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Care and Cultivation Of Camellias And Azaleas

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Recently I wrote about camellias and azaleas and promised to continue on the same subject in this week's column. Today I'll take up fertilization, mulching, varieties and location.

It's much better to err on the side of under-fertilizing than it is over-fertilizing. Two to three pints each year of a special camellia-azalea fertilizer to each 100 square feet under most conditions is enough. With new plantings, mix the fertilizer with the soil several weeks before setting the plants. With old plantings, spread the fertilizer over the top of the mulch and for best results make three applications—one just before growth starts, another in mid-spring and another in July.

Three to four inches of pine straw or similar materials of a coarse nature seem to make the best mulch. About an inch layer of peat moss, sawdust or similar fine materials are also good. Some kind of mulch is almost a necessity. It helps keep down weeds (plants shouldn't be worked around) and helps keep the soil moist and cool.

Your local nurseryman can tell you which varieties do best in your location. If the right varieties are selected azaleas will grow practically anywhere in the State. In the colder sections use only the hardier azaleas such as Kaempferi, Glenn Dale hybrids, Flame, Hinodegiri, Snow and of course the native species—just to mention a few.

No two people ever seem to

agree on which camellia varieties will stand the lowest temperature or how far north and west they can be grown. The location of the plant undoubtedly has a lot to do with it. This is also true of azaleas. Choose well-drained locations protected from sweeping winds. Plants given northern and western exposures, or otherwise protected from winter sun, especially morning sun, will stand more cold than will those with southern exposures.

It's peculiar how some camellias having the greatest flower bud resistance to cold have very tender leaves and stems, and some of the most cold resistant plants produce some of the least resistant flower buds.

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