

Holiday Plants

Hayes Jackson, Urban Regional Extension Agent

Camellia Planting Tips

The soil for camellias should contain well-decomposed organic matter and be acidic in nature. In camellia culture, the value of organic matter cannot be overemphasized, since it improves aeration and drainage and adds moderately to soil acidity.

Some camellias can be grown in full sun, although most grow and produce better flowers in partial shade where the blooms and foliage are protected from sunburn. However, camellias in dense shade often become spindly and produce fewer blooms. A site under pine trees is ideal because pines provide filtered light year-round for growth, winter protection, and natural mulch from the

pine needles. Try to avoid planting camellias beneath some hardwood species such as Red Maple that have shallow root systems that compete with the camellias for nutrients and water. Avoid windy, exposed sites since wind can be detrimental for camellias in winter and summer.

By planting a variety of camellia species and hybrids, camellia blooms can be enjoyed in Alabama gardens from September to April.



Mistletoe



The tradition of the mistletoe dates back to ancient history and across many cultures. In Europe, if you kiss a woman under mistletoe, it is a proposal of marriage. In other parts of the world, the tradition is much less extreme and shall we say, long lasting? According to most current day traditions, a young woman simply stands under the mistletoe and awaits her lover's kiss. In the U.S. it's all right to reverse roles. While you are having a jolly old time under the mistletoe, the proper procedure is to take a berry off the sprig every time you kiss. When the berries are gone, so are the kisses.

Mistletoe can be found almost anywhere in the world. It is a parasite, living on a variety of trees. Mistletoe sends its roots under the host trees' bark where it taps into the trees' nutrients. Mistletoe seeds are spread by birds that carry seeds stuck on their feet or beaks or deposit them in their droppings. Mistletoe can spread so much across a tree that it can weaken or even kill the host.

Harvesting Mistletoe can be simple or problematic. If you are lucky enough to find it on a low growing limb, you can easily pick it off. Most mistletoe is high up in the trees. For sprigs out of reach of a ladder, people resort to shooting it down. Mistletoe is poisonous. If there are little ones in the family, you may want to opt for the artificial just for a few years for safety sake.