

The Cornish Gardener

February and March



Plan and plant early for a colourful summer garden.

To do in the garden...

The climate in Cornwall is mild, but don't let a few nice days fool you into thinking the last of the frosts is over. February particularly could still yield bitterly cold days, so continue to protect your plants and hold back on sowing any seeds outside until March. During February, continue to mulch plants, and dig up and transfer any that require repositioning before they bloom.

Coming into March, as the soil warms up it is time to plant summer bulbs such as lily, agapanthus and alliums.

Camellias



The JC Williams hybrid camellia, found at Caerhays Estate. Image courtesy of Caerhays Estate.

Flowering in early spring, camellias are the first exciting flash of colour in the season. Camellias are native to Asia but are found in many formal or historic gardens in Cornwall after varieties were imported in the 1800s. The camellias found on the Caerhays Estate at Gorran, St Austell were introduced by JC Williams, owner of the estate from 1880

and a keen gardener.

The Mount Edgcumbe estate at Torpoint is another good place to see many varieties in bloom, containing a National Camellia Collection.

Top tip: Care for your camellia

The first camellias to be grown in this country had to be heavily protected from the climate in greenhouses. These days, however, camellias can be a great success in a Cornish garden.

An acid-neutral soil is needed – in anything above neutral the leaves can turn yellow.

Choose a location that offers warmth and light, but also shade (too much harsh sun can burn the leaves).

Camellias grow well in containers on a patio (provided that this is in lime-free compost) and may flower earlier and for longer if brought into a cool greenhouse.

Keep the soil moist but be careful not to over-water, especially if there is risk of freezing. Take extra care to water regularly in late spring and summer to prevent drying-out.

A garden to visit



Open from March 1, Trewithen Gardens near Truro is a colourful springtime haven set around a historic house.

Look out for the magnolias, camellias and daffodil-lined drive, and take time to visit the new apple orchard, created in the rose garden using vintage Cornish varieties used for hybridising in the 1750s.