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# "HOW-TO" GUIDE

*Growing*

## *Azaleas, Camellias & Rhododendrons*

### **PLANTING:**

Azaleas, Camellias and Rhododendrons all have very shallow root systems and their roots are usually found just beneath the surface of the soil. Because of this care should be taken to plant them with their rootball slightly above the soil level. Dig a hole as deep as the pot and twice as wide. The backfill soil should be highly amended (at least 80%) with organic material such as *Master Nursery Camellia, Azalea & Gardenia Mix* and don't forget to use *Master Start* starter fertilizer to help get your plants off to a great start. .

### **MULCHING:**

A good mulch is essential to these plants as they naturally grow with a blanket of leaves covering their roots. Mulching allows the ground to stay cooler during the day and warmer at night as well as conserving moisture, which is key. An ideal mulch is one that does not pack down tightly, thus allowing penetration of water. Fallen leaves or twigs as well as decorative bark chips all work just fine.

### **WATERING:**

All of these plants need a soil that is moist, but not soggy, throughout the year. Never allow the soil to go completely dry. In container grown plants it is necessary to leach the salts that accumulate from regular watering. Monthly, fill the container with water several times until water flows from the drainage holes for several minutes.

### **FERTILIZING:**

Feed plants with *Master Nursery Camellia, Azalea, Gardenia Food* just after they finish blooming and again six to eight weeks later. A feeding of *Master Bloom* 0-10-10 six to eight weeks later helps them on their way to setting flowers buds for next Spring. Note: Because of their surface roots never cultivate the fertilizer in as root damage will occur.

### **PRUNING:**

There is usually not a lot of pruning that needs to be done other than pinching young plants to keep them compact. Older plants may need additional pruning to control any wayward branches and to retain an even shape. The best time to do any pruning is immediately after the plants have flowered. Pruning after mid-summer will cut down on the number of flowers the following year.

### **PESTS:**

Fortunately there are relatively few pests that affect these plants. The two most common are:

**APHIDS:** Appear as small green or brown bugs in clusters on the new growth that follows the flowering period. Knock them off with a simple jet of water when they first appear or, in larger infestations, apply *Master Nursery PestFighter Oil*. Prior to spraying water well the day before and only spray in the morning.

**THRIPS:** Found mainly on Rhododendrons and Azaleas during the late summer months, the damage appears as stippled, discolored (almost gray) leaves with black varnish-like secretions on the underside. Occasional overhead watering will deter these pests but in the case of infestations apply *Master Nursery PestFighter Oil* being sure to spray all areas, especially under the leaves. Prior to spraying water well the day before and only spray in the morning.