



## Winter Wonders

Color and fragrance dominate this article, which you might find surprising for this time of the year. The scent from early flowering Jonquils is almost overpowering, whilst the Daphne bushes are once again delighting us with their incredibly strong, sweet scent.

Some will say that Daphne plants are heartbreakers! This can be true as the plants are susceptible to fungal root rot, but there are ways around this and the fact that a flowering Daphne shrub provides us with such delightful flowers and fragrance in the depths of winter, is well worth a little bit of extra effort. Here's what you do.....

Go to your local garden centre and select a Daphne that has dark green foliage and which might even have the odd flower – that's a bonus! Plant in a semi shaded spot dappled morning sun and afternoon shade is perfect. Set the plant in a slightly raised position so that water does not collect around the base. When mulching, do not smother the stem. Fertilise as you would for all Camellias and Azaleas.

The most important thing to look for with Daphne plants is the sign that there might be fungal root problems. You can identify this as the foliage looks pale, lacks vigour and also the leaves droop downwards. Treat the soil surrounding the plant immediately with Fongarid, following the instructions on the packaging. You can also use Yates Anti Rot which can be applied as a foliar spray. Either way, treat the plant immediately. Taking care of your Daphne plant by checking on its health regularly will provide you with many years of scented glory.

Another stand out plant at this time of the year is the Camellia's. What an incredible family this is, providing us with stunning blooms ranging from the purest of white through to deep velvety reds. The Camellia is part of the Tea family (Theaceae) and has its origins in Japan, Korea and China. In fact, the tea that you drink is derived from the Camellia sinensis. Over centuries, this group of plants has been hybridised to produce so many of the wonderful varieties that we know of today.

Camellia Japonicas are Show Offs! They usually have large and very showy blooms – sometimes with very prominent stamens, others with frills, many doubles and a host of colors. Generally, the darker colors will withstand a sunnier position, but wherever you live, do try and fit at least one Camellia Japonica into your garden to give that burst of color when you need it most.

**Life's a garden – dig it!**