

Camelia

Camelia spp.

Tea Plant

Some 200 species that easily hybridize with more than 3000 cultivars described, usually developed for their flowers. *Camelia sinensis* is commercially grown for tea in India, China, and Japan. *Camelia japonica* is the most widely used landscape specimen and the state flower of Alabama. Camelias have been grown for centuries for their beauty and grace around the world. The Camelia is a vital component of most all Japanese gardens. Probably second only to roses as the most intensively developed garden plant.



Identification

Leaves

Evergreen, alternate, simple, thick and waxy, serrated, usually glossy, 2-5" long. Deep green above and much lighter beneath.



Flower/Fruit

Monoecious; perfect, large and conspicuous, white, pink, red, or yellow. Fruit dry capsule subdivided into <5 compartments with <1/2" seed.



Bark/Wood

Gray to light gray, smooth becoming flaky and scaly with age, rarely straight, often concorted.

Form

Small evergreen trees or shrubs. Trainable to many shapes and forms including bonsai, irregular when not pruned.



Uses

Commercially grown for tea. Very common and valued component of gardens and in particular, Japanese gardens. Many cultivars developed for particular blossoming forms. Used in bonsai.

Ethnobotany

Camelia sinensis is the source of all tea and cooking oil is made by pressing the seeds of many species. Highly valued in Japanese gardens.

Native Distribution

Eastern and southern Asia from the Himalayas east to Japan and south to Indonesia.

Establishment

Transplants easily and requires little care. Seeds more difficult to germinate.

Growing Conditions and Culture

Mature Size 50'Hx20'Wx2'dbh
 USDA Zone 6-9
 Light Requirements Shade to Part Sun

Soils
 Drought Tolerant?
 Inundation Tolerant?

Acid
No
Moderate

Pests/Damaging Agents

Virtually pest free.

Similar Species

Propagation

Seed - cold stratify and scarify. Layering. Softwood cuttings.

Source(s)

Momiji-en, OR cuttings and seed. Transplants.