

From Granny's Garden

Granny (Cam MacKenzie)

Spring seems to be coming on with a vengeance and early spring blooming shrubs are getting ready to put on their show. A neighbour's Camellia has been out for ages – perhaps *C. sasanqua* which is a fall blooming Camellia that may bloom throughout the winter. My spring-blooming Camellia is healthy and full of buds but will not bloom for another six weeks. Camellias can get bushy and tall. My beautiful red one was blocking views from a window so after flowering last year, I gave it a severe pruning. It looked terrible for a while but soon grew new leaves.



Camellias like acidic soil so can be top dressed with a peat moss mixture or bark mulch along with some fertilizer in the spring. Rhodos and Camellias have a shallow root system so when adding mulch do not layer it too thickly. For this reason, they should be watered in the dry season. Camellias can take full sun or part shade.

My Forsythia (right) is starting to flower along the leafless branches. That's always a sure sign of spring with lots of gardening days ahead. After the flowers start to fade and the leaves come out, remember to trim the shrub so it doesn't get too leggy. I usually take mine down two feet or more. Forsythias always like full sun but seem to tolerate poorish soil.



The Magnolias have wintered well and are in full bud too. *Magnolia stellata* (below) will be one of the first to bloom with its fragrant many-petaled white



flowers. These appear in early March. This year, because of our early spring, there will be a few out already. They are well-liked because they do not grow so big and will be a compact three to four feet. There is always a large selection to choose from in the nurseries. Most have creamy white fragrant flowers with tints of pink on the outside and the inside of the flower cup. *M. soulangiana* is a large shrub that can grow to ten feet. The flowers are large too, cup shaped and purple tinged at the base. I also have a *M. grandiflora* which has dark green, evergreen leaves with a

brownish velvet on the underside. It can grow to ten feet or more. The large white flowers will come out later in the summer. Although most Magnolias like acidic soil, some prefer alkaline conditions but all enjoy a top dressing of well-rotted compost, leaves or manure. They also like full sun and a fairly sheltered area.

Osmanthus (right) is another early-blooming evergreen with clusters of tubular white flowers that are very fragrant. The shrub will stay rounded and neat to four feet if lightly pruned after flowering. It is a useful shrub in a small garden as flowers can be planted around without danger of being smothered.

