

Gardenia

GENERAL INFORMATION

The gardenia is the ultimate buttonhole flower. These beautiful and fragrant plants were discovered in China in the 1700's. The aroma is intoxicating and the large, glossy, dark green leaves are a perfect background for the brilliant white flowers this plant produces. Some varieties bloom in the summer, others, throughout the year.

LIGHT AND TEMPERATURE

Correct temperatures are important! For flower buds to form, a night temperature of 60° - 65°F is required, and during the day it should be about 10°F higher. Bright light is essential, but avoid direct midday sun in a south exposure during the summer. 3-5 hours of direct sun is recommended. In Fall, Winter and Spring, full sun in south, west, or east exposure.

WATER AND SOIL

Use any good high peat potting soil. Infrequent repotting is recommended. Repot in spring no more than every 2-3 years. Keep the soil continuously moist, only allowing slight drying. Water with tepid (boiled or rainwater is good) water. Do not let plant stand in water. Mist leaves with warm water (65 - 75°F) daily to provide adequate humidity.

FERTILIZE

Gardenias are acid loving, so use an acid-based fertilizer (Miracid or similar Azalea, Rhododendron or Evergreen food). Fertilize every 6 - 8 weeks.

PROPAGATION

Take stem cuttings in spring. Use a rooting hormone and provide bottom heat.

COMMENTS

The Gardenia can grow to three feet tall with ideal conditions. It normally grows to about 16-20 inches with an annual growth of 4 to 6 inches. If the plant becomes leggy, it should be trimmed back in March - April. Use this opportunity to take cuttings.

Problems associated with Gardenias:

Buds will drop when your plant is stressed from soil being too dry or too wet and from dry air. Plants will not bloom if the light is too low. Temperatures over 75°F will cause plant to shed its flowers and buds. If kept at 65°F, it will bloom profusely over a period of many months.