Camellia japonica
Longwood Hardy Japanese Camellia

Camellia japonica, Longwood Gardens Korean Collection
Camellia japonica foliage

Description

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<th>PLANT NAME</th>
<th>Camellia japonica (ca-MEEL-e-uh ja-PON-i-cuh)</th>
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<td>Theaceae (Tea Family)</td>
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Key ID Traits

- **PLANT NAME** Camellia japonica (ca-MEEL-e-uh ja-PON-i-cuh)
- **FAMILY** Theaceae (Tea Family)
- **NATIVITY** Temperate Asia
- **HARDINESS** USDA Zones 6-9

- **LANDSCAPE SIZE** Longwood hardy Japanese camellias grow 8-12 feet (2.44-3.66 meters) tall.
- **FORM** Japanese camellia is pyramidal to upright oval and very regular and formal in appearance. It is also slow growing.
- **FOLIAGE** Foliage is alternate, ovate to elliptic, serrate, and measures 2-4 inches (5.08-10.16 centimeters) long. Leaves are deep green and very shiny.
- **FLOWER** Flowers are perfect and solitary with five to seven petals that measure 3-5 inches (7.62-12.70 centimeters) across, and are pink to red in color.
- **FRUIT** Woody capsule.
- **BUDS** Flower buds are terminal or in upper leaf axils, imbricate, and measure 3/4 inches (1.91 centimeters) long.
- **BARK** Brown stems are heavily lenticeled.
Culture

**LIGHT** Partial Sun.

**SOIL** Moist, well-drained, acidic, and high organic matter soil preferred.

**PROPAGATION** Cuttings.

**PESTS & DISEASES** None serious.

**LANDSCAPE USES** Specimen plant, plant in small groups, and as a container plant in warmer areas. Best planted in a protected area with a northern exposure to prevent large temperature fluctuations in winter months or courtyards where winter activity occurs. Southern exposure can create chlorotic winter burned leaves.

Selected Species and Cultivars

In 1984, staff from the Morris Arboretum and Longwood Gardens collected seed of *Camellia japonica* during an expedition to Sochong Island off the northeast coast of South Korea. Cultivars that Longwood has introduced from collections of seedlings from that expedition include 'Longwood Centennial' and 'Longwood Valentine', which is the most floriferous of all the camellias collected in the 1984 expedition.

*Camellia japonica* ‘Longwood Valentine’

*Camellia japonica* ‘Longwood Centennial’  *Camellia × williamsii* ‘Aida’

Comments

Longwood Gardens established hardiness trials and a breeding program in the early 1960’s to evaluate and develop camellias that can tolerate colder winters. *Camellia × williamsii* ‘Aida’ was the only camellia trialed in the 1970s that survived two hard winters. ‘Aida’ was a seedling cross selected in 1974 by Longwood. Since camellias hold their leaves year round, the leaves are continually transpiring and losing water, so it is important to plant camellias on the north side of a building to protect them from the winter sun and winds.