



Do's and Don't's with Daphnes

Tricks to success – understanding Daphne isn't hard with a little foresight and a smidge of care, you will be able to count on them being an anchor bloom in your garden for a decade or more.

First things first, find the right position. It should be a cool one. While a few will survive in a sun-baked spot, most prefer to be away from midday sun, sheltered by a tree or a wall.

Soil wise, avoid planting in areas that have a lot of lime. They hate sweet soil. Their preference is slightly acidic, so whilst it is okay to enrich soils with plenty of mature compost or well-rotted animal manure, make sure you do not add any general fertilisers. Only use acid plant food, something similar to what you use on Rhododendrons, Camellias and Azaleas. Free-draining soil is essential. They do not like boggy or water logged soils, so aim to keep their toes dry. If your soil has a tendency to hold a lot of water, it would be wise to plant your Daphne in a pot, or to mound up the soil to create a raised area to keep the roots away from water logged soils. The aim here is to avoid any root rot problems.

Distressed Daphne – the most common Daphne issues are yellowing leaves, defoliation or stunted growth. Yellow leaves and subsequent leaf drop is predominately the result of poor soil. If the plant has been thriving for a season or two and these symptoms occur, drench the plant with a seaweed tonic. This will trigger the roots into action. At the same time apply acid plant food, lightly around the drip line of the plant, then add a light layer of mulch. Over time, if the cause of yellowing leaves was lack of nutrition, new bright leaves will appear, which can take up to six months.

Stunted growth is normally caused by heavy soils or the roots having curled up around themselves into a ball, which slowly strangles any growth. If the plant is still small, lift it carefully out of the ground to assess the problem, tease out the roots and plant into an area with suitable soil.