

# Tea

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*Camellia sinensis* (Theaceae)

**Fast Facts:**

Acres in Washington: 5 Percent: U.S. Acreage: less than 5% Number of Growers: 1
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**Description  
of crop:**

Tea plants are evergreen shrubs that can reach 30 feet in height if not pruned. It usually grows in sub tropical climates. It is grown for its leaves, which are dried, then fermented and constitute the drink tea. The plants tolerate some frost and in the U.S. it is almost exclusively grown in South Carolina. One family in Washington is growing tea on five acres. They are growing *Camellia sinensis* tea plants. When the tea leaves are ready for harvest they hand pinch off each leaf at the stem. Only 2 leaves and the bud at the end of each branch are used. The leaves are heated, rolled and dried. The succulent tips and young leaves are harvested. If the tea is harvested for black tea, the leaves are wilted and partially dried in shallow layers, then are rolled by twisting or wringing. A short oxidation or fermentation period is followed by heating at 160 degrees F or above to stop oxidation. Small amounts of Washington tea have been sold as black, green and white tea.

**Key pests:**

Diseases are not yet a problem on tea. The only insect problems on tea are scale insects. Introduction of natural enemies has been the only means of control used so far. A variety of weeds were a problem during establishment and extensive hand weeding was required. In established plantings, weed management is primarily by mowing. Some grasses grow up through the plants. Canada thistle is a significant weed of established tea and is removed by hand prior to harvest.

**Key pesticides:**

No pesticides are used on tea grown in Washington, organic or conventional.

**Critical pest**

**control issues:** Growers would like to find a control for scale on tea

**Expert contacts:**

Personal communication with Richard Sakuma

**Location**

**of production:** The one grower is in Skagit County.



Tea Tree in Bloom

## Tea Production in Washington State



Deborah Bahs - April 2007

0 25 50 100 Miles

### Counties Producing Tea\*

\* Includes only those counties with significant crop acres.  
The crop may also be produced in counties not highlighted on the map.