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RAISED BED PREPARATION FOR ACID LOVING ORNAMENTAL PLANTS AND EDIBLES

Plants that thrive in acidic soils but can be grown successfully in North Texas include: **Azaleas, Gardenias, Dogwoods, Camellias, Japanese Maples and Blueberries.** In our North Texas clay soil, planting in raised beds that are 8-12 inches above the original soil level is the simplest way to give these plants the conditions they need. The soil must also be amended below the original soil level to a depth of 4-6 inches for optimum plant performance.

To prepare the bed, dig out the existing clay soil to a depth of at least 6 inches, removing any undesirable vegetation or weeds. Next, add the following amendments **in order** per 50 square feet of bed area to build up the bed level at least 8 inches:

- **Expanded Shale** - 40 lb. bag - **2 bags**
- **Covington's Soil Builder** - 1.5 cubic ft. bag - **12 bags**
- **Peat Moss**- 3.8 cubic ft.- **1 large bale**
- **4 lbs. dry molasses**
- **Soil Sulfur** - ½ lb.

Spread the first three ingredients evenly throughout the entire bed. Lightly work the sulfur and molasses into the soil, broadcasting it throughout the bed, then add:

- **Azalea Planting Mix** - 2 cubic ft. bag - **14 bags**
(Specially formulated by the Dallas chapter of the Azalea Society of America)

Or

- **Covington's Soil Builder** - 1.5 cubic ft. bag - **16 bags**

Fertilize at time of planting with **Cottonseed Meal, Happy Frog 6-4-4 for Acid Loving plants**, or fertilizer which is specially formulated for acid loving plants.

For Japanese maples, fertilize with **Happy Frog 4-8-5 Japanese Maple Food.**

SOIL RECIPE FOR CONTAINER GROWN BLUEBERRIES

A 20-30 Gallon container will work best. Good choices include whiskey barrels and high grade plastic containers. Be sure that your container has adequate drainage holes. A soil pH of 4.0-5.5 is necessary for blueberries to thrive.

Fill the container with:

- **3/4 Peat Moss**
- **1/4 Expanded Shale**

Or

- **1/2 Azalea Planting Mix**
- **1/2 Covington's Soil Builder**

Fertilize at time of planting with **Cottonseed Meal, Happy Frog 6-4-4 for Acid Loving plants**, or fertilizer which is specially formulated for acid loving plants. Add 2 inches of Azalea mix or shredded cedar **mulch** to the top of soil.

Covington's Soil Builder is three great soil amendments in one convenient application. It contains **Back to Earth Composted Cotton Burrs, Expanded Shale** and one pound of **Texas Greensand**.

Did you know that the flower color of big leaf Hydrangeas is pink or blue depending on how acidic the soil is?

At a pH between:

- **4.5 and 5.0 - flowers are blue as a result of aluminum in the soil**
- **7.0 and 7.5 - flowers are pink as a result of the alkalinity of the soil**

If your Hydrangea is producing pink flowers and you would prefer blue, spread a pound of aluminum sulfate per square yard under the bush in the early spring and again in the fall. The pink flowers can be changed to blue by adding a pound of ground limestone.