

blooming plant of the month

Gardenia



GARDENIA JASMINOIDES

BOTANICAL NAME

Gardenia jasminoides (gar-DEEN-ee-a jaz-min-OY-deez)

COMMON NAME

Cape jasmine

DESCRIPTION

Gardenia plants are evergreen, woody shrubs that feature shiny, dark green leaves and fragrant *Camellia*-like flowers that grow to 3 to 4 inches across. The waxy petals open into flat or dome-shaped flowers. *Gardenias* are prized for their intense fragrance.

CONSUMER LIFE

Each flower may last only five to seven days, but the plant can last for many months with proper care. Only a few flowers are generally open at any given time per plant.



VARIETIES

Cultivars include 'Mystery,' a large, pure white bloom, and 'Belmont,' a smaller, creamy white variety.

AVAILABILITY

Gardenia plants are available year-round, usually from local markets and growers.

PROCESSING

- 1 Upon arrival, remove the plants from the shipping boxes by grasping their protective sleeves and lifting the plants out.
- 2 Carefully remove each sleeve by tearing along the seam upward from the bottom.
- 3 Inspect plant variety, size and quality.

quality checklist

BLOOMS Remove faded blooms. Don't accept plants that show signs of wilt, rot, mold or yellowing. Proper temperatures are necessary for *Gardenias* to bloom (see "care tips," below left).

PESTS Several insects and diseases are likely to show up on *Gardenias*. Sooty mold can coat leaves and is usually due to an infestation of aphids or mealy bugs. These sucking insects excrete honeydew, which supports the growth of the black fungus. In sandy soil, nematodes feed on the roots and can cause *Gardenias* to be stunted or even die. Root rots caused by various fungi also can be a problem, especially in poorly drained soils.

4 Remove any damaged stems, leaves and blooms.

5 Inspect each plant for disease or damage. Isolate diseased or damaged plants, and report them to the grower or buying office immediately.

6 Determine water needs by pressing a finger 1 inch into the soil or using a moisture meter.

7 Water each plant, as necessary, with room-temperature water, and allow excess water to drain from each pot.

in-store and consumer care tips

WATER Keep the soil moist at all times, but avoid standing water. Irregular watering can cause bud drop. Overwatering can cause leaf drop.

LIGHT Bright, indirect light is best for plants displayed indoors.

TEMPERATURE Keep *Gardenias* at a constant temperature, 65 F to 75 F, because fluctuating day and night temperatures damage the flower buds. Flower buds may fail to form if day temperatures are higher than 75 F or night temperatures are lower than 60 F.

HUMIDITY *Gardenias* need daily misting. Moderate humidity is required.

FERTILIZER Feed the plants every three weeks during the growing season with a *Rhododendron* (azalea) food or acidifying fertilizer.

SOIL *Gardenias* prefer acidic, moist, well-drained soils.

GROOMING Cut *Gardenias* back when they have finished flowering.

CHALLENGE

ETHYLENE SENSITIVITY *Gardenias* are somewhat sensitive to ethylene gas. Check with your suppliers to make sure their crops are treated with an ethylene inhibitor at the farm or during transportation. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflifeflora.com

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