

# Atlantic Coast Camellia

JOURNAL OF THE ATLANTIC COAST CAMELLIA SOCIETY



*Camellia Sinensis*

## **Corrections to previous edition**

Due to oversight, we neglected to change the volume and edition of the first Journal this year. The January 2005 journal was Vol. LII, No. 1

The Editor and Co-Editor humbly apologize for misspelling Mr. Ogle Hess's name in the article, "Thanks to Jim Lively," in the January 2005 issue. The correct spelling is Ogle Hess. Our apologies...and, again, thank you, Mr. Hess, for donating the paintings.

**Cover Photograph:** *Camellia Sinensis* photograph was provided by Mrs. Julia Leisenring. (See "Tea" article on page 9)

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# President's Message

By Lee Poe, Jr.

Dear Members and Friends:

The Atlantic Coast Camellia Society is planning its Spring Board Meeting in Columbia on May 7 at the home of Pete and Donna Denton. At that meeting, we will continue planning the annual meeting for Myrtle Beach in September and conducting other Society business.

As many of you know, 2005 is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ACCS and we are holding a 25<sup>th</sup> year celebration at that Myrtle Beach convention. A history and planning committee has been appointed to plan this celebration. The committee is made up of John Newsome (Chairman) Mildred Robertson, and Bonnie Serpas.

By the time you receive this journal, the camellia blooming period will be over and our plants are in full growth. It is time to fertilize and be vigilant watching for insects and diseases that may attack your plants. As I have been telling people in my talks about camellias, you can spend as much time as you like on your camellia plants. As all of you know, camellias are tough and can live with no attention. On the other hand, they will do better if certain care is given. They need our help to prosper. I suggest removal of fallen blooms, leaves and mulch at this time. I replace removed mulch with several

inches of new pine straw. All of you have your own fertilizing regime, so do it. The weather is perfect and I have a great desire to sit in the warm Spring sun in the backyard but my plants keep telling me to pay attention to them.

For those of us with greenhouses, I am removing my plants and placing them in my yard where they will live during the summer. Since my greenhouse is covered with plastic, I need to remove the plastic and finish cleaning up for summer.

I have recently finished all of my scheduled camellia talks. The last two weeks have been very busy. I spoke/demonstrated at the SC Master Gardeners annual meeting here in Aiken. I discussed camellia propagation and had hands-on air layering by the Master Gardeners who attended the meeting at Hopelands Garden in Aiken. Members of the Aiken Camellia Society supported me in this and other speaking opportunities. The Aiken Camellia Society demonstrated camellia propagation (sprouting seed, rooting camellia cuttings, air layering camellias, and grafting) at North Augusta Kids' Earth Day and at the three-day August Spring Garden Show at the Sacred Heart Cultural Center. We had lots of people stop by to learn about and discuss their camellias. One of the more gratifying situations was to have the opportunity

to talk with young adults, who were raised in families that grew camellias, and had a love for their parents' camellias but had moved away from it and are now drawn to get clones of Momma's or Daddy's camellias for their own gardens. Air layering might be the correct approach for them to accomplish that objective. The approach was described, demonstrated and encouragement was given to do it now.

In closing, let me thank you for allowing me to ramble on about my love for camellias and to stress to you, "use good camellia culture for your plants." As summer season approaches, I will be watering my plants. I look forward to seeing many of you sometime during the next few months.



*Ruffian*  
**The 2005 Armenta Cawood Award Winner**

# **CAMELLIAS TELL HUMANS WHEN THEY WANT TO BE GRAFTED, AIR-LAYERED OR ROOTED—EVEN WHEN TO PLANT THEIR SEEDS**

**by Richard Mims**

In South Carolina and throughout the Southeast we are blessed with four seasons. Winter has just ended, and spring has sprung. Plants are greening up, flowering and spreading pollen to fertilize seeds for next years babies. After summer, fall will arrive. Sap will go to the roots of plants to provide them energy for that spurt of growth and flowering next spring.

Summer begins at the time of Summer Solstice—the time during the year at which the sun in its elliptical orbit reaches its maximum distance from the earth at the Tropic of Cancer. It occurs a little after the third week in June. Winter arrives when the sun is over the Tropic of Capricorn shortly after the end of the third week in December. At midday for several days before and after a solstice the sun seems to stay in the same position.

The genus *Camellia* is one of those beautiful but odd plants that want to grow in spring, put on its flower buds in the heat of the summer and show its spectacular flowers in the cold months of winter. When the heat arrives and cherry blossoms and azaleas are at their glorious peak of

bloom any camellia blooms on a bush will just wilt and flop until the cool dampness of the evening arrives.

The “trigger” that makes each stage of the natural life-cycle of a plant begin is the amount of daylight in a day. In most flowers and bulbs decreasing daylight causes embryonic flowers to be formed deep in the center of buds just waiting to emerge in another length of daylight as a beautiful flower with “honey raw material” that will attract pollinators such as humming birds, bees, butterflies, ants and other insects.

The camellia life cycle differs from most other evergreens because increasing lengths of daylight and heat in June and July trigger the growth of flower buds. Shorter day lengths beginning in fall advancing to the shortest length of daylight in December stimulate the flowers to open--bright sunny days help this process. Camellias are odd because they differ from most other shrubs like forsythia and most azaleas that bloom at the same time each year. All camellias are not in the same length of daylight blooming category. Some bloom early (October,



November); others bloom in mid-season (December) and others are late bloomers (January, February). Still others bloom from early season all the way through late season. Very cold weather also tends to delay blooming. The flower wants to open on a nice warm day so it can be pollinated and form seeds.

Experiments have shown us that camellias grafted before January produce fewer “takes.” By providing a higher rate of grafting success in late January and February, the camellia is telling us it prefers to be grafted at that time so its rising sap can nourish the little scion and help it heal its wounds. While it can also be done at any time a plant produces a semi-hardwood cutting with a “tight” bud on the end, from late January until the growth bud starts swelling is the best time to graft camellias.

Now it is April. Trees and flowers are awakening from a long winter’s dormancy. Sap, (the lifeblood of a bush) is rising from plant roots which get their nutrients and water from the soil. The sap provides food causing leafing out in various tones of green throughout the countryside. The sap flowing up to furnish nutrition to the leaves and new growth enables the bark to “slip.” The plant is not only helping that little graft heal but also letting us know that we can remove a ring of bark and air-layer to produce a new “child.” This is a timely notification because the plant wants its offspring to start out on its own (separated from its mother) in September or October before real cold weather arrives. While grafting can be

done any time of the year, April and May (when the sap is rising) is the best time to air-layer camellias. Plants layered in April and May may have a flower or two in the year layered if the propagator does not remove buds. The second year the plant will produce normal sized blooms.

We are not able to see it; but, the effect of the length of daylight is very strong. The fall “trigger” causes sap to go to the roots and take with it nourishment. On its way it will convert chlorophyll and such into compounds such as starches and drop them off into buds to enable the buds to be more cold-hardy and “do their thing” while the plant is resting and sleeping in winter.

How does the camellia tell us when to plant its seeds? It ripens them just before winter, opens the pods and lets them fall to the ground where, ideally they will find a nice cuddly, soft warm spot in the soil where leaves and debris from deciduous trees will cover them well; keep them moist; provide a place for roots to grow and when the days lengthen in April cause a nice little camellia plant to grow. Its timing in producing seeds is telling us “I want my seeds planted as soon as they are mature.” (Humans, much like camellia seeds, seem to be affected by the winter solstice. They love to rest in a nice cuddly, warm spot especially around Christmas holiday. More children are born in September and October than any other months.)

One would think that water, weather, heat, and cold would be the major factors influencing growth, budding and flowering. While very cold weather will delay blooming and plants begin growth earlier than outside when grown in greenhouses, only a couple of weeks separates the seasons from Florida to California. The camellia has something built in that tells it to ignore the weather but keep up with when the sun comes up in the mornings and when it sets in the afternoons. Very seldom are they

fooled by rain, snow or temperature changes. Believe it or not, a camellia must have some type of “brain.” They let us know that when the sap starts and right before growth buds swell that it is time to graft. When the bark starts to slip—air layering must be done for the precise time to grow on the plants own roots before winter. The seeds mature and start to pop open when they want to be planted. If man doesn’t do it, the shrub will try to produce itself.

## THE ATLANTIC COAST CAMELLIA SOCIETY

We are a society who wants more members to help us promote the science of Camellia culture by exchanging knowledge and ideas with Camellia specialists, provide information about shows and social events and join us at our annual meeting in Myrtle Beach in September or October each year. Annual dues are \$12.50 per year for singles or couples. A membership entitles you to a journal published in Spring, Summer and Fall. To join, send your check and personal information for receiving communications and journals to ACCS, Bonnie Serpas, 229 Green Street, Santee, SC 29142.

### **Membership Dues**

ACCS Dues 9/1/05 - 8/31/06

Single or Double

\$12.50

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# TEA

By Julia Leisenring



Tea, *Camellia sinensis*

My interest in *Camellia sinensis* (the species in the camellia family grown by makers of the commercial product, tea) began when a magnificent plant was shown to me by my mother. It was a tall shrub growing in hot sun right off the terrace of our home in Aiken, South Carolina. Its small, button-sized white flowers literally cover the plant and appear in early fall and cease after a hard frost or in mild years around early December. This plant is a heavy seed bearer and the seeds may be picked up year round. Magnificent, deep dark green glistening leaves sport a network of veins viewable on either side of each evergreen leaf.

Fruitland Nurseries, owned by the Berckmans Brothers and established in Augusta, Georgia in 1856 (now part of that beautiful Augusta

National Golf Course) sold many trees, shrubs and plants to my grandmother and to my mother starting in the early 1930's. This specimen *Camellia sinensis* by the terrace was one of those shrubs.

The common Tea plant was originally classified as *Thea sinensis*. In 1935, however, it was redesignated as *Camellia Sinensis* (Source: William Ackerman). The new designation did not result in immediate change. In the 1943-1944 Fruitland Nursery catalog, the shrub was still listed as *Thea sinensis*.

*Camellia sinensis* has many varieties. Kai Mei and David Parks, Camellia Forest Nursery proprietors, in Chapel Hill, N.C., state "Tea is like cheese, every village (in China) has its own strain of tea plants that have different

qualities. There is even a tea variety developed in China that is caffeine free.” Camellia Forest Nursery sells four *C. sinensis* cultivars and also provides a tea recipe for anyone interested in brewing up a cup or two.

Around fifteen years ago, the New York Times printed an article about the Charleston Tea Plantation on Wadmalaw Island located 24 miles south of downtown Charleston on property previously owned by the well-known tea company, Thomas I. Lipton. My interest in the shrub caused me to persuade friends to journey to Wadmalaw Island for a visit to this commercial operation. Two gentlemen from the Charleston area set up this plantation and received a patent on equipment to harvest the tea. They harvested and prepared the tea, and bagged it into packages labeled American Classic Tea sold throughout the South by food chains.

My second visit to the Charleston Tea plantation was at the time the Garden Conservancy in Cold Spring, New York, met in Charleston to celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Gone were all the unlabeled *Camellia sinensis* plants with which Thomas I. Lipton Co. had been experimenting.

On this second visit I took along branches of tea plants from my grounds in Aiken. The owner was amazed that my tea branches matched perfectly those cultivars growing in

long rows on the plantation. A genetic study would be interesting and probably show the same origins and possibly the specific location of the world on which the original plants were grown.

Alas, this sole tea plantation in the United States had to close. The good news is that the Bigelow Tea Company headquartered in Fairfield, Connecticut has taken over the property and will erect a building for the public to visit and experience some of the history of the tea, understand the tea business and drink up. Perhaps I and those of you who grow *Camellia sinensis* should take advantage of this lovely plant and make from scratch what just might be the ideal thing for your or “my cup of tea.

Sources:

Trees and Shrubs in Eastern North America, Benjamin Blackburn, 1952.

Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs, Rehder, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1962.

“How the Camellia Came to Augusta, Georgia,” Naomi Holt Barnard, American Camellia Society Yearbook, 1948.

The Garden Conservancy, Cold Spring, New York.

Growing Camellias in Cold Climates, William L. Ackerman, 2002.

# Serpas's Believe It or Not

By Tyler Mizzell

When it comes to grafting, Geary Serpas is certainly a pro. Just look at this one year-old plant that he grafted in March of 2004. It stands six feet, five inches tall in March of 2005. The scion of *Sea Foam* was chosen from Dr. Racoff's prize winning plant. It is grafted on a plant in Buck's yard. Geary is pleased that Buck hasn't killed it.

Geary, Buck, and Wilbur (Buck's right-hand man on the farm) graft approximately 75 plants each year. People often ask Geary, "what do you do with all those plants?" Geary usually answers, "I graft them for Buck to kill." Buck is known to have a heavy hand with the fertilizer and sprays. Geary and Bill Robertson move their grafts from Buck's farm as early as possible to escape Buck's path of destruction.

I really think the boys graft so many scions each year because they enjoy watching them grow. Geary's success rate is very high and gets higher each year due to his patience and the enormous amount of practice. Practice promotes perfection...I think!! (Ha! Ha!)

Seriously, Geary conducts grafting workshops for the Coastal Carolina Camellia Club and for the Mid-Carolina Camellia Club each spring. His step-by-step presentation is excellent! Thanks, Geary, for all you do for us and all of the Camellia clubs in the Southeast.

P.S. Believe it or not, Geary grows prize winning blooms on Green Street, too.



# **Atlantic Coast Camellia Society Members Enjoyed Attending the American Camellia Convention: A Photo Essay**

**Photos provided by Cheryl and Warren Thompson**



























## Sasanquas Are Versatile

**Reprint from Southern California Camellia Society  
*Camellia Review*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Nov. 1963**

While japonicas and reticulatas will always catch the eye with most people insofar as the blooms are concerned, both on the exhibit table and on the plant, they do not have the flexibility of use in the garden that is found in sasanquas. In fact, the bloom is of secondary importance, even though desirable, when sasanquas are used as background material in the garden. In such cases foliage is the important thing, and sasanqua foliage is unsurpassed with respect to brightness, texture and the ease with which it can be trained to cover a fence or wall. Since the flower is not the most important thing, some people have used their own seedlings in the interest of saving a few dollars, selecting the seedling

plants that have acceptable flowers, the brightest foliage and have started to grow in the desired manner.

While the sasanqua is probably best suited for training on a wall or fence, this does not preclude its use as a specimen plant in the ground or in a container. Some varieties seem to grow naturally into specimen plants. New sasanqua varieties are being introduced in which the flowers have more substance and do not fall apart so easily. It is suggested that when there is need for foliage in the yard, thought be given to the use of sasanquas rather than to some other plant that has neither flower nor the bright green year around foliage.



# Judging School and Foilage

By Richard Mims

There in the American Camellia Society Yearbook, 2003, turned to Page 93, was my name just as plain as day. On the listing of Active Judges and Novice Judges I was to “expire” in 2006. Now that just cannot happen. I just love to go to Camellia shows and I don’t enjoy peeping from the rear of the room while others are doing the judging. I want to be in the midst of things. In fact, I like to rove around with Lew and see all.

It so happened that around the same time I noticed when I would expire that I got the announcement for the 60th annual American Camellia Society convention in Macon. On the starting date of the convention in February a judging school would be held. I thought rather than drive from home to Massee Lane the morning of the judging school I could go a day earlier and attend. I mentioned my plans to friends at the Mid-Carolina Camellia Society meeting who suggested that I really didn’t need to attend. Because I had helped judge more than ten shows each year since I became a judge, I could use that fact for reaccreditation. After all, the specific requirement is that you have judged ten or more shows over the past three years. Now I faced a dilemma—attend judging school again or use other means to renew my judging credentials. I chose judging school for the following reasons: I would have the opportunity to discuss

and clarify a few judging experiences; I wouldn’t have to write for a form, fill it out and then mail it back; It would give me a reason to go to Macon early and something to do while in Macon that morning; Best of all (the deciding factor) I would meet a few more people interested in growing and showing camellias—another group of camellia friends.

The name of the instructor was not provided. My first judging school was taught by the late Marvin Jernigan and I did wonder who was teaching this one. When I walked into the “school,” I was pleasantly surprised to see two of the most knowledgeable camellia people in the world getting ready their instructional materials. Jerry Hogsette was checking out his PowerPoint presentation while Elaine Smelly was focusing a slide show of beautiful camellia blooms. I knew from the time I walked into the classroom that I had made the right decision. I knew that I would not only learn something new but also enjoy hearing what these friends had to say—things I might not learn from judging blooms in a Camellia show. Also, it had caused me to reread the manual—in detail—for a test. Sure, we judges are supposed to read the manual at least once each season. Yeah!

The excellent way Jerry presented the program clarified some points for me

and will improve my judging. Thanks Jerry! I could mention a few things that will help me but the reason for this article is to talk about just one-- leaves or a leaf on show blooms – leaves, *supposedly* a mere 5 points out of 100 used in point scoring.

Rules & Regulations...Book One, Chapter 1, Section 2 – Acceptance of Exhibits

(d) Wiring and Foliage: *One or two leaves, not necessarily attached, with color and vigor characteristics of the variety must be exhibited with each bloom.*

My major goal in a show is to try to win sweepstakes although I know it involves the most work. Leaving foliage attached saved me both time in packing blooms to take to the show and in unpacking and placing blooms in individual containers at a show. Until February, 2005, I never took the time to give much attention to foilage. Not only do leaves grow upside down, and perpendicular, their petioles can be so long that they make the leaves look like my oversized ears did when I was a boy. Leaves can also be damaged by weather, by sucking, chewing, and boring insects and harbor a little scale that spraying missed. Leaves can dwarf a bloom or be so small they are not visible unless one looks under the bloom. Any of the above “catastrophe leaves” can be attached to the two inches or less of stem usually permitted on a Camellia bloom at a show. Unless the bloom is an outstanding specimen, a bad leaf may cause a judge to say, “give it a ribbon but let it stay.”

Mildred Robertson, my major judging mentor, had hinted in the past few years that I needed to pay more attention to the leaves on my blooms—sometimes strongly-- but always short of hitting me over the head with her nomenclature book. Buddy Cawthon caught my attention at a contention table at a show when he hollered out, “some d-m person left the leaf upside down on this magnificent bloom.” (After a quick glance, I thought it was mine because I had given little attention to leaves that day) I really didn’t realize the significance of giving leaves attention from people telling me what *not to do* but I did realize the full significance when Jerry showed us on slides at judging school *how leaves should be presented*. Right there on the screen was the same bloom with “a leaf placed to enhance the appearance of the camellia bloom” and another with a leaf stuck in only “because a leaf or two is required.” Wow! a well-placed leaf makes a huge difference in presentation although the leaf itself counts only 5 points in the point score. The leaf itself has to be part of the beauty you behold in the exhibit.

Much to do with placement requires artistic ability which I have little of. Lucky for me, though, it can be learned and I think I have learned it. A leaf or leaves attached to the exhibit must show the bloom to its best advantage. A large leaf overwhelms a miniature bloom. Always chose a small leaf from the bush when exhibiting a miniature. A large reticulata looks better with a large leaf half tucked under the bloom. With only half of the leaf showing

table space is saved. If a representative leaf is not available, place the leaf under the flower leaving enough of the tip showing to give balance. Large leaves with large flowers may be placed to perhaps hold up a petal that wants to droop and spoil its symmetry. An attached leaf many times keeps a magnificent flower tilted or resting incorrectly in its container. Detachment of that leaf can give a snug fit that enhances the blooms beauty. Face it, literally and aesthetically, one well-placed, detached leaf not only compliments a bloom but also gives judges more space to mark cards and clerks more space to attach place stickers.

Although the leaves are supposed to count only five points, I believe, in reality, they subconsciously count more. Ask any judge about judging and most will tell you that when they scan a variety grouping usually there is one outstanding bloom that "hits the eyes" or one that "makes a statement." When we appreciate a work of art such as a painting, one wrong brush stroke or misplaced color can cause us to choose one piece over another. When we go to a concert whether or not we consider a musician great is whether or not a note wasn't missed.

Small, seemingly insignificant things influence us more than we think.

Leaves are required on horticultural exhibits. Why not take advantage of their beauty. At the Macon show in February, for the first time since I started showing camellias I tried to choose and place a leaf to enhance the bloom. I say "a leaf" because I only

used one per bloom. If a bloom were a clock, the leaf was placed at a twenty till or twenty after. (Notice the focal point on landscape paintings. The artist usually puts that point to the right or left of center.) On a few blooms a leaf was placed at a "little void" or to hold up a petal. I put a small leaf on a miniature and a leaf to match the size on the other exhibits. When I was picking the flower for packing I tried to choose a perfect leaf to go with each flower. The leaf was packed beside the flower in the travel box.

My efforts were not in vain. I enjoyed (and I know, beamed) after a comment from Robert Ehrhardt, a past president of ACS. "Richard, I like the way you display your flowers." I said only, "Thank You." (I'm sorry I didn't tell him at the time that Jerry Hogsette's presentation at Judging School and two of my mentors Mildred and Buddy were responsible and this was really the first time I had made an all out effort to enhance my flowers with a leaf rather than just to put a leaf in because it was required.)

I also learned in the process that when flowers are transported, fewer blooms are damaged if all leaves are removed before the blooms are packed. This could very well be why the best flower in the show, my "Ruffian," the 2005 Arminta Cawood Award winner made it to the show from Columbia to Macon without a blemish, Leaf placement may well have gotten the judges' attention to place it in contention.

**ATLANTIC COAST CAMELLIA SOCIETY**

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# Camellias

**Les Marbury**