



*Evergreen
structure and
splashes of
colour*

Ericaceous *made easy*

Plants that love acidic soil



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The word *Ericaceous* commonly refers to plants that enjoy growing in acidic soils.

Many of these plants provide useful evergreen structure and splashes of colour in the garden, especially in shaded areas.

Acidic soils naturally happen in the landscape, especially in wooded areas or on sandy soils that leach out nutrients when it rains. Many plants have learnt to adapt to these conditions so that they can thrive in a lower pH soil.

Testing soil

It's always worthwhile testing the pH of your soil to see what plants will thrive in it. Kits are readily available and it's best to sample different areas of your garden. The pH scale runs from 0 to 14, with 7 being neutral. Readings below 7 will be acidic and readings above 7 will be alkaline or chalky. The ideal pH for growing ericaceous plants is around 5 to 5.5



Cultivation Notes

Composts -

Ericaceous compost is specifically formulated for acid-loving plants and is branded with pink to help with identification.

This compost is perfect for adding to the bottom of a planting hole or for growing acid-loving plants in pots and tubs, as you can easily maintain the conditions needed for these plants to thrive. Pot grown plants can then be grown in the perfect position, which for most cases, is in light shade.

Top tip: For those growing Japanese Acers, use a 50:50 mix of ericaceous and a soil-based compost for your pots or in the planting hole.



Blueberries

Are easy and fun to grow in tubs of ericaceous compost!



Feeds – Similar to the composts, formulated feeds for acid-loving plants have pink branding to help with identification. Available in slow release and liquid forms, they can be applied during the spring and summer when most of the ericaceous plants are in flower.



Watering – Use collected rainwater for watering as tap water, especially in hard water areas, contains too much calcium and will affect growth.

However, in times of drought, you can use tap water sparingly for a month or two over the summer. It can also help to add some drops of white vinegar to tap water to help acidify it.

Leucothoe



Camelia



Plants for Acid Soil

When people think of acid soil, they almost always think of Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Hydrangeas. Our handy list helps show just how big the group is, helping you choose the perfect plants for your garden.



Hydrangea

Trees and Shrubs

sp. = *species*

Acacia *sp.* (wattle)

Acer *sp.*

Amelanchier *sp.*

Andromeda polifolia

Arbutus *sp.* (strawberry tree)

Berberis *sp.* (barberry)

Betula pendula (silver birch)

Callistemon *sp.* (bottle brush)

Calluna vulgaris (heather)

Camellia japonica

Cercidiphyllum japonicum

Cornus *sp.* (dogwood)

Corylopsis *sp.*

Crataegus monogyna
(hawthorn)

Crinodendron hookerianum

Cytisus *sp.* (broom)

Daphne *sp.*

Erica *sp.* (heath)

Eucalyptus *sp.* (gum)

Eucryphia *sp.*

Fothergilla *sp.*

Gaultheria *sp.*

Genista *sp.* (broom)

Grevillea *sp.*

Hamamelis *sp.* (witch hazel)

Hibiscus syriacus

Hydrangea *sp.*

Ilex aquifolium (holly)

Indigofera *sp.*

Kalmia *sp.*

Leptospermum *sp.* (tea tree)

Leucothoe *sp.*

Liquidambar *sp.*

Lithodora *sp.*

Lophomyrtus *sp.*

Magnolia *sp.*

Nyssa *sp.*

Pachysandra terminalis

Pieris *sp.*

Populus *sp.* (poplar)

Prostanthera cuneata
(mint bush)

Quercus *sp.* (oak)

Raphiolepis *sp.*

Rhododendron *sp.*

Rhodothamnus chamaecistus

Richea scoparia

Skimmia japonica

Sorbus *sp.*

Tamarix *sp.* (tamarisk)

Ulex *sp.* (gorse)

Vaccinium *sp.* (blueberries)



Conifers

Abies sp. (silver fir)
Chamaecyparis sp. (cypress)
Cryptomeria japonica (Japanese cedar)
Cupressus arizonica (Arizona cypress)
Juniperus sp. (juniper)
Larix sp. (larch)
Picea sp. (spruce)
Pinus sp. (pine)
Sciadopitys verticillata (umbrella pine)
Taxodium distichum (swamp cypress)
Tsuga sp. (hemlock)

Ferns, Grasses and Bamboo

Adiantum pedatum (maidenhair fern)
Blechnum sp. (hard fern)
Dryopteris sp. (buckler fern)
Fargesia murielae (umbrella bamboo)
Luzula sp. (woodrush)
Matteuccia struthiopteris (ostrich fern)
Molinia caerulea (purple moor grass)
Osmunda regalis (royal fern)
Phyllostachys sp. (bamboo)
Pseudosasa japonica (bamboo)

Climbers

Berberidopsis corallina (coral plant)
Billardiera longiflora
Hydrangea petiolaris
Sollya heterophylla (bluebell creeper)

Herbaceous Perennials and Alpines

Asarum europaeum (wild ginger)
Begonia sp.
Erythronium sp. (dog's tooth violet)
Gentiana sp. (gentian)
Gunnera manicata
Iris sp.
Lewisia sp.
Lilium sp.
Liriope sp. (lily turf)
Lupinus sp.
Maianthemum racemosum
Meconopsis sp. (blue poppy)
Mertensia sp.
Narcissus sp. (daffodil)
Phlox sp.
Primula sp.
Rhodohypoxis baurii
Thalictrum sp. (meadow rue)
Tricyrtis sp. (toad lily)
Viola sp. (violet)

Rhododendrons and Azaleas made easy

Out of all the spring flowering shrubs, it is the Rhododendrons and Azaleas that steal the show. With their exotic flowers and wonderful scent, they have become a staple plant in any traditional English garden. Both have easy to understand sub-groups, making it simple to choose the right type for your garden.

Rhododendrons can be split into three main groups: Dwarfing, Yakushimanum (aka Yaks) and Hardy Hybrids:

- **Dwarfing** – These are tough alpine varieties that mainly flower through April. Being alpine plants, they prefer moist, cooler conditions, so hot sunny positions are best avoided. These plants keep their small compact habit and look great in a rockery.
- **Yakushimanum** – These are the compact varieties suitable for pots and small borders. Typically flowering in May, these tough plants can handle slightly higher pH soils and grow up to 75-100cm (2.5-3ft) in 10 years.
- **Hardy Hybrids** – These plants are ideal for hedging, screening, or planting in borders. Flowering anytime from January to July, these larger varieties usually grow to 125-200cm (4-6ft) in 10 years.



Azalea are also split into two groups: the evergreens and the deciduous types:

- **Evergreen Azaleas**, sometimes known as Japanese Azaleas, are perfect for any size of garden, from a patio tub to large estate. They flower from April to May and generally grow to just under a metre (3ft) in 10 years, although some can get much larger.
- **Deciduous Azaleas** lose their leaves over the winter and flower before they come into leaf the following spring. Their flowers are striking oranges and yellows and usually highly scented. They perform best in partial shade or in woodland edge situations. Once established, these are tough and fast-growing plants that grow 125-150cm (4-5ft) in 10 years.



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