

Where to plant

...in your garden

Shade: Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias will happily grow in full sun but if possible they do enjoy a little shade at some point in the day. Filtered sunlight through other plants or partial shade as the sun moves through its day is ideal, as is full shade in front of a fence or wall on a north facing border. Avoid planting directly under trees but instead plant on the edge of the tree canopy.

Shelter: This group of plants enjoy a little shelter too, which for most houses that have trees, walls and fences nearby, shelter is rarely an issue. Avoid planting as a wind screen or on a very open position exposed directly to the prevailing wind.

Soil and ericaceous plants: Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias along with Heathers, Pieris and Magnolias are often referred to as 'ericaceous' plants meaning they like to grow in an acidic soil.

Soil and pH: Ideally they like an acidic soil with a pH 4.5-6.0. They can be grown in a neutral soil, pH 7, providing you apply Ferrous Sulphate twice a year - see 'Soil Conditioners'. They will not grow in a limey soil of pH above 7. In this situation, you may grow them in attractive pots and half barrels instead.

Free Draining: Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias enjoy a free draining soil and dislike a soil that is waterlogged during winter.

- Sandy and loamy soils are ideal. They can dry out during summer so mulch the plants with bark chippings and water well during those summer dry spells.
- Clay soils - avoid planting in areas that are particularly wet during winter in low lying hollows, bottom of slopes or places that are inclined to flood.

Organic matter: They enjoy a humus rich soil so mix plenty of composted leaf mould in with the soil if you can. After planting, mulching with more leaf mould and/or bark chippings will improve the soil further and help retain the moisture in the ground.



How to plant

...in your garden

1. Choose the spot for your Rhododendron, Azalea or Camellia and remove any weeds.
2. Water your plant well in its pot prior to planting.
3. Dig a hole twice as deep and 3 times as wide as the root ball.
4. Loosen the soil in the bottom of the hole to improve drainage.
5. Mix your soil dug out from the hole 50:50 with either *Arthur Bowers John Innes Loam Based Ericaceous Compost* or *Westland Ericaceous Compost with added John Innes*. Also mix in plenty of well rotted leaf mould, pine needles or garden compost if it is available to you.
6. Backfill the hole with the mixed compost to the depth of the root ball.
7. Place your plant in the hole so the top of the root ball is exactly level with the ground (people are often inclined to plant lower than ground level - this is not recommended).
8. Backfill round the plant with more mixed compost until all is level with the ground again. Gently firm the compost with your hands.
9. Water the plant copiously to give it a good start and regularly for the first few years until established.
10. Mulching with leaf mould, bark chips or gravel will provide a nice finish, retain moisture and help suppress weeds.

Tip for clay soils: To further improve the water drainage in a clay soil, dig the hole a little deeper and line the bottom of the hole with 5-10cm of washed and lime free grit sand. Also mix some of this grit sand in with the clay soil dug out of the hole (1 spade sand : 3 spade clay soil) before blending with ericaceous compost.



How to plant

...in a pot

1. Choose your preferred container. It needs to be about 10-20cm wider than the canopy of the plant with drainage holes in the bottom of the pot.
2. Water your plant well prior to planting.
3. Layer the bottom of the pot with pieces of broken crockery to stop the compost from blocking the drainage holes.
4. Now tip some ericaceous compost in the pot. The two recommended composts are: *Arthur Bowers John Innes Loam Based Ericaceous Compost* or *Westland Ericaceous Compost with added John Innes*.
5. Place the plant in the container so the top of the root ball is 5cm below the lip of the container.
6. Tip more of the ericaceous compost into the container until it is exactly level with the top of the root ball and gently firm with your hands. It is not recommended to cover the root ball with compost.
7. Water the plant copiously to give it a good start and regularly thereafter as with all patio plants.

Tip for pots: Mulch with a layer of decorative aggregate (slate, stone, chippings or pebbles) or large bark chips. This will give a nice finish, help retain moisture in the pot and deter vine weevil.



Fertilisers and soil conditioners ...your plant care

A well conditioned and well fed Rhododendron, Azalea and Camellia will have healthy dark leaves, lush growth and form plenty of flower buds full of spring promise. Under nourished they will have yellow veiny leaves and will need some help.

Soil conditioners - most important

Twice a year in April and September apply *Ferrous Sulphate (Iron sulphate)* and some *Epsom salts (Magnesium sulphate)*. This will help to keep your soil acidic with the useful addition of some iron and magnesium.

Fertilisers for the garden

Plant feed can be either garden compost or fertiliser and this can only be taken up by the plant providing the soil is acidic. Therefore it is important to make sure you have conditioned your soil (see above) before feeding unless your soil is already naturally acidic.

The best garden compost is rotted leaf mould or use a granular fertiliser and apply in April and if necessary again in September. We recommend *Levington Azalea*, *Camellia* and *Rhododendron Plus*.

Fertilisers for containers

Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias planted in containers will prefer a slow release feed and we would recommend Osmocote sprinkled on top of the pot in April. As these plants are planted in ericaceous compost, it is unlikely you will need to apply any soil conditioners unless you start to see the veins in the leaf. Container plants would also enjoy an iron sequestrane as a tonic.



Osberton Nurseries

...our quality

Osberton Nurseries are a family nursery with over 15 years experience of growing Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias. Our plants are hardy and grown outdoors for at least 3 years by our team of skilful plantsmen. They are regularly watered, gently pruned and carefully potted from smaller to larger pots to develop into healthy, bushy shrubs with a strong root system.



These are best quality British Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias grown by growers in a picturesque nursery just on the edge of Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire. Look out for our logo on our colour plant tag, a mark of a genuine quality grown plant.

For more information visit www.osberton.co.uk



A Planting and Care Guide



Rhododendrons
Azaleas
Camellias

