

guide to acid loving plants

Soil conditions can impact how plants grow. The pH of soil (acidity/alkalinity) is critical to the health and growth of plants and impacts on the availability of nutrients and microbial activity that plants can access. Typically kiwi gardeners don't have to worry too much as New Zealand soils are predominately naturally acid, so creating special conditions for acid loving plants is not such a major problem, apart from those in specific limestone areas; for example Waitomo.

Plants classified as 'acid loving' thrive in acid soils and include trees and shrubs with a variety of shapes, foliage and flowers.

These include popular species such as; Azaleas, Camellias, Daphne, Ericas, Heathers, Pieris, Gardenias, Hydrangeas and Rhododendrons, including blueberries.



What is Soil pH?

Acidity and alkalinity are measured in pH units; the pH being the symbol for the relative amount for hydrogen in a substance. On the pH scale from 1-14; 1 is extremely acidic and 10 or more is extremely alkaline. For example a peat bog can have a pH as low as 3, and a desert soil can have a pH as high 10-11. A pH of 7 is neutral. Acid loving plants prefer to grow in a soil with a lower pH 4-6 in order to flourish.

Where and When to Buy

New stocks of acid loving plants are available from your local garden centre from May onwards and can be planted in the garden in late autumn/early winter. Always look for healthy specimens.

Issues

Yellow foliage: Some acid loving plants suffer from a yellowing of the foliage (leaves). This can usually be quickly rectified by applying flowers of sulphur around the base of the plant.

Planting Acid Loving Plants

As with all planting, soil preparation is critical to the successful cultivation of these plants. Adding large quantities of peat or compost will increase the acidity of your existing soil and will give your acid loving plant the best start.

Daltons Premium Acid Mix is formulated with a low pH specifically for growing acid loving plants.

Most acid loving plants prefer a cool root run, this can be achieved by mulching around individual plants or planting into beds well prepared with compost. Finish mulching with crushed bark, pea straw or other organic materials on top.

Increasing the acidity of your soil can also be achieved by side dressings of a specific acid fertiliser such as **Daltons Premium Acid Fertiliser** or **Daltons Garden Time™ Acid Fertiliser**.

Important: Lime should never be added to soil near acid loving plants.

Acid Loving Plants in Pots

Acid loving plants can look stunning when grown in pots, especially hydrangea, azaleas and daphne. Use **Daltons Premium Acid Mix**, this will ensure the acidity is suited to the plants needs. Be sure to water it in well.

Gardening Terms Explained

Root run – Space or area where roots will grow.

Side dressing – Means to apply fertiliser to the soil on or around the sides of the plant.



Products to try

Daltons Premium Acid Mix
 Daltons Enriched Compost | Daltons Premium Acid Fertiliser
 Daltons Garden Time™ Acid Fertiliser