



Project List: Caladiums

Caladiums are simply a must-have to light up the darkest shady spaces in beds and containers all summer. Consult this supply list for the products for your best success. and see the reverse for planting instructions for reliable color all the way to first frost.

- Espoma Bulb-tone**— Caladiums appreciate a good organic fertilizer mixed into the prepared soil at the time of planting.
- Garden Soil Acidifier or Azalea Soil Mix**—both of these products lower the pH of the soil for acid-loving plants. In un-amended clay soil, the mix is ideal. For amended soils, simply adding the acidified compost is usually enough.
- Mulch**—Retains moisture and helps regulate soil temperature. Mulch only lightly around caladiums; be cautious to not crowd the plants with mulch as this can cause rot.
- Epsom Salt**— Caladiums appreciate the boost of magnesium and will do well with Epsom salt mixed into the soil at the time of planting (about 1 tablespoon per tuber, mixed well into surrounding soil).
- Expanded Shale**—a porous, lightweight gravel that increases drainage and aeration and helps to break up native clay soils, which is especially important for caladiums.

Glossary of some common Caladium terms:

- **Tuber:** A fleshy, underground bulb-like structure from which leaves and roots grow.
- **Eye:** The dominant leaf bud, surrounded by smaller, or axillary leaf bud.
- **De-Eye:** Many Caladium growers recommend removing the dominant bud to encourage fuller, thicker growth (see reverse).
- **Fancy Leaf:** Varieties that have larger, broader leaves and are best suited for shade.
- **Strap Leaf:** Varieties that have smaller, more pointed leaves and are more tolerant of direct sun.
- **Size or Grade:** The sorted size of the tuber, which typically determines how it is sold and how many eyes or leaf buds it has.

(continued on reverse)

How to Plant Caladium Tubers

Caladiums are tropical foliage plants grown as annuals, and are available in a variety of colors. There are two main leaf types: **'Fancy Leaf'** varieties typically make a larger, broader leaf, and these are best suited for shade. **'Strap Leaf'** varieties typically have a narrower, more pointed leaf and are considered to be more tolerant of sun—although they're not recommend in full sun sites or any with reflected heat—morning sun and afternoon shade is ideal.

While there are several sizes of Caladium tubers sorted by their size or grade, for this year's collection we've brought in the Jumbo, the most popular size, and the tubers average 2 ½" to 3 ½" (6.5 – 9.0 cm).

NOTE! Though our collection of Caladium tubers typically arrives by late March, **we recommend waiting until nearer to Mother's Day (May) to plant.** This is when soils have warmed enough for the best success.



PREP: Caladiums thrive in loose, well-amended soils that are rich in organic matter. It's imperative that it drains well (no standing water). They'll do best in slightly acidic soil, so amending with **Mayer's Garden Soil Acidifier** or **Azalea Planting Mix** is a good idea, especially for heavier clay soils.

Work an organic fertilizer such as **Espoma Bulb-tone** or **Bone Meal** into the soil to a depth of about 4" before planting. Caladiums also like **Epsom salts**, so you can water them in with it dissolved in water, or sprinkle a bit over the soil at the time of planting.

DE-EYE (optional; see photo above): To de-eye, cut out the terminal/dominant buds or sprout(s) (eyes) using a small knife. Staying within the diameter of the eye, remove the entire eye by cutting about 1/8" - 1/4" deep into the bulb. Remember, it is critical to stay within the diameter of the eye to eliminate damage to the small eyes (axillary or lateral buds) that surround the perimeter of the main eye. You may want to dust the tuber with **Dusting Sulfur** during the curing process to avoid fungal infection before planting.

PLANT: Tubers are planted 1-1/2" to 2-1/2" deep in prepared soil. Water them in lightly after planting, and if desired, lightly apply mulch. Leaves will begin to sprout in 10-14 days (depending on temperature).

CARE: Caladiums will last their longest if they receive ample moisture and are protected from excessive sun, and if any blooms that appear are quickly removed to give them the most energy to direct toward leaf growth.

Speak with a Garden Advisor for questions and additional help in growing caladiums.

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