Tea Camellia Care
Tea camellias prefer morning to midday sun. To prevent leaf scorch, we recommend avoiding hot afternoon sun. Good drainage is required - mix in compost in the entire planting bed and plant on a slight mound, mulching with additional compost around the plant. Water well and then let dry slightly between soaks. Fertilize with a rhododendron/azalea fertilizer regularly during the growing season as tea camellias prefer slightly acidic soil. Tea camellias can also be grown in containers; start with one twice the size of the rootball, then increase the pot size every few years after that.

The Three Stages of Plant Productivity
1. Branch Formation Period - first three years after planting. Prune in December or January to encourage vigorous branching. Do not harvest during this time.

2. Plucking Period - once plants are established, new leaves and shoots will emerge every 7-14 days starting in early spring. Pluck often to encourage continual production. A 3’ x 3’ properly branched shrub will produce 70-80 leaves per year, the equivalent of approximately 1-2 cups dried leaves.

3. Rejuvenation - after many years of growth and harvest you may need to give your shrub a hard pruning to encourage re-shaping and re-branching. Prune when dormant (December or January), taking the plant back by no more than one-third to one-half.

Harvesting and Processing the Tea
Green tea is taken from the tip of the branch of Camellia sinensis plants - the top leaf and a bud that is partially unfurled. Pluck tender, young growth with 2-3 leaves and shoots. Dry them in the shade up to a few hours.

Steam the leaves after this rest period in a vegetable steamer for less than one minute or roast in a cast iron skillet for a few minutes.

Dry the leaves in an oven at 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

Storing the Tea
To preserve its freshness as long as possible, tea leaves should be stored in an opaque airtight container in a cool, dry place. Since tea absorbs other odors very easily, it is important to store it away from any strong-smelling foods. It is not recommended that you refrigerate or freeze tea leaves.