

Caladiums



Caladium bicolor (kay-LAY-dee-um)

Caladiums originated in Brazil and are grown for their colorful foliage. Most caladiums prefer shade to partial shade. However, some new varieties will tolerate sunlight.

Caladiums make a strong visual statement when planted in one mass color under a tree or as two complimentary colors in an open bed or along pathways. Their light colors range from pure white to burgundy, and many variegated types in between can brighten a shady garden. The flowers should be removed as soon as they bloom. They usually bloom April through September.

Buy firm tubers, or the most healthy-looking plants, as soon as they become available during the planting season, March through May. There are two basic types: The heart-shaped fancy leaf and the arrow-shaped lance leaf. The heart-shaped type grows 18 to 20 inches, while the arrow-shaped type grows to about 12 inches and remains low and bushy. Early May is the best time to plant caladium tubers for most areas of Texas. Caladiums are warm climate plants and will not grow until soil temperature is at least 70 degrees or higher. Plant the tubers about 1½ times as deep as the size of the tuber and 12 to 18 inches apart in rich, moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soil. Enrich the soil with compost or humus, and incorporate a slow-release fertilizer. For best results, plant partially sprouted tubers with the crown slightly above the soil's surface.

Caladiums should be dug up in the fall and stored in a dry, cool place for spring planting. Propagate by division. Please note that the plant sap may be irritating.