



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Gardenia jasminoides*¹

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Introduction

This glossy, dark green, evergreen shrub is well-known for its profusion of waxy, extremely fragrant, pure white blossoms in late spring or early summer (Fig. 1). The foliage also is extremely attractive at all times of the year. Working well as a specimen planting, *Gardenia* also can be used as a hedge or screen. It is best to prune only after flowering since pruning sooner removes flower buds.

General Information

Scientific name: *Gardenia jasminoides*

Pronunciation: gar-DEEN-ee-uh jass-min-OY-deez

Common name(s): Gardenia, Cape-Jasmine

Family: *Rubiaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 8 through 10 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: screen; hedge; border; mass planting; specimen; container or above-ground planter; cut flowers

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 4 to 8 feet

Spread: 4 to 8 feet

Plant habit: round

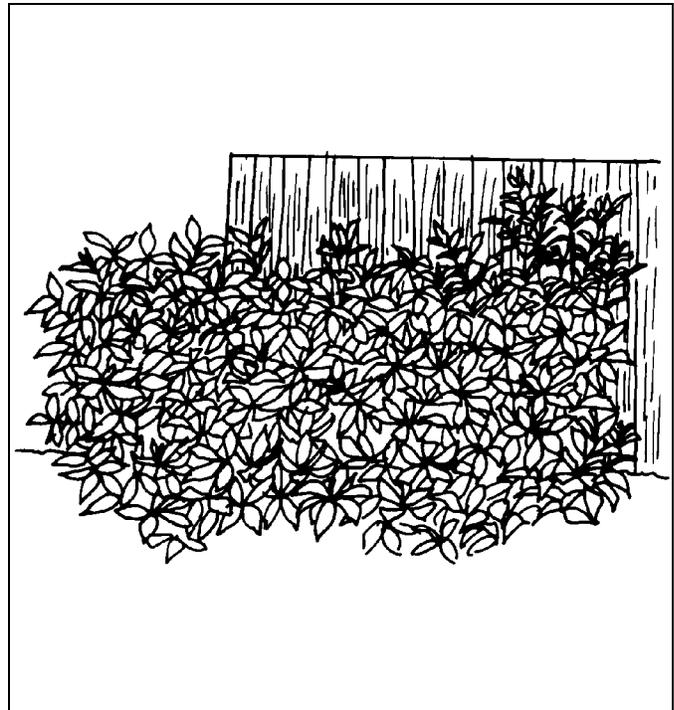


Figure 1. Gardenia.

Plant density: dense

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: whorled

Leaf type: simple

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristic: pleasant fragrance; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: orange
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun; plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; slightly alkaline; loam
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: poor
Plant spacing: 36 to 60 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

Care should be taken in the placement of Gardenia in the landscape. Since its fragrance is overpowering for some people, it probably should not be placed below bedroom windows or other such prominent locations. Plant it near a deck, walk, or patio where the fragrance can be blown around and enjoyed throughout the whole garden or landscape. Plant on 3 to 5-foot centers to form a hedge or mass planting.

Although tolerant of a wide variety of soils, Gardenia performs best in rich, moisture-retentive, acid soils where it will receive some shade during the hottest times of the year. Fewer flowers are produced if plants are kept in total shade. Gardenia needs yearly fertilization to keep the leaves dark green. An iron chelate fertilizer will help keep the foliage glossy green, especially in soil with a pH greater than 7. Otherwise, Gardenias are relatively easy to grow.

Occasionally, flower buds drop from the plant. This can be caused by dry soil, wet soil, insect infestation or root damage from digging, chemical contamination (including too much fertilizer) or soil nematode feeding.

There are many cultivars including 'Fortuniana' is a double-flowered cultivar; 'Mystery', one of the best-known cultivars, has 4 to 5-inch double white flowers; and 'Radicans' is a dwarf, ground cover-type, growing 6 to 18 inches high and spreading 2 to 3 feet.

Plants can be propagated by cuttings but without nematode-resistant rootstock these will be susceptible to nematodes. It is best to purchase plants grafted to nematode resistant rootstock (*Gardenia thunbergia*). Unfortunately these are only hardy in central and south Florida.

Its main pest problems are scale, spider mites and whitefly. Sooty mold causes an unsightly dark mold on the leaves but this is easily controlled by reducing the scale population with a horticultural oil spray. Once the scale is controlled, wash the sooty mold off the leaves with soap and water. Gardenias are very susceptible to nematodes so purchase grafted varieties on nematode-resistant rootstock.

Pests and Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.

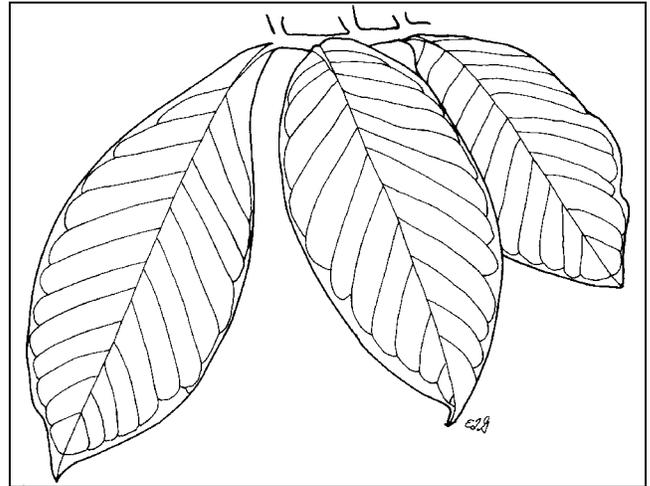


Figure 3. Foliage of Gardenia