

Introduction to Growing Tea (Camellia sinensis)

HERB SOCIETY OF AMERICA WEBINAR HANDOUT

Plan before planting:

Site and soils

- Zone 7 or higher, or protection from cold, with 30-50% shade – morning shade (winter)
- Well-drained and acidic soils (pH 5.5-6.5) – test your soils first if possible, or lower pH slowly if plants already in the ground.

Planting

Choose your plants

- var *sinensis* in temperate climates (some cold hardy) vs. var *assamica* (subtropical)
- Clones of selected plants (shallower root system), or seedlings (tap root, more variety)
- Seeds are easy to start – keep moist, OK indoors or outside in spring/summer shade

Prepare a site, 3 to 4 square feet per plant

- Create raised bed 6-12 inches if drainage is poor, add compost, pea gravel
- Hole almost as deep as the pot and twice as wide, surrounded by loose soil
- Prune tall single stems (at 6-10 inches) on transplanting or in the winter.

Patience (and care)

Tea requires 3 to 5 years before it becomes productive for tea

- Weed control – avoid disturbing shallow roots
- Fertilizer to promote healthy roots and vigorous growth
- Formation pruning to encourage branching
 - Dormant plants can be cut in the winter
- A few of the common pests we see in tea
 - Aphids Tea scale
 - Voles, deer (but tea is one of the last things they choose)

Growing in pots (short term or long-term)

- Tea is not a houseplant!
- Soils and pots
 - Ground aged pine, compost (7:1), camellia/azalea mix
 - Can add 10% perlite (increases drainage) or 10% peat moss (holds water).
- Water every 2-3 days, let it dry out between waterings
- Transplant yearly to slightly larger pot (start small)
- In winter: Short-term indoors (e.g., protect the roots from freezing) In summer: Optimize sun/shade, watering



Camellia Forest Tea Gardens



Our mission

We share what we know and what we grow with gardeners and tea lovers

Our vision

Making homegrown tea accessible, building community, lifelong learning

Offerings

“Grow Your Own Tea” (Timber Press, 2020)

In person educational opportunities –

Workshops, talks and tours

Consulting and personalized events

Open houses - First Flush Fest and Fall Tea for All

Online support for gardeners –

<https://www.patreon.com/Camelliaforestteagardens>

Webinars, consulting and personalized events

Tea plants and seeds shipped from Camellia Forest Nursery, a premier source of *Camellia sinensis* and other *Camellias* (www.camforest.com)



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