

# Caladiums

*Long lasting color for summer gardens.*

**C**aladiums are among our most widely used plants for summer color. They are valued because of their beautifully colored leaves which are produced freely under proper growing conditions. They are grown as pot plants on shaded patios, terraces, and porches and in ground beds beneath trees.

Caladiums offer the gardener with a shaded location underneath trees, a real opportunity for long lasting color while many other summer plants fail. They are grown from tubers which in reality are fleshy underground stems bearing buds.

## **A few preliminaries...**

Before planting, check your soil situation. They prefer a porous or drained soil with a high humus or organic matter content. Clay or sandy soils must be improved to meet these conditions. To do so, use 3 - 4 inches of peat moss, pine bark, or composted leaves. Mix this thoroughly with the top 10 - 12 inches of soil in the planting area. Mix 2 pounds of a complete fertilizer such as 8-8-8 or 10-10-10 per 100 square feet of planting area. For smaller areas, use one teaspoon per square foot of area. Be sure to mix the fertilizer thoroughly. Repeat fertilization monthly.

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## **Plant in warm soil**

The number one reason for failure with caladiums is planting too early. They demand a warm soil temperature for growth. Outside soils are seldom warm enough before mid to late May, and preferably June. If planted too early in cool or cold soils, the tubers become mushy and rot.

Before planting there is a procedure that will give you many more leaves. If planted upside down or cut into quarters, the tubers will produce a great many leaves. One other method is to remove the center bud prior to planting. Many times the center bud will be more dominant and protrude more than other buds.

Take a pointed, small knife and core out the center bud. Using a knife helps avoid damaging other small hidden buds.

Caladiums have a high water requirement. It is necessary to water them frequently throughout the summer. A thorough watering during the morning hours is desired. Soak the planting at each watering. Do not water if sun is directly on the foliage.

***For more information on caladiums, contact your local county Extension office.***