

## Delightful Daphne Odora

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It's that time of year again. The Daphne, *Daphne odora*, is full of buds just waiting to open and release that heavenly fragrance. Daphne is an attractive evergreen shrub, but it's that intoxicating fragrance that makes it one of my favorite garden plants.

So why doesn't everybody plant Daphne and enjoy that blissful smell? Daphne has a reputation for being a difficult plant to grow and that reputation isn't totally unmerited. But it really isn't that hard to provide the right conditions for growing Daphne.

*Daphne odora*, commonly called Winter Daphne, requires some shade and definitely shouldn't be planted in full sun, especially in our climate. It requires fertile soil that both drains well and also retains some moisture so that it doesn't totally dry out. Loamy soil is best. Since it has such a wonderful smell, it's delightful to plant Daphne near a patio or walkway where you can enjoy its fragrance. However, leaves, flowers, and fruit are poisonous and perhaps this is why deer don't care for it. Just use caution when planting it if pets and small children play in a particular area.

Flowers appear in early Spring and are rosy purple to deep red with a creamy throat and are usually pest and disease resistant. Daphne grows to about four feet tall and equally wide. It is a slow to moderate grower so it will take a few years for Daphne to get to that size. But once you decide on a good spot and you plant it, don't move it. Daphne does not like being transplanted. Just cover the ground beneath the Daphne with mulch to retain some moisture but be sure to keep the mulch a few inches away from the base of the plant to prevent rot.

Another essential step to keeping your Daphne happy and healthy is to never overwater it during our dry season. Too much water will reduce flowering the following Spring. A moderate amount of water is best for both the health of the plant and for next year's flowers. Daphne doesn't need much pruning. Just remove any damaged or dead branches.

Does doing all this mean you will have a happy and healthy plant? Sadly, no. Daphne has a reputation for dying even with meticulous care, but also for sometimes thriving with minimal work. But with the many positive attributes of Daphne, such as deer resistance, minimal pruning, attractiveness as a shrub even when not in bloom, and intoxicatingly scented flowers, why not try planting one and next year you may be enjoying that heavenly fragrance in your own garden.

Master Gardener classes are offered monthly throughout the county. You can find our class schedule at: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education\\_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698), and recorded classes on many gardening topics here: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education/Classes/](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education/Classes/)

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard to answer your questions. Use the “Ask a Master Gardener” option on our website: [mgeldorado.ucanr.edu](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu) or leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512. We’ll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see [http://ucanr.edu/master\\_gardener\\_e-news](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news).