



EXTENSION'S Successful Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Helping Carolinians Increase Their Knowledge of Gardening, Manage Their Landscape Investment & Protect the Environment

JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus Camellias for December Color

As glorious as *Camellia japonica* is in the spring, it is just one of many spring-flowering trees and shrubs. The true camellia stars are those that flower during the winter when gardeners are starved for bright colors in the landscape. One of the brightest of those stars is *Camellia sasanqua* 'Yuletide'. This December-flowering camellia features large bright-red single blooms with contrasting yellow stamens that give an eye-catching focus to the winter landscape. Its glossy green foliage offers the perfect backdrop for its spectacular display. 'Yuletide' has an erect, compact growth habit with dense foliage that lends itself well for use as a loose hedge plant or as a focal shrub.

As with other sasanquas, 'Yuletide' tolerates drought after it becomes established. Consider its ultimate height of 10 feet and slow growth rate before deciding on an appropriate planting location. It prefers well-drained soil with a pH of 6.0 to 6.5 for best growth. It can withstand the sun but does need protection from drying winter winds. One of the most popular winter flowering shrubs, 'Yuletide' makes a great addition to any southern garden.

Another good choice for winter color is *Camellia* x 'Crimson Candles'. This rapidly-growing hybrid stands out with numerous small rose-red single flowers in February and March. The new foliage is bronze-red, and the plant is vigorous and disease resistant. One of its best features is its sepals, which are red throughout the winter while the buds are maturing. This gives the bud the look of a red candle long before the flowers open, hence the name, 'Crimson Candles'. Suited for hedges, espalier, topiary or bonsai, this cultivar can also withstand night temperatures in the 20s and is hardy in USDA zones 7 through 9.

These plants can be seen at the JC Raulston Arboretum along with many other camellias suitable for N.C. landscapes.

Donna Teasley

x *Camellia* 'Crimson Candles'

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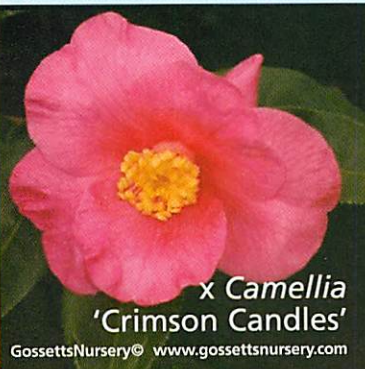
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Garden Spot



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x *Camellia* 'Crimson Candles'

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Camellia sasanqua 'Yuletide'

JC Raulston Arboretum ©



Camellia sasanqua 'Yuletide'

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JC Raulston Arboretum ©

Examine trees carefully before making a choice.



USDA—ARS ©

N.C. grown Christmas trees are produced primarily in the mountains for wholesale use.



NC Wildlife Commission ©

Recycle trees for fish and wildlife habitat.

Holiday Trees: Be Safe, and Give Wildlife a Present

Christmas trees are grown in two regions of the state, each producing different species based on climate. Fraser fir trees are grown in the N.C. mountains at elevations greater than 3,000 feet. Named for John Fraser, a Scottish botanist who explored the southern Appalachians in the late 1700s, Fraser firs are pyramid-shaped and reach a maximum height of 80 feet with a trunk diameter of 1 to 1.5 feet. More than 99 percent of North Carolina's Christmas tree production and all wholesale production occurs in the mountains.

Holiday trees grown in the N.C. piedmont and coastal plain include the Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana*), eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), and Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis leylandii*). These producers sell "choose and cut" trees.

The Fraser fir, balsam fir, Scotch pine and Douglas fir last longer than other species. Make your choice by looking at, touching, feeling, smelling and shaking the tree. Remove a 1/4- to 1/2-inch disk from the trunk before placing the tree in a stand that holds water. A tree can use as much as a gallon of water in the first 24 hours, and a quart of water each day after for every inch of stem diameter. Follow some simple rules to keep your tree fresh and safe:

- Don't use lights with worn or frayed cords
- Never use lighted candles on a tree.

North Carolina is first in the nation in Fraser fir (Abies fraseri) production and second in Christmas tree production behind the Pacific Northwest.

- Don't overload electrical outlets.
- Place your tree away from fireplaces, radiators, televisions, and other heat sources.
- Make sure it has plenty of water to prevent drying.
- Always turn off decorations before going to bed or leaving home.

Consider recycling your tree after the holidays. To recycle it, remove everything, including tinsel, and place the tree outside for birds and other wildlife. The branches provide shelter from winds and cold. Hang fruit, seed cakes, or suet bags on them to feed wildlife. Mix peanut butter and seeds, place it on pinecones, and hang the cones in the tree. Prune off the branches and place them over perennials as winter mulch. Chip the tree and use the mulch around trees, shrubs or flowers.

Recycle your tree as fish habitat by sinking it into a pond or reservoir. The branches will provide fish with shady places to hide from predators and habitat for aquatic snails and insects eaten by fish. In ponds, wire the tree to a cement block and drop it in 6 to 10 feet of water. In reservoirs, place it in 12 to 21 feet of water. Always place it away from swimming areas and mark the location so swimmers and boaters can avoid it.

To find a local grower, visit www.ncchristmastrees.com, www.nc-chooseandcut.com or your county Extension center. **Amy-Lynn Albertson**

Christmas Concerns (Poisonous or Not)

Since 1919, stories unconfirmed by science have circulated about poinsettias. They were thought to be poisonous in 1919 when a child died in Hawaii after reportedly eating a leaf. The report was never confirmed, but the rumor occasionally surfaces. Research conducted at Ohio State University in the early 1970s and at Duquesne University showed no toxicity, no changes in behavior and no mortality, even when poinsettia leaves were ingested at high doses. The

American Medical Association confirms no deaths or significant injury in their *Handbook of Poisonous and Injurious Plants*. Poisindex Information Service states a 50 pound child would have to ingest 1 1/4 pounds (500 to 600 leaves) to exceed experimental doses. Even at that level, no toxicity occurred. Recent texts and reference books contain correct information about the poinsettia, although some reference materials

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Q&A

When do I prune?

Many people prune when plants get in their way or become too big for a space. Most plants will give more satisfying results if you prune to encourage their growth habits.

Plants that bloom in the spring form next year's flower buds on this year's growth. They should be pruned just after they bloom. This gives them time to put on new growth and form new flower buds. Azaleas and camellias are two examples.

Plants that bloom in the summer form their flower buds on new growth. Prune them in the spring. They will put on new growth, form flower buds on it, and then bloom the same year. Often they can be lightly pruned to encourage more

flowers late in the same season. Crape myrtles, buddleias and most roses are among this group.

Not all plants are grown for their blooms. Broadleaf evergreens, such as boxwoods or aucubas, can be pruned as needed. But heavy pruning is best done in early spring. Be careful when pruning near the first or last frost date. New growth can be burned by cold temperatures.

Deciduous plants benefit from pruning while dormant. You can see the shape of the plant more clearly when it is free of leaf cover. Find out more about pruning at your county Extension center or www.ces.ncsu.edu. May your pruners always be sharp!

Jeff Rieves

ENVIRO-
TIP

Be "Firewise" in your Landscape

As temperatures dip, many of us will get cozy near a fireplace to watch the flames and embers. When the ashes cool, they can benefit your garden. Like lime, wood ashes raise the pH of acidic soil to unlock bound nutrients. And they contain potash, phosphate and calcium, plus boron and trace elements that plants need. Spread a thin layer of wood ashes over your garden throughout the winter, and dig or till them in come spring. Apply up to twice as much weight in ashes as you would in lime, based on a soil test, but not more than 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet. *Make sure the ashes are cold when applied.* And make sure they deliver the most benefit by testing your soil annually instead of every other year. Your county Extension center can provide soil test supplies and assistance.



USDA—ARS©

Fires bring risk as well as comfort. To protect your home from a fire that starts elsewhere, consider a "firewise" landscape. There are no fire-proof plants. But creating a buffer at least 30 feet wide around your home with plants that have firewise characteristics can help decrease the risk of fire damage. Select plants with high moisture content (such as sedum), few resins (deciduous trees and shrubs) and open branching (strawberry bush). Choose trees that produce few dead branches, such as dogwoods. Well-maintained turf and plants for wildlife can be part of the plan when placed properly.

Find out more from *Firewise Landscaping in North Carolina*, available from your local Extension office or online: http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/forestry/pdf/ag/firewise_landscaping.pdf

Mark Blevins

Christmas Concerns

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quote outdated information. Consumers should know that poinsettias are the most widely tested consumer plants in America, and no test has ever shown them to be poisonous.

Although the poinsettia is not poisonous, it is classified as "nonedible" and can cause some discomfort if ingested. Milk or ice cream usually helps the discomfort. The sap from poinsettias can produce a mild skin irritation and irritation of mucus membranes. Poinsettias should be placed out of reach in homes with active and curious children and pets.

David Barkley



JC Raulston Arboretum ©

Gardentalk



"From December to March, there are for many of us three gardens—

the garden outdoors, the garden of pots and bowls in the house, and the garden of the mind's eye."

Katherine S. White
(1892-1977)



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Successful Gardener[®] Editor
Department of Communication Services
Box 7603, NC State University
Raleigh, NC 27695-7603

Editor and Team Leader: **Lucy Bradley, Ph.D.**
Extension Specialist, Urban Horticulture

Account Coordinator: **Rhonda Green**
Department of Communication Services

Assistant Editor: **David Goforth**
Consumer Horticulture Agent, Cabarrus County

Compilations Editor: **Will Strader**
Agricultural Extension Agent, Franklin County

Contributors: County	Name	Phone
Alamance	Mark Danielely	(336) 570-6740
Brunswick	David Barkley	(910) 253-2610
Burke	Donna Teasley	(828) 439-4460
Cabarrus	David Goforth	(704) 920-3310
Catawba	Fred Miller	(828) 465-8240
Cumberland	Shauna Haslem	(910) 321-6870
Davidson	Amy-Lynn Albertson	(336) 242-2091
Durham	Michelle Wallace	(919) 560-0525
Forsyth	Craig Mauney	(336) 703-2850
Gaston	Mark Blevins	(704) 922-2112
Henderson	Diane Turner	(828) 697-4891
Iredell	Donald Breedlove	(704) 873-0507
Mecklenburg	Scott Ewers	(704) 336-4008
Nash	Mike Wilder	(252) 459-9810
Orange	Carl Matyac	(919) 245-2062
Randolph	Mary Helen Ferguson	(336) 318-6003
Rowan	Darrell Blackwelder	(704) 216-8970
Union	Jeff Rieves	(704) 283-3741

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Gardening in December

Lawns

- This is a good time of year to winterize your lawn mower. Change the oil and air filter, replace the spark plug, and clean and store the lawn mower.
- Do not allow newly seeded lawns to go dry. Irrigate your lawn if necessary.
- Spot treat with herbicides for winter annual weeds.

Ornamentals

- Finish cleaning weeds out of planting beds, and make sure you have a 2- to 3-inch layer of mulch in place.
- Compost fallen leaves by mowing them over, then piling them up into a shady corner in the garden and letting them decompose.
- Prune any perennials that have died back for the winter if you have not already done so.
 - If scale and mite insects have been a problem in the past, apply preventive horticultural oils on the entire plant.

- Lightly fertilize winter annual beds such as pansies, cabbage and snapdragons.
 - Cluster indoor houseplants together, set them on a shallow pan covered with pebbles, and water to prevent them from drying out.
 - Make sure poinsettias get at least 6 hours of bright indirect sunlight every day, and water them regularly to prevent them from drying out.
 - Lightly prune holly shrubs and evergreens to use for indoor holiday decorations.

Vegetables

- Begin planning your spring vegetable garden by reviewing seed catalogs.

Gift Ideas

- Prune back grape vines, and create beautiful wreaths.
- Collect sweetgum balls for making homemade ornaments.

Michelle Wallace

The Arboretum at Tanglewood Park

Tanglewood Park is part of the Forsyth County park system located along the Yadkin River. Stunning views occur all over the park. One exceptional treasure is the Arboretum located behind the manor house about midway through the park. This public garden contains diverse collections of native flora, herbs and landscape plants cared for by many volunteers, and most are Master Gardeners. It is an educational opportunity for professionals, youth and anyone who visits it.

The Arboretum includes more than 20 different gardens. The newest is the Conifer Garden, located a few steps from the greenhouse. Nearby, a wildflower garden with an overlook area provides a natural setting for weddings and other events. Tanglewood is located a few miles west of Winston-Salem off Interstate 40 in Clemmons. For more information visit www.tanglewoodgardens.org or call the Forsyth Extension center at 336-703-2850.

J. Stephen Greer

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- ▶ Garden Writers Association
- ▶ International Association of Business Communicators
- ▶ N.C. & National Associations of County Agricultural Agents
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