

"I have come across many daphnes and can honestly say I have not met one I do not like."

Michael A Dirr, author of Manual of Woody Landscape Plants

The genus *Daphne* consists of about 50 small evergreen, semi-evergreen and deciduous flowering woody plants. They are usually chosen and planted for their lovely fragrant early spring flowers. Daphnes are small to mid-sized shrubs prized for their clusters of four-petaled flowers. Winter Daphne and the summer-blooming Rock Daphne are probably the best-known members of the family, but Sky Nursery offers a large number of other varieties to entice you. Bloom time, bloom color, and plant habit vary widely among varieties; see list below for details.

Most daphnes like full or part sun. They prefer rich soil with excellent aeration and drainage. If possible, work in at least 3 inches of Cedar Grove Compost, Fertil-Mulch®, or other organic matter before planting. If your soil is particularly heavy, you may wish to add some coarse sand to your planting area to improve the drainage. Into the bottom of your planting hole mix some organic rose and flower fertilizer. Be sure to plant your daphne so the top of the rootball is at the top of the soil level.

Daphnes do not like to be kept soggy or to be mulched too heavily. A light layer of mulch is good, but do not mulch deeper than an inch. Do not allow the mulch to touch the daphne's trunk! Planting or mulching too deeply can kill your daphne or retard its flowering, as can poor drainage (the most common problem seen in daphne autopsies).

Regular feeding is helpful. It is best to use an organic rose and flower fertilizer in the spring and again in the fall. Follow the package instructions for your size plant. If your soil is acidic, scatter a handful of dolomite lime around each plant in the fall. Most daphnes do not like to be pruned. Limit pruning to clipping broken and crossing branches. Older shrubs do not respond to pruning for rejuvenation.

A number of daphnes have been chosen as **Great Plant Picks** by the Elisabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden for their outstanding performance in maritime Northwest gardens.

SPECIES DAPHNES

***Daphne bholua*. Himalayan Daphne.** Evergreen. Narrow green foliage. Pale pink flowers in late winter/early spring. Very fragrant. Large shrub to 8'. Hardy to 10°F.

***Daphne cneorum*. Rock Daphne.** Evergreen. Dark green narrow foliage. Rosy pink flowers in late spring. Extremely fragrant. Great rock garden plant—matting to trailing habit, 1' tall X 3' wide. Likes full sun. Hardy to -20°F. **'Ruby Glow'** has particularly vivid rose pink flowers.

***Daphne genkwa*. Chinese Daphne.** Deciduous. Long silky green leaves. Long wands of unscented lilac flowers in late spring before the plant leafs out. Likes summer sun and heat. Compact shrub to 3' high and wide. Hardy to -10 °F.

***Daphne mezereum*. February Daphne.** Deciduous. Thin, rounded foliage. Reddish purple flowers in early spring before leaves appear. Intensely fragrant. Stiff, rather gawky plant to 4' tall X 3' wide. Hardy to -20°F.

***Daphne odora*. Winter Daphne.** Evergreen. Deep glossy green foliage. Deep pink flowers with creamy pink throats in late winter. Extremely fragrant. Neat, handsome shrub to 4-6' tall and wide. Likes morning sun or partial shade—does not like hot afternoon sun. Hardy to 10°F. The classic **'Aureo-marginata'**, with yellow-edged leaves, is a **Great Plant Pick**. Other varieties include: **'Mae-jima'**, with striking creamy leaf margins; **'Moonlight Parfait'**, a new variety with creamy variegation and pale flowers; **'Rebecca'**, whose yellow margins are broader and more regular than those of 'Aureomarginata'; and **'Zuiko Nishiki'**, a robust variety with glossy dark foliage and a more upright and rounded habit than the straight species.

HYBRID DAPHNES

'Carol Mackie'. Semi-evergreen. Light green leaves edged with cream. Light pink flowers in mid spring. Fragrant. Compact shrub to 3'. Hardy to -20 °F. **Great Plant Pick**.

'Eternal Fragrance'. Evergreen. Glossy deep green foliage. Pale pink to white flowers in early summer, reblooming through fall. Extremely fragrant. 2-3' tall and wide. Hardy to -10 °F. **Great Plant Pick**.

'Jim's Pride'. Semi-evergreen. Rich green large leaves. White flowers in late spring with flushes through the summer. Extremely fragrant. Compact shrub to 4'. Hardy to -10 °F. **Great Plant Pick**.

'Lawrence Crocker'. Evergreen. Glossy dark green foliage. Lavender flowers from spring to fall. Very fragrant. Dense compact shrub to 12" tall and wide. Hardy to 0°F. **Great Plant Pick**.

'Summer Ice'. Evergreen. Foliage is green edged with white. Pale pink to white flowers in early summer, reblooming through fall. Extremely fragrant. 2-3' tall; 18-24" wide. Hardy to -10 °F. **Great Plant Pick**.

'Wilhelm Schacht'. Evergreen. Deep green, thick foliage. Deep pink-purple flowers in late spring. Very fragrant. Dense shrub to 12" tall and wide. Hardy to 0°F.