best if only 10% of the roots are removed.

**Design and Styling:** You can try a number of styles on the Camellia as it is suited for any number of styles, however, the best choices include cascade for the larger trees and an informal upright on single or multiple trunk trees.

**Some species suitable for bonsai:**

* Camellia cuspidata - Reputed to be somewhat more hardy than the other members of the species, this plant has abundant small white flowers.

* Camellia japonica: camellia, common camellia - This is the most widely grown species. Although best known as a shrub, it can grow into a tree over 30 feet tall. It has oval leaves up to 4 inches, and most generally grows in zones 7-9 although some cultivars have been grown as far north as southern New York. It is best known for its spectacular blooms, which occur in late winter or early spring, and can be white, pink or red. There are numerous cultivars, generally selected for their various flowers.

  * Camellia maliflora - A small flowered variety.
  * Camellia reticulata - A small-leaved, shade-tolerant Camellia. It is hardy to zone 9. The white, pink or red flowers can be found both single and double. Aggressive pruning is needed to promote branching.

  * Camellia sasanqua: Sasanqua camellia - Smaller than japonica, this Camellia has two inch leaves and flowers, and grows only to 12 feet. Like C. japonica, it is hardy in zones 7-9, and has many cultivars.

  * Camellia sinensis: tea, tea plant, tea bush - A white flowered variety, its small leaves and flowers make it better proportioned for bonsai than other Camellia species.

  * Camellia taliensis

  * Camellia tsaii - another small flowered Camellia.

  * Camellia vernalis: Vernalis camellia

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”
—Mahatma Gandhi—
The Camellia

(Camellia sp.)

General Information: The most famous member of the Camellia family is C. sinensis, the plant from which we get tea. Tea can be made from other Camellia species, but its flavor is not as desirable. But these other Camellias make showy bonsai, with beautiful flowers and shiny evergreen leaves. They can be grown outdoors in warm climates, and are often grown as an indoor bonsai when they cannot be kept otherwise. Most Camellias flower from fall through early spring.

When flower buds begin to appear, they are delicate. They may fall off if the plant is moved, or if there is too great a variation in temperature or light.

The Camellia is native to the mountains of Korea and Japan growing to heights of up to 39 feet. It is also found in Mediterranean countries where it only reaches heights of up to 26 feet. Camellia bonsai are within a family of species which include Camellia sasanqua, Camellia japonica, and Camellia reticulate. Though there are more than 250 species, the most popular choice is the Camellia sasanqua, which is particularly small and hardy. It works well as a bonsai because it has small flowers and leaves which are well suited to bonsai proportions. The Camellia ‘Hot Flash’ will be a welcome addition to any bonsai gardener’s collection with lovely vibrant flowers and a lush canopy of green leaves.

The Camellia typically has large, glossy leaves that range from medium to dark green. This type of bonsai is favored because of its beautiful blooming season which offers a welcome dose of winter color during the dull days of winter. The ‘Hot Flash’ (sasanqua) offers wonderful pink flowers that bloom from fall through early spring against glossy green leaves.

CARE

General Care:

Temperature: Zone hardy to zones 8 or 9, depending on species. Never below 10°F. Can be grown successfully indoors, but needs cool nights (between 40°-60°F, but 50°-59°F is best) in winter. This plant prefers being placed in a partially shady spot in mid spring after the danger of frost is over. It will need to be brought indoors in early fall taking care to move the plant before it begins to develop flower buds or they will tend to fall off.

Lighting: Partial shade to full sun. When growing Camellia bonsai, you need to keep the tree in a location that is airy and cool with much light but not direct sunlight. This Bonsai does enjoy bright diffused light, but will not do well in direct sunlight. It prefers diffused morning sun and afternoon shade.

Air: Likes ventilation, but should be kept sheltered from strong winds.

Watering: Moderate, but as the root hairs are very fine, the plant CAN NOT be allowed to dry completely. Your Camellia Bonsai is not drought tolerant and will do poorly if allowed to dry out. Increase watering during active growth, and when the plant is in bloom. A cooler environment will indicate a need for less water. It is best to use decalcified (soft) water if possible. Likes an occasional misting, but do not mist while in bloom or the flowers will wither.

Fertilizing: Every 2-3 weeks, spring-autumn. Use a fertilizer such as Miracid, formulated for acid-loving plants, at half-strength. Do not fertilize while the plant is in bloom. The plant may also benefit from administering chelated iron 2-3 times a year.

Pruning / Training: Wire from late spring to autumn, taking care to protect the delicate bark and branches. Do not wire while the plant is setting buds, and wire only woody shoots. The fall-blooming camellia tends to grow straight and up-right, and it has excessively brittle branches. To develop a pleasing shape, wiring the tree when it is very young or wiring a cutting, which is pliable, is likely to get the best results. Watch the tree closely and apply wires when the branches have become woody but before they turn brittle. To encourage branching, you will want to prune back the new shoots leaving only two or three leaves in place. Young plants should be pruned after the shoots have developed 4-6 leaves, trimming back to 2-3 to establish branching. Pruning of established bonsai is best done following flowering, pruning only once and then allowing new shoots to set buds. Camillias do not like to be pruned hard and will not sprout new growth from buds that sit farther back on mature, or woody, branches.

Insects / Pests: Keep in mind that Camellia is quite prone to scale and aphids. You will want to use an organic herbicide or a solution of 1 tsp dish soap to 1 quart warm water sprayed on the foliage until run off occurs. Rinse solution off well, and repeat as necessary. Be sure to avoid spraying the blossoms when in bloom as it will cause browning to occur. In addition, the Camellia is susceptible to viruses, which can cause damage to the beautiful flowers. Camellia is also vulnerable to red spider mites sooty mold, weevils and chlorosis.

Propagation: By seed, soaking in warm water, for 24 hours, and then removing the outer casing. Fast germinating. Also hardwood cuttings can be taken from winter-summer, although rooting is slow and difficult. The use of rooting hormone and bottom heat of 72°F is recommended. Air-layering is possible.

Repotting: Every 2-4 years in late winter or spring, following blooming. Likes acidic, humus rich soil. When replacing the soil, make sure you use lime-free soil, as it does not tolerate lime. A good soil blend is 50% potting mix, 25% small lava rock and 25% Turface. The roots are superficial and fine, so drastic root pruning is not recommended, and it is