For the joy of gardening!
Estabrook's

SMOKEBUSH CARE

LIGHT

Smokebush (Cotinus coggygria and common hybrids) grows best in full sun, especially purple-leaved cultivars whose color weakens in shade. Light shade is tolerated. Check mature size carefully: many selections become large shrubs or small trees and need substantial space around their spreading crowns.

WATER

Water deeply after planting and check the original root ball while roots establish. Established plants tolerate some drought, but prolonged dry weather can still cause stress. Avoid saturated soil and frequent shallow sprinkling. Let drainage and actual soil moisture guide watering.

SOIL & PLANTING

Choose well-drained garden soil and plant at nursery depth. Cotinus tolerates a range of soil pH, but struggles in waterlogged sites. Mulch over the root zone while leaving the stem bases clear. Avoid forcing a naturally large selection into a cramped foundation bed.

FEEDING

Routine heavy feeding is unnecessary. If a soil test or weak growth indicates a need, apply a modest spring shrub fertilizer according to the label. Check moisture and drainage first. More nitrogen is not a remedy for a poor smoky flower display.

SEASONAL CARE

Choose pruning according to the effect you want. To keep the smoky flower display, retain an established framework and prune lightly. Hard renewal in late winter or early spring encourages vigorous foliage shoots but sacrifices that season's flowers. Annual hard cutting is optional, not required.

HELPFUL TIPS

Cultivars differ in size, leaf color and flowering. Preserve the trunk on tree-form plants. Wear gloves when pruning because sap can irritate sensitive skin. Persistent branch wilt needs diagnosis. American smoketree (Cotinus obovatus) has separate care.