

Daphne - Care Guide

Introduction

Daphnes have a reputation for being slow growing, difficult and temperamental to grow and expensive. While their reputation is well deserved on all three counts that is not to say that they cannot be grown perfectly easily in gardens throughout the UK providing a few basic guidelines about their requirements as evergreen or semi evergreen plants are taken into account when planting.

Preferred Location

Daphnes prefer to be grown in partial shade or full sun. *Daphne laureola* will however tolerate full shade. *D. bholua* varieties, *D. pontica* and *D. odora* varieties may well do best in partial shade particularly where their roots are shaded from full sun. Daphnes thrive in well drained moisture retentive soils and detest waterlogged positions as well as areas of the garden which are very dry. Both may well result in quick fatalities as the roots will either rot in the wet or die back in drought conditions. Where your garden is prone to drying out, and the soil is thin, watering is essential in dry periods.



Daphne gemmata



Daphne odora



Daphne pontica



Daphne pontica



Daphne burkwoodii
'Astrid'



Daphne albowiana



Daphne 'Rebecca'



Daphne 'Rebecca'

All daphnes have exquisite scent. This is perhaps their greatest attraction and it is therefore best to plant them near a path or near the house where the scent of the flowers can be appreciated in full.

Soil Conditions And Fertiliser

A neutral soil which is neither acidic nor alkaline will suit all types of daphne.

Daphne mezereum is the most chalk tolerant. *D. pontica* and *D. tangutica*, however, need completely lime free conditions. If you intend to grow these then an upraised bed of suitable topsoil would be required.

Humus rich soils are key for all daphnes so, if your soil is sandy or thin, you must add a good deal of organic matter (well rotted dung, leaf mould peat or compost) to the soil before planting.

Daphne laureola and *D. mezereum* will tolerate heavier more claylike soils than other varieties but, again, plenty of organic matter in the soil is the key.

Since daphne roots need to be kept moist it is a good idea to mulch around the plants to ensure more moisture is retained in the soil in dry conditions.

The best way to kill your daphnes is to add granular or other fertiliser into the planting pit or to the top of the soil afterwards.

A small sprinkling of blood, fish and bone in the planting pit or thereafter annually is more than enough to feed your plants. *D. bholua* varieties especially will have had no slow release fertiliser in their compost when you purchase them from us.



Daphne mezereum

Although all daphne are slow growing (the more dwarf species suitable for rockeries especially so) there is absolutely no need to prune them. Pruning will of course remove the new growths which carry next year's flowers. Do not do it unless there is some physical damage to the plant.

D. bholua varieties and *D. odora* varieties have a lifespan of around 20 years. Smaller growing rockery species may well live longer. When they get to the end of their natural lives daphnes tend to flower prolifically, overseed and die quickly. Sometimes the twigs and stems in *D. bholua* become flattened and subulate just before they turn up their toes.



Most daphne species are perfectly hardy in UK conditions and can readily tolerate temperatures of minus 10°C. *D. bholua* varieties are more tender and can probably only tolerate minus 5°C for brief periods. However, in cold winters some forms of *D. bholua* can and do lose some or all of their leaves with no long term ill effect.

In colder parts of the country, or where your soil is unsuited to growing daphnes, it may therefore be sensible to grow *D. bholua* varieties in deep pots and bring them inside into the conservatory or greenhouse for the winter. Certainly you will appreciate their scent more there when they flower in January to March.

Propagation

The reason that all daphnes tend to be expensive is that they are difficult to propagate from cuttings and are normally grafted; usually onto a *D. tangutica* rootstock.

Some species, in particular *D. bholua*, can be grown from cuttings in mid to late summer. Semi-ripe new growth should be used for this together with a 'heel' where the new growth joined the older stem.

Several daphne species produce viable seed; *D. mezereum* in particular with us at Burncoose. Remove the fleshy exterior of the seeds and pot in a potting compost with grit. Germination will occur best in a shady spot or a cold frame but usually only in the second year.

Where their growth habit makes it possible daphnes can be propagated by layering but this is a lengthy process which may take up to three years. *D. cneorum* is perhaps the easiest species to layer.

Pests And Diseases

Daphnes do not suffer from any real pest problems.

The main disease problem is wilting and browning of the leaves or a more general yellowing of the leaves. *D. odora* varieties are particularly prone to this.

When a daphne is suffering like this the cause is likely to be either insufficient nutrients or, perhaps, the incorrect use of granular fertiliser which can have a similar effect. The other causes, as indicated above, may be waterlogging of the ground or, conversely, drought.



Sick Daphne



Sick Daphne



Sick Daphne



Sick Daphne

Our Best Selection And Most Easy To Grow



D. bholua 'Jacqueline Postil'
evergreen with extremely fragrant flowers dark pink outside and white within



D. x trans. 'Eternal Fragrance'
evergreen and slow growing reaching a height of 2-3ft with a similar spread. The flowers are pink in bud opening white in April to October.



D. x trans. 'Pink Fragrance'
Pink form with pink flowers.



D. odora 'Aureomarginata'
the leaves of this evergreen have wavy yellow margins. The flowers are fragrant and reddish-purple in tight clusters in early spring. Grows to 3-5ft eventually.



D. x burkwoodii 'Somerset'
a semi-evergreen with clusters of scented purplish-pink flowers. Grows to about 1-3ft in height.

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/4gjRprDNV KY>

Daphne Odora 'Perfume Princess' - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here https://www.youtube.com/zbTdW_hG6dw

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