

# Planting Caladium Tubers

## Project List:



- Espoma Bulb-Tone or NHG Bulb Food** — Caladiums appreciate a good organic fertilizer mixed into the prepared soil at the time of planting.
- Acidified Compost or Azalea Planting Mix**—both of these products lower the pH of the soil for acid-loving plants. In un-amended clay soil, the mix is ideal. For amended soils, simply adding the acidified compost is usually enough.
- Mulch**—Retains moisture and helps regulate soil temperature. Mulch only lightly around caladiums; be cautious to not crowd the plants with mulch as this can cause rot.
- Epsom Salt**— Caladiums appreciate the boost of magnesium and will do well with Epsom salt mixed into the soil at the time of planting (about 1 tablespoon per tuber, mixed well into surrounding soil).
- Expanded Shale**—a porous, lightweight gravel that increases drainage and aeration and helps to break up native clay soils, which is especially important for caladiums.

### Glossary of some common Caladium terms:

- **Tuber:** A fleshy, underground bulb-like structure from which leaves and roots grow
- **Eye:** The dominant leaf bud, surrounded by smaller, or axillary leaf bud.
- **De-Eye:** Many Caladium growers recommend removing the dominant bud to encourage fuller, thicker growth (see reverse).
- **Fancy Leaf:** Varieties that have larger, broader leaves and are best suited for shade.
- **Strap Leaf:** Varieties that have smaller, more pointed leaves and are more tolerant of direct sun.
- **Size or Grade:** The sorted size of the tuber, which typically determines how it is sold and how many eyes or leaf buds it has.

# How to Plant Caladium Bulbs (Tubers)



Caladiums are tropical foliage plants available in a variety of colors. They brighten up shady gardens and are ideal for container plantings, too. ‘Fancy Leaf’ varieties typically make a larger, broader leaf, and these are best suited for shade. ‘Strap Leaf’ varieties typically have a narrower, more pointed leaf and are considered to be more tolerant of sun, although we don’t recommend full sun sites—morning sun and afternoon shade is ideal.

## Caladium tubers are sorted and sold by grade, or size:

- No. 1: 1 ½" to 2 ½" (4.0 – 6.5 cm)
- Jumbo: 2 ½" to 3 ½" (6.5 – 9.0 cm)
- Mammoth: 3 ½" to 4 ½" (9.0 – 11.5 cm)



While our collection of Caladium tubers typically arrives by late March, **we recommend waiting until nearer to Mother’s Day (May) to plant**, after soils have warmed sufficiently.

**PREP:** Caladiums thrive in loose, well-amended soils that are rich in organic matter. It’s imperative that it drains well (no standing water). They thrive in slightly acidic soil, so amending with Acidified Cotton Burr Compost or Azalea Planting Mix is a good idea, especially for heavier clay soils.

Work an organic fertilizer such as Espoma Bulb-Tone or Bone Meal into the soil to a depth of about 4" before planting. Caladiums also like Epsom salt, so you can water them in with Epsom salt dissolved in water, or sprinkle a bit over the soil at the time of planting.

**DE-EYE (Optional):** To de-eye, cut out the terminal/dominant buds or sprout(s) (eyes) using a small knife. Staying within the diameter of the eye, remove the entire eye by cutting about 1/8" - 1/4" deep into the bulb. Remember, it is critical to stay within the diameter of the eye to eliminate damage to the small eyes (axillary or lateral buds) that surround the perimeter of the main eye. You may want to dust the tuber with dusting sulfur during the curing process to avoid fungal infection before planting.

**PLANT:** Tubers are planted 1 1/2" -2 1/2" deep in prepared soil. Water them in lightly after planting, and if desired, topdress with mulch. Leaves will begin to sprout in 10-14 days (depending on temperature). Caladiums will last longest when they receive ample moisture, are protected from excessive sun, and when any blooms that try to appear are quickly removed.