



# The Herb Society of America

## Promising Plants Profiles

### ***Camellia sinensis***

**Genus:** *Camellia*  
**Specific Epithet:** *sinensis*  
**Common Name:** tea  
**Family:** Theaceae

**Flower Color:** white  
**Form:** evergreen shrub  
**Hardiness Zone:** 7  
**Height:** 3-20'  
**Soil:** rich, moist but well-drained soil  
**Sun:** full sun or partial shade

**Uses:** culinary, medicinal, economic, dye  
**Parts Used:** leaves, flowers, seeds, fruits



"This is the most important species commercially grown yielding tea. Thought to originate in western China, it has been grown for more than 3000 years for this prized beverage and first made its appearance in North America in 1650 via Dutch trading ships. Various kinds of tea are obtained by different methods of curing the leaves. Tea contains less caffeine than coffee, but contains tannins which are a possible cause of esophageal cancer. It also contains antioxidants which may help protect against heart disease and stroke. Tea is the world's most popular beverage, second only to water.

Tea plants are generally winter hardy in Zone 8b, but there are clones from higher altitudes that are hardy in Zone 7. In cold areas they can be grown as greenhouse container plants. They have glossy evergreen leaves, 2-4 inches long, and 1-inch white flowers, similar to those of *Camellia sasanqua* which is a popular garden shrub in the South.

Tea is a slightly bitter herb which stimulates the nervous system. It also has diuretic effects. In Asia it is used to relieve diarrhea, dysentery and gastroenteritis. In excess it can cause constipation, indigestion and insomnia. Externally it is used for insect bites. Green tea is said to protect against arteriosclerosis and help to lower blood pressure.

As well as being made into a beverage, tea leaves are used as a coloring agent for boiled eggs. They are also toasted as a flavoring for duck. Cold tea is used as a liquid for soaking dried fruit either for compotes or as an ingredient in fruit cakes. The essential oil is used in the perfume industry and in commercial food flavoring, and the fixed oil is used in paint manufacture." – Madalene Hill, Promising Plants Presentation, 2005

**Plant Sources:** Richters Herbs – Goodwood, Ontario; Camellia Forest Nursery – Chapel Hill, NC

Photo by Gwen Barclay  
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