93147258
Fax 93147264

JOONDALUP

Cnr Joondalup Drv
& Cord St
Ph 93000733
Fax 93001244

www.dawsonsgardenworld.com.au

Mulching.

Mulch around plants with a coarse grade mulch like Waterwise Pine Bark Mulch, leaving a 10-15cm bare circle around the main stem.

Feeding Your Camellias and Azaleas

The best time to fertilise garden plants is in spring, just after flowering and again in early summer when plants are making most of their growth. Feed with a specific Azalea and Camellia Fertiliser or Dawson's All Purpose Garden Fertiliser. Always apply fertilisers to moist soils, apply at recommended rates and water in well. Keep in mind that these plants are shallow rooted and too much fertiliser can cause burning. An application of Sulphate of Potash when flower buds are developing in February will help improve flower size and quality. Slow release fertilizers such as Apex are the best and safest option for potted plants.

Pests & Diseases

Camellias:

Camellias are generally trouble-free, however on rare occasions you may find one of the following:

- Scale- spray with Pest Oil*
- Aphids-simply hose off with strong water jet, or spray with Confidor* or Pest Oil.
- Caterpillars-attacking new growth-spray with Success.
- Mealy bug-spray with Confidor*, Pest Oil* or Eco-Oil*
- Red Spider Mite- Spray with Mavrik*, Natrasoap* Pest Oil* or Eco-Oil* Spray twice, two weeks apart, to bring mite populations under control.

Azaleas:

- The most common pests are:
- Red Spider Mites- Spray with Mavrik*, Natrasoap* Pest Oil* or Eco-Oil* Spray twice, two weeks apart, to bring mite populations under control.
- Lace Bugs and Thrips- all causing silvering of the leaves. Thrips and Lace Bugs also leave tell tale, brown/black specks on the leaves
- Lace Bugs- Spray with Confidor*.
- Thrips- spray with Confidor or Natrasoap*
- Petal Blight- a fungal disease, causing flowers to turn brown and mushy. Spray with Bayleton* or Mancozeb Plus*. Begin spraying at the expanded bud stage (before buds begin to colour) until the end of flowering. If leaves turn brown at the tips-the problem could be poor drainage, incorrect pH, too dry, over fertilizing or wind burn.

* During the warmer months don't spray during the heat of the day, or when temperatures exceed 35°C.



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