

# *Atlantic Coast Camellias*

Journal of the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society

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*Camellia Reticulata* 'Marilyn Maphis'

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## *From the Cover*

### *‘Marilyn Maphis’*

*Front page photo taken by  
Randolph Maphis*

Originated in 2007 by Jack Mandarich of Garner, NC (previously from California and Oregon) A very large, SD, highly frosted pink reticulata hybrid of (Lilette Witman x Hulyn Smith) blooming midseason.

*Photo at right taken by  
J. D. Thomerson*



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***This Edition of the Atlantic Coast Camellia Journal  
Is Dedicated in Memory of***

**BEVERLY LOEBLEIN RITTER**

# 2023 Award of Merit

## From the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society

### Dr. Jasper Dewey “J. D.” Thomerson

The 2023 ACCS Award of Merit was presented to Dr. Jasper Dewey “J.D.” Thomerson for his dedication to the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society . Known for his excellent communication skills, J.D. has become a featured speaker and educator throughout the Atlantic Coast region for his presentations on camellias. Most importantly, J.D. has become the preeminent editor of “Atlantic Coast Camellias,” the ACCS regional journal.

After moving to Georgia, J.D.’s interest in camellias was sparked by an article in the local paper announcing a local club meeting at a nearby restaurant. J.D.’s interest in camellias deepened significantly after being introduced to Mr. Hulyn Smith, who took J.D. under his wing and tutored him over several years. As this friendship grew, J.D. became a key assistant of Hulyn Smith. Being proficient with computers, J.D. spent hours assisting Hulyn Smith with his electronic files, allowing this giant of the camellia world to maintain communications, notes, and files regarding his camellia collection.

J.D. started demonstrating his editing skills by volunteering to publish the newsletter for the Valdosta Camellia Society. He has been and continues strongly supporting both the Valdosta Camellia Society and the Wiregrass Camellia Society, hosting many meetings at his private residence. J.D. gave numerous informative programs throughout Georgia and Florida regarding growing camellias from seed, grafting techniques, and procedures for air-layering. With his good friend Mark Crawford, J.D. has been a key agent in the preservation of the Gordy camellia collection.

What has made J.D. special to ACCS has been his ability to assist many of the leaders in the Camellia world with the documentation, preservation, and



*Fred McKenna presents the  
2023 ACCS Award of Merit to  
J.D. Thomerson*

communications of their efforts. J.D. is known for not seeking the limelight but is always a selfless helper worker in the background. In 2021, J.D. volunteered to become the editor of “Atlantic Coast Camellias,” Journal of the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society. Since that time, J.D. has produced ten journals of the highest quality and graphics. Not only has the publication become extremely attractive, but the average content has also increased by 15%. Due to his efforts, the “Atlantic Coast Camellias” journal is enjoyed by hundreds of camellia lovers in the Atlantic and Gulf Coast region.

J.D.’s contributions reflect great credit upon himself and the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society.

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## **ACCS MOURNS THE LOSS OF BEVERLY LOEBLEIN RITTER**

**by Carol Selph**

It is with sad hearts we say goodbye to a magnificent lady. Beverly Loeblein Ritter passed away on December 4, 2023. She was 81 and was the absolute love of Chuck Ritter’s life.

She started her working career teaching English to eighth graders, the hardest of all grades to teach. Upon leaving teaching, she and Chuck started a company, StenEd, where she turned a confusing bunch of info into gold. She wrote each lesson a court reporter would need, organizing them sequentially for easy real-time translation. She wrote and sold a series of RealTime books, from dictionaries, briefs, and theory to schools. These guides became the best study series in the world for court reporters and stenographers to master.

Bev had a real enthusiasm for life, which she shared with everyone she met. Her radiant, smiling face let all know she was always eager to help. She was beautiful with perfect hair and complexion and complemented her wardrobe with the perfect accessories. She dedicated her time to causes to help the community of Lake Rosa remain close-knit by blocking a toll road, keeping a Disney-like resort out, and donating time and money to the local library.

Bev was a gracious lady with a quick wit who was a loyal friend to all she met, and we were all blessed by her love. We will all miss her.



**Chuck and Bev Ritter at a Past  
ACCS Convention**

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

by Carol Selph

What a totally awesome ACCS annual convention we just experienced. After all of the planning, everything fell into place beautifully. This convention would not have been successful without Fred McKenna's leadership, Marsha Zeagler's many hours scouting around Savannah for the perfect location, Richard Buggeln's foolproof guidance and technological support, an outstanding auction, and Tommy Alden's selection of great speakers. Friday's spectacular events included a judge's reaccreditation class or a special trip Tommy and Brenda Alden arranged to the Jenny Lynn Bradley estate. The evening ended with a time of fellowship with camellia friends over a low country boil feast and beverages. Many thanks to Marsha Zeagler and Gene Phillips, along with the friends of the Coastal Plains Botanical Garden as the hosts, and to God for providing the perfect weather. The highlight of the Saturday night banquet was the comedic speech on the winter freeze presented by our own professional speaker, Dr. J. D. Thomerson, followed by the presentation by President McKenna of the Award of Merit to J. D. for his dedicated service as editor of the ACCS's Journal. If you did not attend the convention, you will never want to miss another one. Please put September 30 — October 1, 2024, on your calendar as the convention dates for next year.



My main concern as the new ACCS President is what Miss Lillian Gordy called TMB: 'Too Many Birthdays.' As our members get older, it is each of our responsibilities to recruit a replacement for ourselves. I am challenging each of you to recruit three new members to mentor in these ways: 1) to help them in their gardens with advice on the selection of plants, how to grow them, and where to grow them in their gardens; 2) to entice them to show blooms at local shows, 3) to persuade them to become clerks and 4) to eventually to encourage them to take the novice judges' class to become GOOD judges. We need active members willing to work and truly catch the 'camellia bug.' I'm sure you noticed the convention's absence of names like Robertson, Mizell, Serpas, Beach, Newsome, Reese, Hooten, Mohr, Bender, Ritter, Walker, and Buggeln from the convention. These names represent years of dedicated service to our organization as State Directors and Presidents. The only way we can truly thank them is through service. Hopefully, some will be back, but many have failing health or have recently passed on to a Heaven filled with camellias. They taught us how to have fun socializing as we shared our love of the camellia. In honor of these outstanding role models, we must step up and keep our organization strong.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the remainder of the show season. May God Bless each of you and keep you safe.

## The American Camellia Society has Named Camellia Japonica 'Royal Velvet' the Camellia of the Year for the 2023-2024 Season

The article below appeared in the October 10, 2023 edition of Nursery Management Magazine. *Nursery Management* is the leading trade publication serving wholesale nursery growers. Average Print and Digital Subscribers are 17,449 individuals and E-Mail Subscribers average 12,227 (data as of June 2022).

Special thanks to Mark Crawford for writing and submitting this press release.

NURSERY MANAGEMENT

OCTOBER 10, 2023

# CAMELLIA JAPONICA 'ROYAL VELVET' NAMED CAMELLIA OF THE YEAR

The American Camellia Society has named *Camellia japonica* 'Royal Velvet' the camellia of the year for the 2023-2024 season. The extended freeze event in late December 2022 that occurred from the Atlantic coast to Texas and as far south as the Gulf coast and north Florida damaged the flower buds of many of the popular varieties grown in the southern region.

Plants and flower buds of Royal Velvet were unaffected by the freeze, resulting in an outstanding blooming season. Royal Velvet grows and blooms well in full sun to part shade and makes a wonderful addition to the late winter garden.

As a tribute to this great camellia, the city of Savannah, Georgia, is planting 2000 specimen plants that will line a 3.5-mile bike/jogging trail. The grower, Gene Phillips, selected Royal Velvet for this project, recognizing not only the beautiful flowers but also the varieties' hardiness and adaptability to varying climates and soil conditions. Installation is in Fall 2023.



Camellia Japonica 'Royal Velvet'

# I've Been Thinking . . . I Don't Like Hurricanes

By J. D. Thomerson

**V**aldosta, GA, is located 20 miles north of the Florida state line. It is 70 miles SW to the Gulf of Mexico and 100 miles East to the Atlantic Ocean. Kay and Katie have lived in Valdosta all their lives, and I have lived here for 41 of my 59 years. Hurricanes have devastated various parts of East and West Florida and the Florida panhandle, as well as parts of coastal Georgia, but during the years we have lived in Valdosta, it has been spared major hurricane damage. Because of this, you begin to think it just won't happen to you – but suddenly, things change.

Wednesday, August 30, 2023, a hurricane came through Valdosta. It tracked the shortest route possible from the gulf waters straight to Valdosta – about 70 miles. “Idalia” was this storm’s name, and it increased to a Category 4 hurricane just before landfall in Cedar Key, FL. By the time it reached Valdosta, it had been lowered to a Category 1 – 2 storm. Let me tell you – I cannot imagine being in a



**J. D. Wondering What to do with one of many Uprooted Tree Stumps**

Category 3 or higher hurricane. The Valdosta area got hammered. We got nearly 10 inches of rain in about five hours, and this caused huge trees to be uprooted all over the city by the high winds and soggy soil. Mark Crawford, who also lives in Valdosta, and myself were not to be excluded. Luckily, our homes were not damaged like many others in Valdosta. But, our camellia gardens really took a beating. I had a huge magnolia, a huge water oak, and a huge tulip poplar, all uprooted from the



**Photo of J. D.'s and Kay's Rental Property Yard**

ground and laid atop my camellias. A 150-foot tall pine tree broke off midway up and landed on our camellias, as did five large pecan tree branches.

Upon inspection, I thought, “Oh, Pitiful Me – I got hit worse than everyone else.” But damage like this was all over Valdosta. Telephone lines and poles were laid in the streets and yards all over town. Trees on top of roofs were very common on nearly every street. We later learned that a huge tree had fallen through Nancibeth Shealy’s house in Quitman, GA. Kay and I soon realized we were actually very lucky.



**Mark and Sherrida Crawford’s Utility Pole**

Power was out at our house for three days, and we had no Internet or TV for nineteen days – how did folks live without these luxuries years ago? I had talked to Mark Crawford soon after the storm and knew he and Sherrida were OK, and so was their house. Randolph Maphis took them a generator the day after the storm as Mark needed one to keep the well pumps running for his camellia nursery. Randolph called to check on me and said, “You need to go see Mark’s property – you won’t believe it.”

So, on Friday, two days after the storm, I thought it was finally safe to travel the ten minutes to Mark’s house. Nope, things were not OK for travel. About every third or fourth street was closed with huge trees and downed power lines. It took 30 minutes to drive the normal ten minutes to Mark’s house. Along the drive, I was hoping Mark and Sherrida might have power restored, and I could enjoy some much-needed AC, but this was obviously not the case (see photo above). Mark and Sherrida’s property got hammered like mine, and since they own 12 acres of land and many different tree species, it was a real mess.



**Downed Pine Tree in Street Blocking Entrance to the Crawford’s Home**

Mark and I discussed how we didn't even know how to begin cleaning up all the debris. Mark decided to hire a tree removal crew to saw up and remove all his downed trees, as heavy equipment could get in and around his property without adding significantly to the damage. My yard and adjoining rental property had no way for heavy equipment to get into and remove any of the downed trees without totally destroying much of our camellia garden. I had a small 16-inch chain battery-powered chainsaw that was perfect for cutting up small and medium-sized limbs. Kay and I worked hours and hours daily for ten days, cutting up and carefully pulling branches and limbs off our camellias and hauling them out to the street, where crews were hauling all the debris away. I had four very large



**Downed Tree Between J. D. and Kay's Yard and Rental Property**

downed trees that had trunk widths of 2 feet or more. My small chainsaw could not handle the size of these logs. Randolph Maphis came to my rescue with a large gas-powered chain saw, and he helped me cut up these tree trunks. But they were so heavy we could barely roll them around. Mark Crawford was next to come to our rescue. He brought his tractor with a front-end loading bucket, and we carefully rolled



**Huge Eucalyptus Tree Down in Mark's Yard's**

the huge logs around the camellias to a loading area where he could fit his tractor. A friend of ours and I struggled together to roll the big logs into the tractor's bucket so Mark could haul them out to the street. After three long weeks of hard work, our camellia garden was fairly well-cleaned. We did not lose as many camellias as we first feared, thanks to hard work and our good friends.

Well, let me wrap this up and say once again, "I don't like hurricanes." But I sure like camellia folks. In

addition to Randolph Maphis and Mark Crawford's help, Kay and I received calls and messages from camellia folks all over. Konrad Hooper offered to drive three hours one way to hook up a generator for us. He also offered to give me several of his grafted camellia plants to replace some of the ones we had lost. As we all know, camellia folks are the best.

I know this report will bring back memories of when many other ACCS camellia growers got severe damage from hurricanes, tornadoes, ice storms, or other bad events. It's not fun – but we move on and clean up and thank God for our safety and ability to work and enjoy another day. I even mentioned to Kay that now that I have lost several camellias and trees, I have places to plant all the camellias I had growing in pots that I had no idea what I was going to do with.

I hope you are like Kay and me and realize how much we are blessed. The super freeze of Dec. 2022 and the Aug. 2023 hurricane have come and gone – hopefully, the next bad event will be a long time in the future. In the meantime, cherish every minute of every day. As we know, life is short. Even as I write this article (Dec. 2023), we have camellia blooms all over our yard – they survived the past storms and trials and are displaying their beauty and giving joy. That's a good lesson for all of us humans to strive to live up to as well.

I hope 2024 brings everyone joy and cheer and lots of beautiful camellia blooms -- and no hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, ice storms, hard freezes, or other calamities.



**Photo Top Left:** Many broken branches (widow makers) still in Thomerson's trees.

**Photo Top Right:** These were not small trees.

**Photo at Left:** It was just a big huge mess.

# *Are Deer Munching on Your Camellias?*

## One Camellia Grower's Thoughts on How to Keep Deer from Destroying Your Camellias

By Philip Thomas

**T**he problem of deer damaging camellias (and other landscape plants) is becoming a larger problem these days, especially in rural areas. Why is this a bigger problem than it used to be? There appear to be several reasons. First, deer are much more plentiful than they used to be. When I was a kid, at least where I grew up in South Carolina, you could walk all day in the woods and not see a deer or even a deer hoof print. Deer hunters had to work hard to get venison for the freezer.



**Philip Thomas and Teri McCathern**

Today, in those same areas, it's not unusual to see deer and deer prints. And hunters have a much easier time harvesting deer. The people I talk to, who seem most knowledgeable about this, say that conservation laws, some of which were implemented roughly 50 years ago, have significantly increased our deer population. In addition, more rural land is being developed these days, reducing the deer habitat and forcing deer to move into more urban areas to find food and live. As the deer move into more developed areas, they become less afraid of people and wander into people's yards, where they find those tasty camellias!

Nothing is more frustrating and disheartening to me than to find a camellia in my yard that has been stripped of its leaves and smaller limbs by a deer that grazed in my yard in the middle of the night. This is a heart-breaking event that has happened to me on numerous occasions. A few years ago, I had a "Cornelian" plant that I had ordered from Nuccio's in California and had planted in the yard. It was doing well, and in the spring, it started putting out a flush of new growth. Then, one night, the deer visited and stripped almost every leaf off the plant. I was devastated, but I sprayed the plant and took good care of it, and it grew some new growth before the end of the summer.

The following spring, it had another flush of nice new growth. But the deer visited again and stripped it a second time. But, despite my best efforts, I couldn't save it this time. Apparently, when the deer bites the leaves off, open wounds enable diseases (dieback, etc.) to get into and attack the plant. On the top of the next page is a picture of another camellia (grafted this year) that was bitten off by a deer. The plant was stunted but did recover.



**Camellia Graft – Top Bitten Off by Deer**

So, how do we keep the deer from damaging our camellias? When I first started having deer damage, I had heard that Milorganite (fertilizer) spread around a plant would keep deer away. So, I put some Milorganite around my camellias, which seemed to work for a while. But, I believe it loses its potency over time and needs to be re-applied religiously. Also, I believe the deer get used to it, and eventually, they are not deterred by it as much as they were when it was first used.

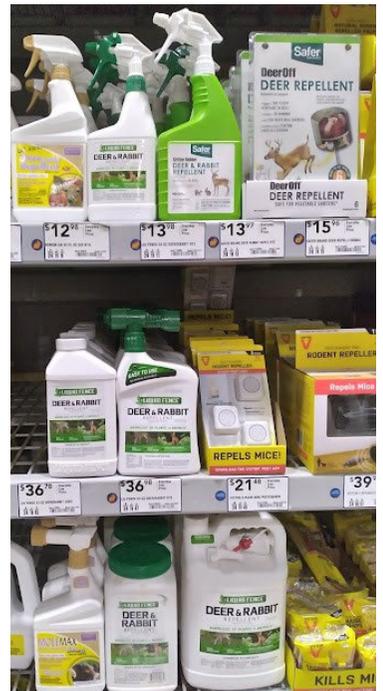
The Milorganite was a good short-term solution for me, but I needed a permanent solution that didn't need a lot of maintenance on an ongoing basis. I looked at other granular and liquid products and found a host of products available. See the picture below of products recently available at a local home center.

I suspected that if I tried these products, I would have the same results as I did with Milorganite, so I

kept looking for more options. I also heard that some people had good luck with motion-activated noise-makers, but eventually, the deer got used to them, and they didn't work well long-term. One product that was effective long-term was an oscillating sprinkler that was motion-activated. It could even be programmed to only come on after dark when the deer did most of their grazing. This was intriguing to me, but it wasn't practical to put these sprinklers all over the yard. If I did, then anyone (in addition to the deer) walking in the yard after dark would be subject to a surprise shower!

So, what did I do to stop the camellia carnage? Eventually, I concluded that if I was going to be able to grow the number of camellias I wanted without the deer damage, I needed a fence. So, what kind of fence, and how tall? I had played golf recently at Fripp Island, and I will never forget seeing a four-foot fence that had been built to protect azaleas, with deer that had jumped inside the fence munching on the azaleas!!! So, I knew the fence had to be taller than four feet.

I had also heard some "experts" say deer could jump an eight-foot fence. But some neighbors down the street had built a six-foot fence, and they had not had problems. Apparently, if deer are highly motivated (for food when they are hungry or to be with a suitor during mating season), a large deer can supposedly jump an eight-foot fence. But I have not seen one do that.



**Deer Repellent Products In A Local Home Center**

I decided to build a six-foot fence around the camellias between the house and the street. I didn't want to put up a gate because we were constantly driving in and out of the driveway. But the deer quickly found the opening at the driveway entrance and came into the yard again. So, I installed one of the motion-activated sprinklers (mentioned earlier) at the entrance to the driveway. I programmed it to only come on after sunset and before sunrise (when the deer would visit). We had to let our friends and neighbors know to expect the sprinkler to come on if they came through the driveway after dark. A couple of joggers almost got wet, but they started jogging on the other side of the street to avoid being showered.

The above solution worked well for me for several years until I moved to a larger piece of farm property in a more rural area. I quickly found that the deer at the farm property liked camellias just as much as at the old property. As I started planting camellias at the farm, I knew I would eventually need to build a fence around them, but I started with "cages" around the individual plants (see picture at right).

I started with small cages around the new, small camellias. The cages were easy to build. A 50-foot roll of four-foot tall (2" x 4" welded wire) fence would yield six to eight small cages. As the camellias grew, I would take the small cages off, make larger cages for them, and put the smaller cages on newly planted camellias.

This worked well for a while, but eventually, as more camellias were planted, it became unmanageable. So, I bit the bullet and started building a "real" fence (see picture on next page). The new fence has worked well for me. It was built like the first fence (6 feet tall, etc.), and no deer have gotten into it (that I know of). The downside of the fence is the time and expense to build it. Also, access to the camellias is somewhat limited, since to get to a particular camellia, I have to go through one of the gates.

So, bottom line is, what's the best answer to the problem of deer damaging camellias? I've heard a couple of farmers say when someone complains about deer eating their crops, that you need to plant more than the deer can eat! When it comes to camellias, if I were a commercial grower, maybe I could do that. But I'm a recreational grower, and the deer have already proven to me (where I live) that they can eat more than I can plant. What about the granular and liquid repellents? They didn't work well for me because they must be re-applied religiously, and I'm a



**Camellia Protected By Individual Cage**

procrastinator sometimes! Also, I suspect the deer get used to at least some of the granular and liquid products, so they don't work as well long term for me.

The best solution for me was the fence. It's there all the time, and it works! The time and expense to build a fence can be substantial, depending on the size and type of fence built. I reduced the cost substantially by shopping around for the best prices on materials and doing all the work myself. I took my time and did the work over several months. But it was a happy day when I closed the gate on the fence and started taking the cages off the individual plants. I could rest easily at night, knowing the camellias were protected. So, if you're having problems with deer damaging your camellias, I feel your pain! I hope you can find a workable solution to keep the deer away from your plants. If you don't live in an area with deer, then consider yourself lucky! The deer can truly be a destructive pest!!!

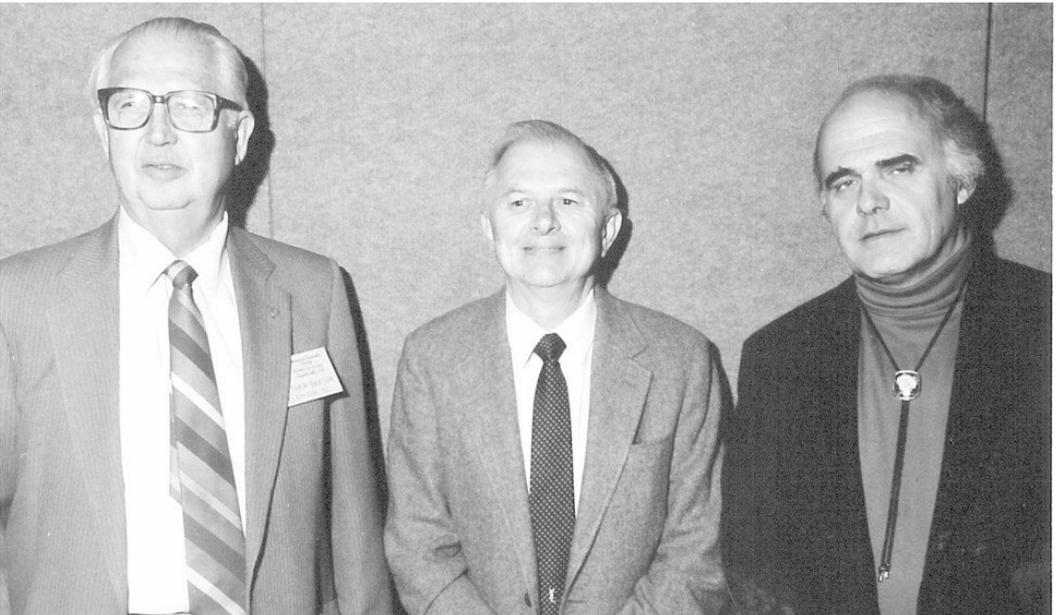


**Picture of New Fence**

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## **Remembering Three Giants of the Camellia World**

**Thanks to Randolph Maphis for Finding and Sharing this Rare Old Photo**



**Left: Dr. Luther Baxter**

**Middle: Dr. Walter Homeyer**

**Right: Dr. Clifford Parks**

*The ACCS Convention in Savannah, GA  
was a Great Success*



**Member's of the Middle Georgia Camellia Society at the ACCS Convention**



**Distinguished Navy Veterans Attending ACCS Convention**



**Member's of the Wiregrass Camellia Society at the ACCS Convention**



**Fred McKenna Introducing Carol Selph as the New ACCS President**

**Excellent Educational Sessions included “BackYard Camellia Growing” by Paul Greenway and “Growing Protected Show Flowers in Virginia” by Bob Black. The banquet speaker was J. D. Thomerson, and he shared the slides below.**

**WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE DECEMBER 2022 FREEZE**

**WE DID NOT LIKE IT!**

**THE END**

## ACCS Visits the Jenny Lind Bradley Estate

Located on Sylvan Island just a short drive from Savannah, GA, this magnificent house and garden was featured in the February/March edition of Garden and Gun Magazine. This Tour was a Highlight of the 2023 ACCS Convention.

*Photo at right courtesy of Garden and Gun Magazine. All others by Kay Thomerson*





# Remembering Dr. Arthur A. Kirk Humanitarian/Philanthropist

By Bob Black

I first met Dr. Arthur Kirk in the late 1990s during a Virginia Camellia Society fall camellia show at the Chesapeake Square Mall in Chesapeake, Virginia. He casually walked into the show holding a camellia sasanqua sprig cut from a chance seedling growing in his garden in Portsmouth, Virginia. He approached a group of us to find out if we liked the flowers and thought it was distinct enough to justify registration. Captain Doug Simon, show chairman, and Dr. James “Tubby” Habel, past president of the American Camellia Society, observed the lovely pure white formal double-to-rose form double blooms on the sprig and immediately remarked that it was an unusual flower form for a fall bloomer and worthwhile to register.

Dr. Kirk graciously invited me to visit his garden to observe the chance seedling. It was a large floriferous specimen about fourteen feet tall growing vigorously in the lot he owned across the street from the home where he and his wife Marie lived in Portsmouth. The seedling was among many fine camellias which graced and dominated his beautiful garden. The following summer, he graciously allowed me as propagator at Bennetts Creek Nursery in Suffolk, Virginia to collect cuttings from it to determine if it would propagate and grow well on its own roots. It did, and in 2000, Dr. Kirk applied to ACS for registration of his chance seedling. Registration application #2521 was approved in July of 2000. He named the chance open-pollinated seedling *Camellia sasanqua* ‘Marie Kirk’ in honor of his wife of fifty-five years, Marie Lucille Linge Kirk, mother of their three children, William, Ann, and Arthur.

Bennett’s Creek Nursery was granted propagation rights and began commercial production of *Camellia sasanqua* ‘Marie Kirk.’ For marketing purposes, the common name ‘Autumn Moon Camellia’ was added to the botanical name to emphasize the beauty of the pure white formal double to rose form double flowers in the fall. It is a horticultural gem in the garden and well-received by the gardening world.



Portrait of Dr. Arthur Kirk  
with his wife Marie



**Camellia Sasanqua 'Marie Kirk'**  
**Marketing Name is 'Autumn Moon'**



**Camellia Sasanqua 'Autumn Moon'**  
**Registered by K. Sawada in 1960**

Unfortunately, it has been confused with the fine camellia that the famous nurseryman K. Sawada of Mobile, Alabama, registered with the ACS in 1960, *Camellia sasanqua* 'Autumn Moon,' — Sawada's Autumn Moon Camellia. K Sawada's Autumn Moon cultivar is a large white single-flower form with 8 to 9 petals of thick texture. It is distinctly different from the nearly formal double flowers of 'Marie Kirk' consisting of 30 plus heart-shaped petals. Cultivar 'Marie Kirk' is currently produced in large quantities by several commercial nurseries in the US, including the highly renowned Monrovia Nursery. It has proven to be a tough, reliable performing camellia, having withstood minus 5 degrees Fahrenheit with minimal damage in my garden in Windsor, Virginia, during the arctic outbreak of 2018.

I had the pleasure of visiting Dr. Kirk at his Portsmouth garden and home on numerous occasions, and on one of those occasions, he also invited two of my young children, Robby and Corey. That day, he took us down into his basement to learn about and see his works in progress from the hobby he had taken up upon his retirement after a 43-year career as a prominent and highly respected orthopedic surgeon in Portsmouth. Several of his innovative surgical techniques were published in medical journals. However, on this day, as a retiree, Dr. Kirk was no longer making skillful incisions as a surgeon but precise cuts as a lapidarist on gemstones. His basement was equipped with various



**Photo of the 'Hokie Blue' Topaz Dr. Kirk**  
**Donated to Virginia Tech University**

cutting and polishing apparatus. He let the boys try their hand polishing a few small stones that day and generously let them pick out a couple as souvenirs from a box containing many small rough stones.

Dr. Kirk's interest in lapidary began during a family around-the-world tour many years prior. While on that trip, he observed children cutting gemstones in Agra, India. That sparked the notion that he could successfully cut and polish gemstones as a hobbyist if the children he saw that day could do it. Collecting, cutting, and polishing gemstones, very large gemstones, grew into a passion upon his retirement. That same day, he showed the boys and me a very large blue topaz gemstone he had been working on for some time. He said he named it "Big Blue". Upon completing the cuts and polishing of that stone, he and his wife Marie donated it to Old Dominion University in memory of their son William, who tragically died at age 30 from melanoma.



**Dr. Kirk shown with Euclase Crystal/  
Aquamarine Stone he Donated to  
Virginia Tech University**

Once Dr. Kirk finished cutting and polishing that beautiful blue topaz in his basement, it weighed 3,856 carats. It is displayed at Old Dominion University in Norfolk on special occasions. We will never forget that gemstone or the grin on Dr. Kirk's face as our mouths gapped open when he showed it to us in his basement that day. He chuckled softly and enjoyed our bewildered reaction to that massive topaz. Before we left that day, I asked him what his secret was to his long, healthy life. He grinned, softly chuckled, and replied, "Coca-Cola and Chocolate."

In addition to donating "Big Blue" to ODU, over the years, Dr. Kirk and his wife Marie donated many museum-quality stones to his alma mater, Virginia Tech University, and the Smithsonian Institute. He attended the annual Gem and Mineral Show in Tucson, Arizona, hunting exceptional stones with which he could practice his lapidary hobby. Being very outgoing, Dr. Kirk quickly made many friends and important contacts to acquire exceptional stones. One individual in particular, Mr. Joel Djahjah, proved to be a very reliable source of large stones, mainly from Brazil.

Several of the stones donated to VA Tech are on permanent display in the Geoscience Museum on campus in Blacksburg. One of which he named the "Hokie Topaz." He cut and polished it, resulting in a 2,955-carat brilliant blue beauty. Another stone of exceptional quality he acquired is now on display at VA Tech and is believed to be the largest Euclase crystal in the world. Euclase is in the same mineral species as

Aquamarine. He acquired it from a family in Brazil. It is believed to have originated from a mine over 100 years ago in Minas Gerais.

During and after his career as an orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Kirk quietly made major contributions of his time and finances to numerous humanitarian causes. One of those was the co-founding of the Kirk-Cone Rehabilitation Center for Children in 1954, which served to educate severely disabled children in Portsmouth and Chesapeake schools for decades. His exemplary generosity and impact upon the community resulted in his recognition as The First Citizen of Portsmouth award in 2006 and The Hampton Roads Philanthropist of the Year award in 2014.

Dr. Kirk's humanitarian contributions were not limited to the US. On several occasions during his career, Dr. Kirk made extended international mission trips, volunteering to teach medical techniques in several countries, including Kabul, Afghanistan, and Indonesia. In 2007, the Commonwealth of Virginia General Assembly presented Dr. Kirk with House Joint Resolution Number 738, recognizing and commending his outstanding, dedicated service and philanthropy to the Commonwealth and beyond.

To quote from the Commonwealth of Virginia General Assembly resolution number 738, "Dr. Kirk is greatly admired by all who knew him, and he is foremost a sincere, unassuming, and humble man who has been compelled throughout his life to help others in need."

The world is a better place in many ways because of his amazing contributions, which included the horticultural gem *Camellia sasanqua* 'Marie Kirk' Autumn Moon Camellia. In January 2015, Dr. Arthur A. Kirk passed away with his family by his side in his home at the age of 99, but he lives on in many he touched during his well-lived life.



Marie Kirk Showing the Mass Blooming Character of this Fine Sasanqua

**NOTE: Both Gem Stone Photographs in this article are courtesy of the VA Tech Geoscience Museum. The bloom 'Autumn Moon' registered by K. Sawada is provided by Forrest Latta.**

**HULYNISM'S — Hulyn Smith had a unique Vocabulary when Discussing Growing, Showing, and Judging Camellias. Here are just a few examples:**

- *Dig it up and Throw it Away — We're Not Running a Plant Hospital Here.*
- *If You Can't Run with the Big Dogs You Better Stay on the Porch.*
- *Let's Hurry Up — Were Judging Them Not Growing Them.*

# *IT WAS A GREAT YEAR!*

## **CAMELLIA VARIETIES REGISTERED IN 1979**

**By J. D. Thomerson**

I remember the year 1979 very well. I was a sophomore at Valdosta High School in Valdosta, GA. Popular TV shows were Happy Days, Taxi, Three's Company, Dallas, MASH, and the Dukes of Hazards. Bestselling movies were Superman, Rocky II, Amityville Horror, Star Trek, and Alien. Bands such as the Bee Gees, Queen, Eagles, ABBA, and Fleetwood Mac were very popular, as well as individual singers like Michael Jackson, Kenny Rogers, and Lionel Ritchie. 1979 was also the year the Village People came out with the "YMCA" song that people developed hand motions to go along with.

Jimmy Carter was the President. McDonalds introduced the first Happy Meal. The SONY Walkman was introduced to the world with cassette tape and lightweight headphones. The TRS-80 and the Apple II were the top-selling computers. Popular sports cars were the Pontiac Trans-Am and the Chevy Camaro. The overall best-selling car for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row was the Oldsmobile Cutlass.

The 1979 NCAA Basketball Tournament was probably the most historic one ever. It featured Indiana State, led by Larry Bird, against Magic Johnson's Michigan State team. Michigan State won the championship, and Bird and Magic became legendary in the NBA. In football, Alabama capped off a 12 – 0 season and another National Championship with a 24 -9 victory over Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl.

I remember 1979 as being an overall outstanding year. Like previous articles of mine, you might be asking what any of this has to do with camellias. Well, after



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**



**NUCCIO'S JEWELL**

looking through years and years of ACS Journals and studying the new camellias registered for each year, I think 1979 gets my vote for the year with the best new camellia introductions. This year did not have the most new registrations, but it was a year that had a large number of really outstanding ones.

My final two years for Best New Camellia Introductions came down to 1979 and 1989. The year 1989 nearly won my vote because of two special camellia introductions – Frank Houser, registered by Walter Homeyer, and Royal Velvet, registered by Nuccio’s Nursery, were both registered in 1989. Most every camellia grower considers Frank Houser the best overall reticulata hybrid camellia, and after Royal Velvets’ performance during the freeze of Dec. 2022 (along with its other great features), it should be considered as one of the best japonica camellias of all time.

How did the year 1979 beat out 1989 and these two great camellias? Well, let’s look at the photo gallery below and the previous and next pages that shows the many great varieties registered in 1979.



**KAY BERRIDGE**



**HULY SMITH**



**TOMORROW PARK HILL BLUSH**



**KATIE**



**MISS BESSIE BEVILLE**



**CURTAIN CALL**



**SHOW TIME**



**IN THE PINK**



**FRANCIE L.**



**BOB HOPE VAR**



**DOROTHY CHESTER**



**CORAL DELIGHT**



**GRAND PRIX**



**NUCCIO'S GEM**



**REDWOOD CITY**



**NUCCIO'S PEARL**



**ADORABLE**



**NUCCIOS RUBY**



**DICK GOODSEN**



**ANGEL WINGS**

The ACCS Website shows photos of 64 varieties registered in 1979, and I am sure many others were registered in 1979 that we do not have photos of for the ACCS Photo Gallery. Other 1979 varieties that you might have heard of and are shown in the ACCS Photo Gallery include Goggy, Amazing Graces, Arcadia, China Lady, Debut, Emma Gaeta, Lois Coker, Mrs. George Bell, Mrs. Woodward Hathorn, Our Linda, Roger Hall, and several others.



**LITTLE SLAM**

## **State Director's Report for Georgia, Sept 2023 — Submitted by Sandra Jones**

### **Middle Georgia Camellia Society (with Brenda Alden)**

Middle Georgia Camellia Society kicked off this year's activities with an opportunity to learn about and practice gibbing at the Alden's nursery and garden. They have monthly meetings. They have planned their calendar and look forward to a very busy year.

Middle Georgia hosts two shows every year. This year, the first will be October 14 at the Georgia National Fair, and the second will be February 24, 2024 at Masee Lane. This club works closely with ACS. Many of the members volunteer regularly. The club also has a work day in April at Masee Lane to help prune and care for the camellias in the Sun Trial garden.

November 11, 2023, Middle Georgia will hold a workshop at Masee featuring sessions on growing camellias successfully, planting camellias, waxing camellias, grafting, and air layering, and using camellias in floral arrangements. The Middle Georgia Camellia Society truly is an outstanding club.

### **Chattahoochee Valley Camellia Society (with Cameron Bean)**

Chattahoochee Valley Camellia Society will have a gibbing workshop/garden tour of the Sam M. Wellborn Camellia Garden, the Old Town Camellia Garden, early in December. They will have a board meeting in January. They have meetings before their show and when needed.

Chattahoochee Valley Camellia Society looks forward to holding a camellia show with flower sales the first Saturday in March.

Mr. Sam Wellborn has been instrumental in assisting a new club, Greensboro Camellia Society, in Greenville, Alabama, in planning their show in January and assisting them with plans for improving and expanding their camellia garden in Beeland Park Gardens.

### **Coastal Georgia Camellia Society (with Gene Phillips)**

The Coastal Georgia Camellia Society continues to hold monthly meetings year-round, with 20 to 25 people attending in the summer and higher attendance during the fall, winter, and spring months. This year's plans include two exhibitions with plant sales: one on November 11<sup>th</sup> and one in February. The one in February will include a speaker and workshops.

These events will be held at the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens, which houses the Judge Arthur Solomon Camellia Trail. The club volunteers at these gardens and helps maintain the Camellia Trail.

Coastal Georgia Camellia Society is applying to the International Camellia Society for acceptance of the Coastal Georgia Botanical Gardens to be designated as a Garden of Excellence.

### **Augusta Camellia Society (with Marcia Christman)**

The Augusta Camellia Society was a large and vibrant club in the 80's. However, in recent years, it has barely survived. They did have a show in 2019 but had only 4 or 5 members at that time. COVID followed and took its toll. They had no meetings for a couple of years. They began meeting again last year, and their membership is up to 30!

The new president, Marcia Christman, is leading the newly revived club and is determined to see it continue to grow. They now meet monthly from October through March in members' homes on the first Tuesday of each month.

The Augusta Camellia Society is planning a show for this coming February. They have an exciting year planned!

### **Wiregrass Camellia Society**

Wiregrass Camellia Society held monthly meetings this past year and plans to continue. They kicked off the new season on September 10 with a meeting at the Brooks County Museum and Cultural Center. Plans and dates have been set for the coming year, along with a list of potential speakers.

Wiregrass Camellia Society continues to support the Quitman Garden Club for their ACS sanctioned show during the first week in February. Many of the Wiregrass members are members of both organizations.

Wiregrass Camellia Society was unable to host a camellia show last year because of the severe freezes in December and January. However, they did hold a workshop at Pebble Hill Plantation, which was well received and attended. Pebble Hill has requested that another one be held again this coming February.

Wiregrass Camellia Society is having a show on November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in Boston, Georgia. All plans are underway, and the club and town look forward to it.

### **North Georgia Camellia Society (with John Scarpicci)**

The North Georgia Camellia Society holds monthly meetings, which are a combination of in-person and Zoom meetings. They have speakers such as Tom Johnson, Rick Smith, and Russ Clayton lined up for this coming season. November 25, the club is contributing about 25 camellias, propagated by Jim Pruckler, that are of historical importance to the metro Atlanta area to the Atlanta History Center's Goizueta Garden. They plan to sell plants in December at an antique mall in north Georgia and in February at their show.

Their show will be at the Atlanta Botanical Gardens on February 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. This is the first year they are giving monetary prizes (and it was stated they will be substantial). They also have two classes, one for experienced growers and one for novices and locals. The Honorary Chairman for the show will be Dean Day Smith Sanders. John Newsome will be recognized as the Emeritus Show chairman. This club has also engaged an artist to design a club logo.

## **State Director's Report for Virginia, Sept 2023 — Submitted by Bob Black**

The Virginia Camellia Society continued its full schedule of annual events during 2022 and 2023. This included our Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 shows, which were well attended and exhibited a decent number of blooms. The plant sales revenue at the shows was sufficient to keep the VCS on sound financial footing. The judges and VCS members volunteering enjoyed a nice gathering at Peggy and Dean Troyer's home in Norfolk prior to the Spring show held on March 11<sup>th</sup> at the Norfolk Botanical Garden.

Other memorable events last year and year to date include our annual Air Layer Swap held in October of 2022 to exchange plants propagated by members. It is a nice way for members to obtain cultivars that are generally not commercially available. Marietta and Steve Madden graciously hosted this event at their home in Chesapeake. This event included a challenging Camellia Jeopardy hosted by Fred and Toni McKenna. It was a fun way to test members' camellia trivia knowledge. Winners were rewarded with camellias and other prizes.

The VCS also continued to be involved in community outreach events. This included annual educational and plant sale events held by the Virginia Beach and Chesapeake master gardeners. These events are an opportunity to promote camellias and camellia societies and sell camellias to provide additional revenue for sustaining the VCS mission to promote and educate camellia gardening to the public.

In July, VCS held its third annual camellia propagation hands-on workshop at the Chesapeake Arboretum. Bob Black was the instructor teaching 15 paid participants how to propagate camellias from cuttings using a high-humidity chamber. Participants were allowed to collect cuttings from the diverse collection of camellias growing on sight in the Camellia Cove section of the arboretum.

### **Upcoming events:**

October 21, 2023, Air Layer Swap at Bob and Sandy Black's home, Windsor, VA

November 11, 2023, Fall Show and Plant Sale at Norfolk Botanical Garden

March 16, 2024, Spring Camellia Show and Plant Sale at Norfolk Botanical Garden

## **State Director's Report for Virginia, Sept 2023 — Submitted by Paul Cloessner and Philip Thomas**

The South Carolina clubs were well represented at the annual convention at Litchfield. All the clubs had shows scheduled and were making preparations for the much anticipated season. The weather was good, except for two very cold nights at Christmas, with temperatures dropping to the low teens in much of the state. Despite the weather, there were many beautiful blooms when the shows began in January.

The Aiken Society began the season with a picnic at the Outing Club. The club had a very successful auction, and the meetings were well attended by members and guests. Members of the Aiken club also made presentations at the Augusta, GA, club and at nearby garden clubs. The club had a society display and recruited several new

members at the Aiken Master Gardeners plant sale. The Aiken show was well attended and had 772 blooms.

The Mid-Carolina Society hosted both a fall and spring show in Columbia with 275 and 785 blooms, respectively. Participants and judges at both shows included society members from Georgia and North Carolina.

The Coastal Carolina Society had a very successful show on January 28, 2023. There were 550 blooms exhibited, 580 attendees, and 26 exhibitors. Due to COVID, this was the first show since January 2020. The next show is scheduled for the last Saturday in January (1/27/24). Meeting attendance has been down some recently, so we are looking at changing the meeting times to accommodate more people and looking for other ideas to increase attendance.

The Grand Strand Society has been growing and has doubled in size in the last two years to 25 attendees at the last meeting. The show this year was held on January 14-15, and was a great success. There were 422 blooms exhibited, 434 attendees, and 33 exhibitors. The next show will be February 10-11, 2024, at the Murrells Inlet Community Center, which is a new venue. A Facebook page has been created now (Grand Strand Camellia Society), and everyone's invited to check it out for current happenings in our club.

In summary, all four societies in South Carolina had successful shows this past season despite the hard freeze we had at Christmas. This was a welcome change from the last couple of years dealing with Covid-19. The societies are also planning the shows for this season and are looking forward to another successful season!

### **State Director's Report for North Carolina, Sept 2023 — Submitted by John R. Fields and Bob Cox**

Fall of 2022 was one of hope and excitement as the new camellia season was about to burst into bloom, with the sasanquas beginning to show color and the buds on the japonicas gibed and swelling for the upcoming show schedule. The NC clubs were planning for two great shows, and everyone was looking forward to all the shows in our region.

With the termination of COVID restrictions came the hope of knowing we would finally get back to enjoying the flower and the company of people who love this flower so dearly. The NC show schedules for both the Fayetteville and the Tidewater Camellia Club in Wilmington were a go, with no restrictions in mind, as were the meetings of both clubs. The Fayetteville Camellia Club Fall Plant Sale, October 2022, was held at the Ross and Cathy Kubeny's Garden. The Tidewater Camellia Club Fall Celebration and Camellia Sale, Nov 2022, was held at the New Hanover County Arboretum. Both events were supported and enjoyed by many club members and public attendees of all ages.

Similar to last year's weather, the season was blessed with ample rain and mild temperatures. There were no large tropical storms nor ice storms to ruin the blooms in Eastern NC. The season of good weather was followed by two outstanding camellia shows — the 75th Annual Camellia Show in Fayetteville and the Annual Camellia Festival in Wilmington.

The 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Camellia Show in Fayetteville was a historic show and took place on March 4-5, 2023, at Cape Fear Botanical Garden, Rt 301, Fayetteville. The Show was a great success, and the location was beautiful.

The Annual Camellia Festival, February 24-25, 2023, was held at the New Hanover County Arboretum. This was a smashing success. The show was preceded by a wonderful Judges' banquet on Wrightsville Beach for the first time. This was a very special time for all.

Both shows created a great deal of publicity for the camellia, and more than 1200 blooms were shown by over 40 exhibitors and untold numbers of members from both clubs. Many new members joined the ACS and the local clubs as a part of the festivals. There were camellia care presentations, hands-on workshops, camellia garden tours, floral displays by local clubs, fun family activities, plus county school's camellia art displays at both shows involving a record number of young artists.

In addition to the outstanding shows, The Tidewater Club provided grants and volunteers for the installation of raised beds for two local schools to enhance the gardening experience and education. They also rejuvenated by pruning camellias at the historical Oakdale Cemetery, as well as preservation of cultivars by propagation with air layers from local gardens.

The Fayetteville club participated in local garden tours, preserving many old cultivars through cuttings and air layering, and planted multiple camellia plants at the Cape Fear Botanical Gardens.

Both The Tidewater and Fayetteville Clubs are excited about the upcoming year and look forward to sharing their beautiful blooms again in 2024.

### **State Director's Report for Maryland, Northern Virginia, and DC, Sept 2023 — Submitted by Richard Mohr**

The CSPV had a Holiday luncheon at Greenspring Garden in Alexandria on December 11, 2022, and a PowerPoint on showing camellias was given, and a meeting discussing our upcoming show was held at the National Arboretum meeting room on March 12, 2023. Our 67<sup>th</sup> annual Camellia show was held on April 1, 2023, at Brookside Garden in Wheaton, MD, with 424 Blooms, 300 attendees, & 14 exhibitors. The best-unprotected bloom was Kumasaka, and the best-protected bloom was Linda Carol.

A summer picnic was held at David and Lenka's home in McLean, VA. A demonstration on Air layering was presented, and a discussion on future meetings and scheduling the 2024 Annual Show was held.

Plans are to have another Holiday luncheon at Greenspring next December and the 2024 Annual Show on March 23 at Brookside Gardens.

The latest CSPV Membership is 20 Active or returning members and 20 new members for a total of 40 paid members.

### **State Director's Report for Florida, Sept 2023 — Submitted by Jerry Selph**

The four societies located on the Florida peninsula are Gainesville, Ocala, Lakeland, and Orlando.

The **Gainesville Society** reports that their membership has almost recovered to pre-covid levels. They had a much smaller show than normal. They had fabulous plant sales, which gave them the money to have several special projects.

They hosted a We Love You Chuck Ritter Party and the members paid homage to Chuck and Bev for their many years of service to their society.

They also have instituted a program of giving two \$1500 scholarships to current students studying Ornamental Horticulture at The University of Florida.

Their welcome back-meeting is scheduled for September 17; they are hoping for a good crowd.

The **Ocala Society** is back up and running after the summer break. Their two longtime sponsors have moved, and they are working hard to continue the club. They did not have a show due to weather considerations.

The **Lakeland Society** is maintaining, which is good following the challenges of COVID. They had a successful show and are working hard to get the club back up and functioning after the summer break.

The **Orlando Society** is functioning at top performance after having a successful 2022-23 year. Their show was a success, and they are planning another banner year.



**LAVENDER LADY**



**BELLA JINHUA**

## ACCS STATE DIRECTORS

State	Name	Term
Florida	Jerry Selph	2022-2024
Florida	Howard Rhodes	2022-2024
Georgia	Gene Phillips	2023-2025
Georgia	Sandra Jones	2023-2025
Louisiana	Jim Campbell	2022-2024
Maryland	Richard Mohr	2023-2025
North Carolina	John Fields	2023-2025
North Carolina	Cathy Kubeny	2023-2025
South Carolina	Paul Cloessner	2022-2024
South Carolina	Philip Thomas	2022-2024
Virginia	Toni McKenna	2022-2024
At Large	Vacant	2022-2024

### **Join NOW! — The Atlantic Coast Camellia Society**

A membership entitles you to a journal published in January, May, and September and full access to ACCS Website. To join, send your check and membership info below to:

**ACCS, Fred C. Jones  
2056 Dunn Road  
Moultrie, GA 31768**

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**Membership Form**

**ACCS Annual Dues, Good for 1 Year from Date of Payment**

**Single or Double \$25.00**

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**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Telephone # (include Area Code):** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-Mail:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Camellia Japonica 'Royal Velvet'**  
**Grown and Photographed by Mark Crawford**