



Uncanoonuc Mt. Perennials

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HEATHS & HEATHERS

“Heathers” is a term gardeners often use to refer to plants in the genera *Erica* and *Calluna*. For the most part they are low growing, spreading evergreen shrubs popular for their beautiful foliage colors and showy flowers. They are effective as ground covers, in mixed plantings and for rock gardens. To tell them apart, look closely:

HEATHS (*Erica carnea* cultivars)

- * Needle-like foliage that comes straight out from the stem
- * Petals are fused into an urn-shaped blossom
- * Bloom in late winter to early spring

HEATHERS (*Calluna vulgaris* cultivars)

- * Softer, scale-like foliage that overlaps and hugs the stem
- * Bell-shaped flowers are deeply divided
- * Bloom at various times from late spring to fall

GETTING THEM GOING: ESTABLISHMENT

Choose a location in full sun or very light shade. If the area is partially shaded remember that heaths are more tolerant of shade than heathers. A slightly acid, sandy soil is ideal. Adding large amounts of pre-moistened peatmoss to the planting bed is important. Heath and heather prefer a well-drained soil that never totally dries out. Set the plants at the same (or slightly deeper) level as they were growing in the pot. Water your new plants deeply and make sure they receive ample water especially during their first season. A two inch layer of an organic mulch (like bark mulch or pine needles) is highly recommended. Mulching helps keep the soil moist and the weeds down.

KEEPING THEM GOING: MAINTENANCE

Heaths and heathers are not heavy feeders. A very light dose of an acid-type, granular fertilizer in early spring will be ample. Pruning is a simple, once a year task that is important to maintain thick, vigorous growth. Prune both heaths and heathers promptly after bloom, just below the faded flowers. Winter mulching is recommended to protect their evergreen foliage from drying winter winds. A six inch layer of salt marsh hay or straw or evergreen boughs should be laid over the plants sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas, not before. Remove the winter mulch in two stages - half sometime in March, the rest about two weeks later.