

Best known for its fragrant white flowers during spring and summer months, the Gardenia is a popular cold-tolerant shrub used in landscapes throughout Brevard County. This native of South Africa grows two feet to ten feet, depending on variety.

Only grafted gardenias should be planted in Brevard County. Ungrafted gardenias quickly succumb to nematode problems in our sandy soil and should only be grown in containers.

The main difference between cultivars is the shape of the leaves. All grafted gardenias have similar white flowers with the same fragrance.

The 'Miami Supreme' can be used in the landscape as a large specimen shrub or small tree. The semi-dwarf variety 'Veitchii' is a popular cultivar that grows to four feet in height. Gardenia radicans is a low-growing dwarf species which reaches only about two feet in height.

### Planting

Gardenias grow well in sun or partial shade and prefer rich organic, well-drained soil with low pH (acidic). They have low salt tolerance and should be used inland, away from damaging salt spray in coastal areas.

Plants should be placed in the ground at the same soil level in the pot. Mix **Rockledge Gardens Planting Mix** or **sphagnum peat moss 50/50** with your soil around each root ball. Mix **Espoma Biotone Starter** into the soil for healthy root growth. Mulch should be applied two to three inches thick over the entire root area, keeping six inches away from the base of the plant.

Newly planted shrubs should be watered every day for a week or two, then every other day for two weeks. Then water twice weekly.

### Fertilizing

Fertilize every 3 months with **Espoma Holly-Tone**.

### Pruning

Gardenias should be pruned to shape only once each year after they have finished their heavy blooming in spring.

### Plant Problems

#### **Bud Drop**

One of the most common problems with gardenias. Flower buds form and suddenly drop and is caused by many overwatering, under-watering, sudden changes in temperature, lack of light, insect damage (thrips) or over-fertilizing.

#### **Whitefly, mealy bugs, thrips and scale**

Troublesome insects that often attack gardenias; these are all sucking-type insects that remove plant juices through the leaves, weakening the plant. These insects are the cause for black sooty mold that forms on the leaf surface.

#### **Sooty Mold**

A black mold that grows on secretion left behind by insects and scale. Sooty mold is harmless to the plant, but usually the insects are harmful. Use **All Season's Oil** spray. This should kill the insects and help break up the sooty mold.

#### **Nematodes**

Microscopic worm-like pests that attack the root system, weakening and eventually causing premature death of the plant. This is only a problem on non-grafted varieties.

