**Camellia oleifera**
**Tea-Oil Camellia**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Tea-Oil Camellia is so-named because they are cultivated in their native homeland of China specifically for the seeds, from which is extracted commercial tea oil (Fig. 1). This particular Camellia species looks much like *Camellia sasanqua* except the dark green, evergreen leaves are a bit larger, three to five inches long and two to three inches wide. Single, white, fragrant flowers are produced in late winter, and this large shrub or small tree will reach a height of 20 feet with thin, upright, multiple trunks and branches. The crown forms a rounded or oval vase with lower branches removed.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Scientific name:** *Camellia oleifera*

**Pronunciation:** kuh-MEEL-ee-uh oh-lee-IF-er-uh

**Common name(s):** Tea-Oil Camellia

**Family:** Theaceae

**USDA hardiness zones:** 6 through 9 (Fig. 2)

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Uses:** Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; hedge; large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized parking lot islands (100-200 square feet in size); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; screen; trainable as a standard; small parking lot islands (< 100 square feet in size); narrow tree lawns (3-4 feet wide); specimen; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); residential street tree

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

**DESCRIPTION**

**Height:** 15 to 20 feet

**Spread:** 10 to 15 feet

**Crown uniformity:** symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms

**Crown shape:** round; vase shape

**Crown density:** dense

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** medium
Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: oblancoleate; obovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: broadleaf evergreen; evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches; less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: showy; winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; not particularly showy; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Tea-Oil Camellia should be grown in full sun or partial shade on rich, moist, acid soils. It will tolerate drought once established and grows well in clay soil.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

**Pests**

Watch for scale infestation.

**Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.

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**Figure 3.** Foliage of Tea-Oil Camellia.

**Other**

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** little, if any, potential at this time  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

Plants should require little pruning and their dense, compact, crown makes them ideally suited for informal borders, specimens, accents, and sheared or natural hedges or screens. Large specimens may be trimmed to multi- or single-trunked small trees. This is a great tree for planting along a street beneath power lines since it will not require pruning by the utility company, but unfortunately it is not yet readily available. Nurseries should grow and market this plant in a multi-stemmed and single-trunked form for this purpose.