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Gardenia Care

The ideal environment for gardenias includes bright sunlight for at least half the day, high humidity, acidic soil/fertilizer, and cool (55 to 65 degrees F) night temperatures.

To Encourage Blooms: Mix at 1/3 or less strength Miracid fertilizer in a mister bottle and mist your leaves daily in periods of no rain. Do this in early morning or evening when the plant is not in direct sunlight, as the fertilizer can burn the leaves if applied wet in the sun.

Water: Gardenias must be thoroughly soaked from top to bottom of soil ball with each watering, but the water must be allowed to drain away without collecting against the bottom of the pot. Then, the soil surface should dry to the touch between waterings. In the heat of summer, daily waterings or at least watering over the foliage is required. In fall and spring, watering should be about every 2 to 4 days depending on rain. Indoors, watering should be about every 5 to 7 days, but the foliage should be misted daily.

Humidity: Maintain high humidity by 1) watering over the foliage of the gardenia with a mister bottle or the watering hose daily during periods of no rain or when indoors, 2) allowing water to collect in a saucer of rocks under the pot but do not allow water to touch roots/pot, or 3) run a humidifier indoors in the winter.

Sunlight vs. Temperature: Place where your gardenia where it will get at least 4 to 6 hours of direct sun each day (even more in the winter), but where it will get a break from the heat, as well. An ideal location for summer would be AM sun or late PM sun.

Soil: An acidic soil mixture with no soil moist is an absolute necessity. Peat moss with a blend of perlite and vermiculite is the best. Note: most available potting soils are neutral, so shop carefully for an acidic blend. Pemberton's keeps a homemade mixture available that we can package in any size you need.

Fertilizer: Use acidic fertilizers advertised more commonly for azaleas than for gardenias. You can use the slow release types and apply every 3 to 4 months or the liquid dissolving types like Miracid and apply every 1 or 2 weeks (summer) or every month (winter).

Repotting: Gardenias can be repotted or root-pruned and placed back in the same pot. This should happen only when the gardenia becomes completely rootbound, difficult to keep watered in summertime, or becomes top-heavy and falls over easily.