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# How to Grow a Gardenia Shrub



Photo Credit: Kannika Chaoywaeng/Shutterstock

Botanical Name: *Gardenia jasminoides*

Plant Type: Shrubs and Bushes

Sun Exposure: Full Sun, Part Sun

FREE GUIDE!

**Soil** [Acidic](#)  
**I**  
**pH**  
**:**

**Bloom** [Spring](#) ,  
**om** [Summe](#)  
**Time** [r](#)  
**me**  
**:**

**Flower** [White](#) ,  
**we** [Yellow](#)  
**r**  
**Color:**

**Hardiness** [7](#) , [8](#) , [9](#) ,  
**rdi-** [10](#) , [11](#)  
**ne**  
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**Zones:**

**Species** [Attracts](#)  
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# Planting, Growing, and Pruning

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: February 4, 2025



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Gardenias are tender, evergreen shrubs native to the tropics. They have amazingly fragrant flowers and shiny, dark-green leaves. However, to grow well, gardenias need extra care. Here's how to plant, grow, and care for gardenias in your garden or home!

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## About Gardenias

The main species of **gardenia** (also known as “**cape jasmine**”) grown in North American gardens is native to the tropical

world, the plant has been used for centuries in herbal medicine. Its yellow fruit was traditionally used to make a dye, which could be used to color food and clothing. Gardenias are a member of the [Rubiaceae](#) (coffee) family!

Gardenias are known to be a bit of a challenge for gardeners. Frankly, the plant is picky and often needs more attention than other flowering shrubs. It prefers fairly acidic soil (a pH of 5.0 to 6.0), likes a tropical climate (but suffers in too much direct sun), and doesn't transplant well. Nevertheless, with a little extra work, a gardenia can be a wonderful addition to a suitable garden.

If you happen to live within a [hardiness zone](#) colder than Zone 7, you're not out of luck when it comes to gardenias! They can also be grown indoors in pots. Put them outside during the warm days of summer and take them indoors for the cooler seasons.

## ADVERTISEMENT

There are many varieties of gardenias to choose from, depending on what you're looking for. There are compact plants that only grow 3 to 4 feet tall, and there are giants that grow up to 8 feet in diameter. Some bloom early in the summer, and some bloom later. Some varieties have only a few huge blossoms, and others have many small blooms. There's something for everyone!

## Read Next

- [Hydrangea Varieties for Every Garden](#)
- [The Easiest Roses to Grow](#)
- [How to Grow Jasmine: The Complete Jasmine Flower Guide](#)

## PLANTING

ing site. While their scent is enjoyable in passing, it may become overbearing if the shrub is planted near a window or frequently traveled area!

Gardenias appreciate a tropical climate, but may suffer in full sun at the height of summer. In warm regions (Zones 8+), select a spot that gets morning sun and light afternoon shade but that avoids the harsh midday sun. In cooler areas, select a spot that gets full to partial sun. Additionally, choose a sheltered spot where the gardenia will be protected from cold winds in the winter.

Gardenias require a low soil pH (acidic) of between 5.0 and 6.0 to grow well. Soil should be rich and moist, but well-draining. To increase the fertility of the soil, add aged manure or compost to the site before planting.

## **When to Plant Gardenias**

- Generally, the best time to plant gardenias is in the fall. In areas that get a

weeks prior to your local fall frost date.

- In cooler regions (Zone 7), it's best to plant in the spring, as this will ensure that the gardenia has plenty of time to settle in before winter.

## How to Plant Gardenias

Gardenias do not transplant well and respond poorly to root damage. Because of this, handle the plant with care during planting!

### ADVERTISEMENT

- Dig a hole that is twice as wide and a bit deeper than the root ball.
- Put a couple of inches of fresh soil in

- Place the gardenia in the hole so that the top of the root ball is even with the soil surface.
- Fill in with soil around the root ball.
- Water deeply.
- Add 2 to 4 inches of pine straw or compost around the plant, leaving bare soil right around the stem to allow for airflow.



Photo: Skywing

## GROWING

- Gardenias grow and bloom best when temperatures during the day are between 65 and 70°F (18 to 21°C) and night temperatures are between 60 and 65°F (15 to 18°C).
- Keep watering consistent. Gardenias will suffer if they dry out or are overwatered.



- Fertilize with a slow-release fertilizer formulated for acid-loving plants such as rhododendrons and azaleas a couple of times during spring and summer. Do not fertilize in the fall, as this can cause a spurt of frost-tender growth.
- Routinely remove faded flowers to encourage more blooms.
- Bud drop can be caused by low humidity, over- or under-watering, insufficient light, and high temperatures.



*Photo: Ancha Chiangmai*

## How to Prune Gardenias

- Prune younger plants only to keep the plant nicely shaped.
- Prune back the new growth of established plants by two-thirds after flowering.

## How to Propagate Gardenias

1. In early spring, take a 4-inch stem cutting just below a leaf.
2. Dip the end of the cutting in the rooting hormone.
3. Put the cutting into a pot with a mix of perlite and potting soil.
4. Keep the soil moist.
5. Transplant the cutting into a bigger pot after it has been rooted.

## **How to Grow Gardenias Indoors**

- Gardenias grown indoors need 6 to 8 hours of bright, indirect sunlight through a window.
- The gardenia is very sensitive to temperature changes, so keep it away from air conditioning, heat vents, and drafty windows.
- The plant prefers 70°F (21°C) during the day and 60 to 65°F (15 to 18°C) at night.
- The gardenia likes high humidity. To increase humidity, place the potted gardenia on a shallow tray with gravel and water. Water will evaporate and increase the relative humidity around

ifier close to the plant or mist the leaves often with water.

## Types

### Smaller Gardenias with Repeat Blooming

- **‘Chuck Hayes’** is a cold, hardy cultivar that grows to 4 feet high. It has semi-double, 2 to 3-inch flowers during summer and re-blooms in the fall.
- **‘Kleim’s Hardy’** is hardy to 10°F and grows 3 feet tall and wide. The single flowers bloom in early summer and have a second bloom in the fall.
- **‘Variegata’** has interesting variegated foliage and beautiful double flowers on a small, 3 to 4 foot tall and wide plant.

### Larger Gardenias with Double-flowers

- **‘August Beauty’** grows 4 to 6 feet high and 3 to 4 feet wide. It blooms from mid-spring to fall with double 3-inch flowers.
- **‘Mystery’** has large 4- to 5-inch double white flowers that fade to cream yel-

- **‘Veitchii’** is one of the oldest cultivars and grows to 4 to 6 feet tall and 3 to 4 feet wide. It has double flowers with a long bloom period.

## HARVESTING

### Gardenias as Cut Flowers in a Vase

- Don't touch the blossoms with your bare hands, as they may bruise and wilt.
- To help absorb water, cut the woody stems at a 45-degree angle.
- Remove the bottom leaves so that no leaves will be below the water in the vase.
- Add a tablespoon of sugar and a teaspoon of bleach to the water in a medium vase.
- Place gardenia blossoms in a bowl or a cup of water as floating blooms.

## GARDENING PRODUCTS



## PESTS/DISEASES

### Insect Pests

- Aphids
- Mealybugs/scale insects
- Spider mites
- Whiteflies

### Diseases

- Powdery mildew
- Root rot
- Stem canker
- Nematodes

- In the [language of flowers](#), the gardenia symbolizes “secret love.”
- Gardenias were named after the Scottish-born American naturalist [Alexander Garden](#) (1730–1791).

## SHRUBS AND TREES

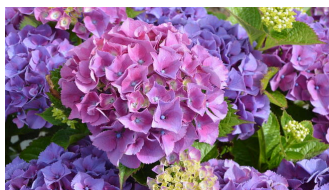
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

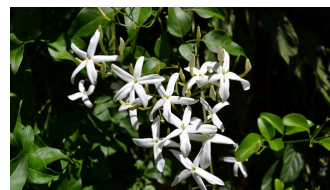
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# COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

**Binny Botanics (not verified)** 8 months ago  
air-purifying.

REPLY

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**Sandra (not verified)** 1 year 8 months ago  
well i just planted one outdoors and I live in south Dakota did not realize maybe should be house plant but its a bush like. I have put in the winters around my vulnerable plants gunny sacks around bottom any way i could cover it to keep protected we are zone three.

REPLY

**The Editors** 1 year 8 months ago  
Since gardenia is native to tropical areas it only thrives outdoors in

— — — — —



denias as a house plant. But they also do not transplant well, so you will want to cover it well for the winter, but there is no guarantee it will survive the elements in your zone.

**REPLY**

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**Lawrence Schneider (not verified)** 1 year 12 months ago

I live in Atlanta, GA and planted 4 southern living fool proof gardenias last fall. They looked beautiful. It is now the beginning of May and it looks like they are dead with only one leave budding on one of the plants. Do I give it more time or are the plants dead. At this point they do not look good.

**REPLY**

**Pamela Liedke (not verified)** 1 year ago

I bought my home in 1974 with a mature gardenia next to the house facing east.

Everyone was welcome to pick the flowers..

I only gave it pickle juice (sweet and acidic) and picked off the dead blooms when it finished blooming .

We lived on the bay in Redington Beach, FL and needless to say it received a good supply of saltwater soaking.

I sold my home in February of 2022.

The last hurricane did it in.

I think it missed my family. We were very sad to hear this.

I guess what I am attempting to tell you is that this gardenia was very low maintenance and so beautiful.

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 1 year 11 months ago

Perhaps wait several more weeks to see if things improve. Gardenias are evergreen, though, and should have kept their leaves over the winter season, so it is likely that the cause is not

.....

likely plays a part. Look for signs of disease or insects, and be sure that the plants are in their ideal spot, as far as lighting, non-soggy but moist soil, etc.

Another possibility is if your area had experienced a cold snap, such as around December 24 in 2022. If the plants did not have enough cold protection, it may have caused dieback to branches, flower buds, and possibly roots due to cold damage. Even though Atlanta experienced nighttime temperatures in the 10s and 20s around December 24, and Foolproof gardenia is hardy to Zone 7a (0 to 5F), some plants (especially when they are just being established in their new home) might have been vulnerable. In certain cases, plants can recover from cold damage, although several branches, and likely all flower buds for the next year's blooming season, may be lost. Again, we'd suggest giving them a little more time, such as midsummer or so to see if any leaves

roots have not been damaged, in certain cases, the plants can come back.

The fact that one of the plants is starting to leaf out suggests that at least that one has a chance for recovery.

Hope this helps!

**REPLY**

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**Brenda Lutz (not verified)** 2 years ago

Planted 2 gardenia plants last year. They did well planted in our yard. Now in the early spring they don't seem to be coming back. Live in zone 7. What could be the problem?

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 2 years ago

Hi Brenda, Sorry to hear that your gardenia plants don't seem to be coming back this spring. As a plant that is native to tropical and subtrop-

Most gardenias are hardy in zones 8 to 11, but some varieties, like Klein's Hardy gardenia and Summer Snow, are hardy in zone 7. If you planted a more tender variety, it could be that the winter temperatures were too low for them to survive. In zone 7, it is best to plant in the spring to ensure they have plenty of time to settle in before winter. In the future, you could also plant gardenias in pots so they can be outside during the summer months and then brought indoors for winter.

**REPLY**

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**nancy (not verified)** 2 years 11 months ago  
just bought a gardenia for my 88 y/o mom who lives in central florida. i planted in a large container. just a few days in, the leaves are turning yellow. please help me save this plant.

**REPLY**

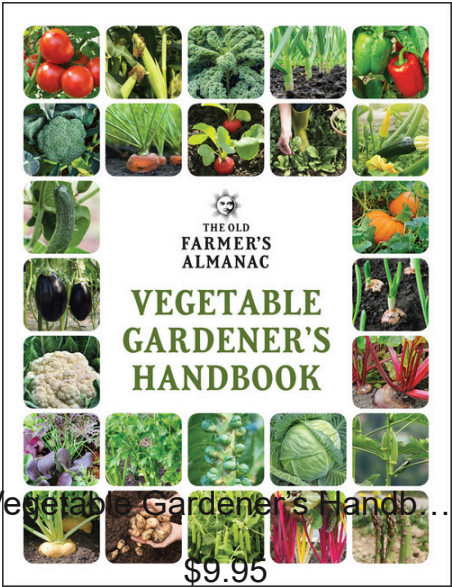
**Nancy Lynn Kimberlin (not verified)** 2 years 5 months ago

Perhaps you have watered it too much. Let it dry out between watering.

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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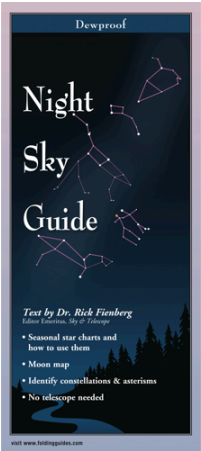
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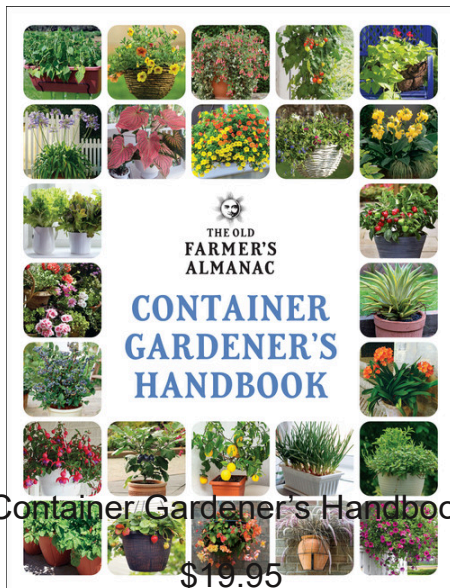
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