

Daphne: Beautifully scented slow growing shrubs with small pink flowers in Spring.

Halesia carolina: A beautiful tree with clusters of white, bell shaped flowers in spring. Pear shaped winged fruit in Autumn

Fothergilla: Deciduous shrubs with bottlebrush-like white flower spikes in May and June. Rich, autumn colours red and orange.

Berberidopsis corallina: A beautiful evergreen climber with heart shaped leaves and deep crimson flowers in summer. Good for a wall in semi-shade.

Leptospermum scoparium (Tea Tree): Small leaved evergreen shrubs with small button like pink or white flowers.

If your garden has alkaline soil you don't have to miss out on these spectacular plants. There are many smaller varieties available that are suitable for containers. Larger plants can be grown in raised beds provided that there is a good depth of soil.

Remember to keep plants watered, especially in dry weather and feed with an ericaceous food, either a slow release fertiliser such as **Osmocote** or a liquid feed such as **Miracle-Gro** ericaceous plant food.

Raised Beds

Raised beds can be made out of lime-free stone, brick, timber or railway sleepers. 75cm to 1m is deep enough for growing all but the largest varieties. Fill the construction with a mixture of lime-free, ericaceous compost and top soil.

Containers

When choosing a container or pot, bear in mind the size of the plant at maturity. You don't have to put a young plant into a huge pot to start with but you will have to re-pot it into a larger container as it grows. Fill the container with ericaceous (lime free) compost such as **Westland's** Ericaceous with added John Innes.

Plunged Pots

Plant into a plastic container with ericaceous compost. Make sure that it is large enough to give the plant space for two or three years and that there are plenty of drainage holes. Dig a hole big enough to accommodate the pot in the border where the plant is required. Plunge the pot into the hole so that the rim is just above soil level. The edge of the container can be disguised with an ornamental mulch.

Treat as you would any other plant in a container and remember to water in dry weather and feed as above. Re-pot the plant as it gets bigger to allow for the roots to grow.

If you require any further information, please ask our outdoor plant advisors who will be very happy to help.

Opening Times

Monday – Saturday: 9am – 6pm
Sunday: 9.30am – 4pm

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Acid Loving Plants

(Ericaceous)



Care & Advice Sheet

No. 17

Inspiration for your Home & Garden

The terms acid soil, ericaceous, lime free, non-calcareous, peaty soil are one and the same. Soil pH is an index that describes how acid or alkaline your soil is. A neutral soil has a pH of 7.0. A slightly acidic soil with a pH of 6.5 is the best general purpose pH for gardens, allowing a wide range of plants to grow, except lime-loving plants.

There are many shrubs, described as 'acid loving' that thrive in soils with a pH lower than 6.5.

Acid loving plants are generally woodland plants that thrive in rich peaty soils. If grown in limey / chalky conditions soil nutrients are locked up and unavailable to the plant. This causes what is known as chlorosis, the leaves to turn yellow between the leaf veins and they eventually fall off. A general lack of vigour and flowering occurs as the plant loses strength.

If you want to grow plants from this group but are unsure of the pH of your soil then use a soil testing kit available from our shop.

Planting

When planting acid loving species in the ground we recommend that you mix plenty of ericaceous compost into the planting hole. If planting into a container use a loam (soil) based ericaceous compost such as John Innes ericaceous..

Care

Many of the plants from this group have large flowers in spring that are formed in late summer. They will produce more flowers if kept watered and fed with a slow release ericaceous feed in summer. Plants grown in containers and any that have lost vigour can be fed with a fast acting water soluble feed, such as **Miracle-Gro** ericaceous plant food

If possible water with collected rain water, as tap water often contains dissolved calcium salts making it alkaline.

The following plants need an acidic soil to thrive and prefer partial shade out of direct sunshine:

Rhododendrons and Azaleas: Large showy flowers available in a variety of colours and flowering times. Many sizes are available from dwarf varieties to large, almost small tree sized shrubs. Most Rhododendrons are evergreen with large waxy leaves whereas Azaleas are smaller and lose their leaves in winter or are semi-evergreen.

Acers: Japanese maples are small trees with brightly coloured delicate leaves. There is a separate care sheet for them.

Camellias: Evergreen with shiny dark green leaves and circular showy flowers. Hybrids of *Camellia japonica* and *Camellia x williamsii* flower in early spring. *Camellia sasanqua*'s have smaller flowers in late Autumn to Winter.

Crinodendron hookerianum: Unusual bright red-crimson flowers that hang like lanterns along this tall shrub's branches in May. Needs a sheltered spot.

Pieris: Compact evergreen shrubs with small pointed leaves that emerge bright red turning shades of pink then cream and eventually green. Many have attractive red or pink flower buds formed in autumn that open in April to May. The flowers are generally white or pink and hang down in drooping clusters.

Calluna vulgaris (summer flowering heather): Trouble-free, low growing evergreen with tiny leaves many with brightly coloured foliage. A large selection available, flowering at different times from July to November. Shade tolerant but flower more freely in sun.

Enkianthus: Tall spreading deciduous shrubs grown for their superb autumn colour and cup shaped flowers in May and June.

Gentians: Challenging perennials with intense bright true- blue flowers in spring or autumn.

Kalmia latifolia: Evergreen rhododendron-like shrub with bright pink flowers in June.

Hydrangea: Soil acidity affects the colour of blue, mauve and pink hydrangeas. In acidic conditions they turn blue and pink in a more alkaline/neutral soil.

Vaccinium (Blueberries): Fruit bushes with edible berries and small ornamental shrubs.

Many other shrubs are tolerant of alkaline soils but will benefit from acid soil. These include:

Hamamelis (Witch Hazel): Winter flowering shrubs or small trees with yellow, orange or red spider-like flowers in early spring.