

## Dicentra - Growing Guide

### Caring For Dicentra – Bleeding Heart

These are the most beautiful spring flowering plants with heart shaped flowers. Some forms very occasionally flower with us by Valentine's Day following a very mild winter.

Dicentra are perennials from China and North America and make excellent border plants. The smaller growing forms are useful in rockeries. *D. spectabilis* can be allowed to naturalise in a woodland setting in partial shade where, although the foliage can aggravate skin allergies, it is, unfortunately, rather attractive to rabbits and deer.

*D. formosa* – wild bleeding heart – is a wide spreading rhizomatous perennial which has abundant lobed basal leaves 10-15in tall. Branching racemes of deep rose-pink flower buds open to pink and stand 4-6in over and above the leaves. This is a very free flowering hardy plant from North America which is popular in UK gardens and flowers in late spring on into early summer.

*D. spectabilis* grows rather larger and taller as a clump forming perennial. It has thick fleshy roots and pale green leaves 6-15in or so long when fully developed. Arching fleshy stems produce racemes of flowers which have rose pink outer petals and white inner ones in late spring or early summer which can be up to 3-4ft from ground level. It comes from China and there is an attractive pure white form.

In recent years we have added *D. spectabilis* 'Valentine' to the list of plants offered. This is an even taller growing and clump making form with scarlet-red flowers on arching stems.

Dicentra grows best in moist and fertile conditions. When dormant they benefit from deep mulching with organic material. They will tolerate neutral or slightly alkaline soils.

As with so many perennials with fleshy or rhizomatous roots the easiest way to propagate these plants is to gently divide them when dormant or to take root cuttings over winter and start them off in a loose sandy compost in the greenhouse with bottom heat.



*D. formosa*



*D. formosa*



*D. formosa*



*D. spectabilis*



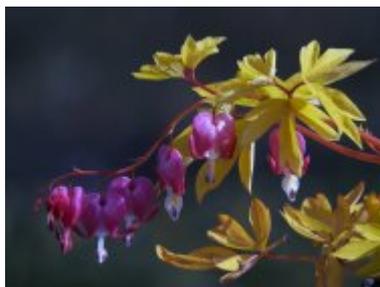
*D. spectabilis*



*D. spectabilis* 'Alba'



*D. spectabilis* 'Goldheart'



*D. spectabilis* 'Goldheart'



*D. spectabilis* 'Valentine'



*D. spectabilis* 'Valentine'



*D. spectabilis* 'Valentine'



*D. spectabilis* 'Valentine'

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