



Blackcreek Creek Nursery

Home Grown Tea – FAQs

What are Tea Plants?

Tea plants are evergreen plants that are members of the Camellia family. The plant species used for tea production is *Camellia sinensis*.

Can any camellia produce tea?

While it is possible to produce tea from the leaves of other camellia species besides *Camellia sinensis*, the resulting beverage may not taste, look, or smell the same as traditional tea. All camellia species contain certain chemical elements that when processed for tea, may give you different results.

Where can I grow tea?

Tea from *Camellia sinensis* can be grown in most mild regions of the USA and around the world. In the USA, they do best grown outdoors in climate zones 7-8-9. Tea can be grown in colder climates if they are grown outdoors in warm weather, indoors in cold weather.

How many plants do I need to produce tea?

That depends on how much you want to make. If you have a small family and only drink tea occasionally, then 1-2 mature plants should be fine. If you have a larger family or want to produce more tea, then start with 10-12 plants and increase as plants as needed.

When do I harvest tea?

You only want to harvest the soft tender green growth when the plant is actively growing. Plants in the USA usually go into a dormant period in Fall-Winter. So harvesting in zones 7-8-9 would be anywhere from March-September depending on your climate.

Why do I want to have bushy plants?

Because you are harvesting tea from the tips of plants, you want to have as many tips as possible. The bushier the plant, the more tea you can harvest.

How do I make my plants bushy?

The best way is to start with pruning your plant just before spring growth. Pruning your plant each year to about 2-3' tall will encourage the plant to put on lots of shoots. When you begin harvesting tea, do it on a regular basis – every 10-12 days as new growth emerges. This will continue the “bushy” formation of your plants.

How big will my tea plants get?

Your tea plants, if left alone with no pruning, can get upwards of 10-12 feet tall. For optimal tea production, we suggest keeping your plant to 2-3 feet tall or waist high.

What is the purpose of the flowers?

Plants flower as a way of reproduction. Flowers that are pollinated will usually form seed pods. When ripe, the seeds fall to the ground and seedlings soon emerge. Seedlings are genetically different from the mother plant. Tea plants grown for tea have very few flowers because the constant pruning and plucking prevent the plant from going into a full reproduction mode.

Can I grow tea in containers?

Absolutely. They make excellent container plants and will fit in nicely as an evergreen shrub on your deck, porch or patio.

Can I use regular potting soil to grow my camellias in containers?

Be very careful of using a general purpose potting soil with Tea plants. Usually, these soils are formulated for vegetables and bedding plants and are designed to hold water to keep your plants from drying out. Because of the components used in commercial potting mixes, soils are usually very compact leaving very little air space for your roots to breathe. Tea Plants like to have a soil that has good drainage and good oxygen. We use a finely ground aged pine bark mix that has some moisture retention, but the water drains away from the roots instead of compacting the soil

Where can I get a container mix?

We sell our own custom blended **Blackcreek Creek Potting & Planting Mix** for Camellias & Tea plants.

What types of plants do I need to grow green, black or oolong tea?

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What is the difference between Green, Black and Oolong teas?

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How long before I can harvest my own tea leaves?

Any leaves harvested need to be soft green growth, never the older harder growth. Older growth that is too tough will not oxidize properly and will taste very bitter. You can process the leaves from any size plant. Smaller plants will only produce a few leaves. The bushier and older the plant, the more tea leaves it will produce. Since only the tips are taken, your yield will increase as the plant ages. Optimal age is between 4-5 years old.

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All tea is made from the same plant – Camellia sinensis. It's not the plant that determines what tea you get, but the way you make it. It's like potatoes. French fries, mashed potatoes, and potato chips are all made from potatoes. But it's the way they are processed that makes them what they turn out to be.

What is the difference between Green, Black and Oolong teas?

- Green Tea – fresh leaves are not allowed to oxidize, or to ferment. Leaves are not bruised. It's the purest and simplest to make. Caffeine content is the lowest in green tea.
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How long before I can harvest my own tea leaves?

Any leaves harvested need to be soft green growth, never the older harder growth. Older growth that is too tough will not oxidize properly and will taste very bitter. You can process the leaves from any size plant. Smaller plants will only produce a few leaves. The bushier and older the plant, the more tea leaves it will produce. Since only the tips are taken, your yield will increase as the plant ages. Optimal age is between 4-5 years old.

Training For Tea

Plants grown for tea must be trained to produce lots of tips to maximize harvest. This is done through pruning. Plants usually undergo a 2-3 year period of pruning and growing to produce a nice bushy plant. . Pruning is done in February of each year during dormancy. First year prune is about ½ of the plants size. 2nd year prune is a little less harsh, with only about a 1/3 of the height removed. 3rd year prune is also done in February, but only the top 6-8" is pruned. Each February after prune any dead or unhealthy limbs out. If plant gets too leggy you can repeat 2nd year prune with usually no more than 1/3 of the plants height trimmed. During this time you can harvest the new growth which will encourage bushier plants.

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Where can I grow tea?

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How many plants do I need to produce tea?

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What is the difference between Green, Black and Oolong teas?

- Green Tea – fresh leaves are not allowed to oxidize, or to ferment. Leaves are not bruised. It's the purest and simplest to make. Caffeine content is the lowest in green tea.
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How long before I can harvest my own tea leaves?

Any leaves harvested need to be soft green growth, never the older harder growth. Older growth that is too tough will not oxidize properly and will taste very bitter. You can process the leaves from any size plant. Smaller plants will only produce a few leaves. The bushier and older the plant, the more tea leaves it will produce. Since only the tips are taken, your yield will increase as the plant ages. Optimal age is between 4-5 years old.

Training For Tea

Plants grown for tea must be trained to produce lots of tips to maximize harvest. This is done through pruning. Plants usually undergo a 2-3 year period of pruning and growing to produce a nice bushy plant. . Pruning is done in February of each year during dormancy. First year prune is about ½ of the plants size. 2nd year prune is a little less harsh, with only about a 1/3 of the height removed. 3rd year prune is also done in February, but only the top 6-8" is pruned. Each February after prune any dead or unhealthy limbs out. If plant gets too leggy you can repeat 2nd year prune with usually no more than 1/3 of the plants height trimmed. During this time you can harvest the new growth which will encourage bushier plants.

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Where can I grow tea?

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That depends on how much you want to make. If you have a small family and only drink tea occasionally, then 1-2 mature plants should be fine. If you have a larger family or want to produce more tea, then start with 10-12 plants and increase as plants as needed.

When do I harvest tea?

You only want to harvest the soft tender green growth when the plant is actively growing. Plants in the USA usually go into a dormant period in Fall-Winter. So harvesting in zones 7-8-9 would be anywhere from March-September depending on your climate.

Why do I want to have bushy plants?

Because you are harvesting tea from the tips of plants, you want to have as many tips as possible. The bushier the plant, the more tea you can harvest.

How do I make my plants bushy?

The best way is to start with pruning your plant just before spring growth. Pruning your plant each year to about 2-3' tall will encourage the plant to put on lots of shoots. When you begin harvesting tea, do it on a regular basis – every 10-12 days as new growth emerges. This will continue the “bushy” formation of your plants.

How big will my tea plants get?

Your tea plants, if left alone with no pruning, can get upwards of 10-12 feet tall. For optimal tea production, we suggest keeping your plant to 2-3 feet tall or waist high.

What is the purpose of the flowers?

Plants flower as a way of reproduction. Flowers that are pollinated will usually form seed pods. When ripe, the seeds fall to the ground and seedlings soon emerge. Seedlings are genetically different from the mother plant. Tea plants grown for tea have very few flowers because the constant pruning and plucking prevent the plant from going into a full reproduction mode.

Can I grow tea in containers?

Absolutely. They make excellent container plants and will fit in nicely as an evergreen shrub on your deck, porch or patio.

Can I use regular potting soil to grow my camellias in containers?

Be very careful of using a general purpose potting soil with Tea plants. Usually, these soils are formulated for vegetables and bedding plants and are designed to hold water to keep your plants from drying out. Because of the components used in commercial potting mixes, soils are usually very compact leaving very little air space for your roots to breathe. Tea Plants like to have a soil that has good drainage and good oxygen. We use a finely ground aged pine bark mix that has some moisture retention, but the water drains away from the roots instead of compacting the soil

Where can I get a container mix?

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Blackcreek Creek Nursery

Home Grown Tea – FAQs

What are Tea Plants?

Tea plants are evergreen plants that are members of the Camellia family. The plant species used for tea production is Camellia sinensis.

Can any camellia produce tea?

While it is possible to produce tea from the leaves of other camellia species besides Camellia sinensis, the resulting beverage may not taste, look, or smell the same as traditional tea. All camellia species contain certain chemical elements that when processed for tea, may give you different results.

Where can I grow tea?

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