

Atlantic Coast Camellias

JOURNAL OF THE ATLANTIC COAST
CAMELLIA SOCIETY



Pleasant Memories
Camellia reticulata

Vol. LIX

September 2011

No. 3

Atlantic Coast Camellia Society Past Presidents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Hulyn Smith (deceased) | 1980-1982 |
| Annabelle Fetterman | 1983-1984 |
| Elliott P. Brogden (deceased)... .. | 1985-1986 |
| Richard Waltz | 1987-1988 |
| Leslie Cawthon (deceased) | 1989-1990 |
| Marion Edwards (deceased) | 1991-1992 |
| Mildred Robertson | 1993-1994 |
| Ed Powers | 1995-1996 |
| Bill Hardwick | 1997-1998 |
| Jeanette Waltz | 1999-2000 |
| Geary Serpas | 2001-2002 |
| Bob Reese | 2003-2004 |
| W. Lee Poe | 2005-2006 |
| John Newsome | 2007-2008 |
| Glenn Capps | 2009-2010 |

Cover Photo
Flower by Buck and Tyler
Mizzell
Photograph by Mary K. Hall

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Be sure to check the 2011-2012 show dates online at

<http://atlanticcoastcamelliasociety.org>



President's Message

Mack McKinnon

Richard Buggeln is now the web-master and has done an outstanding job updating the site. The address is <http://atlanticcoastcamelliasociety.org> (it was previously a ".com" address). I invite members to visit the site. Also, if your local club has a website, the club can be linked to the ACCS website by joining the ACCS. The treasurer or I will have Richard link it. Be sure to bookmark the ACCS website as one of your favorites!



As you know, more of the Florida clubs are now part of the Atlantic Coast Territory. Jim Dickson and I put together a letter that is being distributed to the new clubs and members in our area. We hope to encourage them to join the ACCS and participate in activities such as the upcoming convention. When you see or talk with those in the Florida area, be sure to tell them how much fun we have.

The convention will be September 16 & 17. The schedule, activities and registration information are here in the Journal and on the ACCS website. Please make your plans and sign-up early. A fun time will be had by all!!!

Can you believe it? In just a couple months we will begin attending the fall camellia shows. It is time to be getting the plants disbudded and the gibb ready. From the looks of the bud set on my plants I'll have quite a job removing the excess buds. For the early shows it is suggested to start gibbing in the second half of August. Hope to see your blooms on the Head Table!

See You At The Convention,
Mack

Pruning Camellias

by Richard C. Mims

Cameliaphytes who write articles about pruning advise that we start shaping and planning for a beautiful adult camellia plant early in its life. I am going to advise pruning for seedlings immediately after the seed has sprouted and a tap root is visible. (We cannot get earlier than that.) Take a sharp knife and cut the tip off the taproot shortly after the seed sprouts, has a short top, and transplant it from the sprouting medium into a good balanced, porous soil mixture. Let the seed rest on the soil surface barely covered with light material with the tap root pointing downward. The snip you made to remove the point will cause that seedling to put out lateral roots to get food and rapidly grow a top.

Most camellias thrive with pruning that can be done at any time during the year. There are “best” times for everything, though, and best times for pruning camellias are early fall for light pruning and late spring for drastic, renewal pruning. Every single little camellia plant deserves the opportunity to grow and produce beautiful blooms during the dead of winter and spring when our eyes want to see something besides the brown, dead-looking bushes and snows. It is our job to see that each little plant gets what it deserves and even better—plan to show it to thousands of lovers of flowers at Camellia shows. Talk to the camellia, pet it, play it music but don’t forget to keep trimming it with selective proper pruning and never shearing it as one shears a hedge. You tell your barber to give you a hair cut that doesn’t look like a hair cut—now that is what you want to do with a camellia...prune it to look natural.

I’m writing this article for the September issue because better blooms can be produced through utilizing a pruning in September. Heavy pruning, however, must wait until early spring just before the plants put on their flush of spring growth. When plants are moved during winter time, it is best to use pruning and balance the top mass to match any pruning or breakage of root ball.

Each year in January or early February, the Mid-Carolina Camellia Society has what is known as the Geary and Buck Show. Do not construe this to be the same as the Buck and Bill Show at the annual beach convention. Instead of being a fun auction, our

show is for Geary's grafting demonstrations and Buck's pruning demonstrations.

Geary Serpas begins by causing most new members to gasp and groan when he quickly decapitates a beautiful camellia plant and lets the severed top hit the table. He only leaves the trunk stub a few inches above soil level to expose the trunk where he will split, insert the graft and teach grafting (an subject we will cover in January with better instructions on hardening off the grafts than we had last time.)

Buck Mizzell follows with his pruning demonstration (sans beer) for which he uses a large plant that might have multiple trunks or were planted two to a pot by a nursery to get a large, sellable plant early. You can picture this—Buck, wielding huge clippers or a saw, makes quick work of all but one major trunk—felling the extras to the table top. Needless to say, those new people seeing severe pruning for the first time act as if they are taking their last breath. The moral here is that a camellia is a small tree and unless it is used in hedges, espaliered, or weeping should forever look the part with one trunk.

Old timers have always advocated painting cuts with wound paint; certain agricultural universities discourage wound painting. They contend the weather splits the paint and causes the area to rot. Who do we believe? Both. I see it this way—camellia diseases, especially die back, enters through wounds. Pruning causes wounds. I don't worry about sap not being able to get out or either rot—I worry about the fungus going in. If Spin Out is available, it is good wound paint. Whether I use Spin Out, Commercial Wound Paint or Elmer's Glue, I mix in a good tablespoon of fungicide. I have found that glue laced with fungicide makes good wound paint. If the spot rots, perhaps the fungicide residue will still keep away fungi. On camellias, I believe the dressing gives the wound time to start a callous or healing process before rot sets in. To further keep down disease always sterilize pruning shears, saws, knives—anything you use. Some people use 1 part Clorox to 9 parts water; others use alcohol; others mix fungicide with water for the pruning instruments to rest in when not in use. If you don't 'dip' before each cut, at least dip when you leave one plant for another. (I'm not talking about snuff.) When two people work together one can

prune while the other paints. Fewer wounds are missed when using togetherness. Also, who knows what can happen when two get together after a pruning session.

Where to cut is extremely important. (These illustrations use small branches. The same type pruning is done on large branches using appropriate pruning instruments.) When a stub is left to rot off it may introduce disease. All branches have a collar. Some collars are visible and some are not. Always cut as close to the collar as possible or a line flush with the source of the limb (Figure A). Many camellia cuts are not back to a trunk but to a growth bud (Figure B). Make a slanted cut with the lowest part slightly above (around an eighth inch) a bud pointing in the direction you want the new limb to grow.

Now that you know where to cut, begin pruning by removing all dead and diseased wood. I prune ends of limbs where buds were treated with giberelic acid the previous season. Because giberelic acid causes the growth buds it touches to grow and be pinched out or die. I always cut this back to a nice green growth bud below that point. Also, remove the spindly and crossing growth that may interfere with opening flowers.

When you are pruning, please notice the surprising number of limbs that are dead that have a wire name tag hanging. I think there



Figure A—Pruned limb showing branch cut at collar.



Figure B—Cut at a growth bud.

must be something about the name tag that kills the limb and possibly research attention should be given to this phenomenon. Sometimes that limb is the only one dead on the camellia. Also be certain to place that tag on another limb, or pot to prevent losing the varietal name. You know the name but the plant will probably outlive you so your heirs or a purchaser of your property will probably never know the camellia's name if the tag is missing. The only good thing that comes out of people forgetting to replace tags after pruning and losing varietal names is that camellia societies sometimes get new members when people come by asking for identification of a camellia that was "inherited."

After the necessary pruning, visualize the plant you want to see fitting into the space you want it to grow. Consult the *Nomenclature* and find out the natural growing form of the variety you are planning to prune. If it grows pyramidal, don't fight its natural shape-- the same with round or bushy. Use pruning and the plant's genes to add to its natural beauty. Shaded, matted dense growth is really for the birds...and scale... and bugs...with really no room for buds to open without bruises. In most cases, with camellias that have regular pruning merely thin out the branches to give the plant good air circulation.

Haven't we all marveled at the art of bonsai? Those ancient miniature trees are shaped and pruned throughout their lives with limbs carefully trained to make an eye-appealing plant utilizing space. The plant is carefully studied before each clip is made. (Camellia growers can follow bonsai example and use stakes or wires to help shape plants.) The spaces between the limbs on bonsai are as important as the limb itself. You hear camellia pruners say to "leave enough space between limbs to throw a cat through." This would be enough space to easily spray underneath leaves and space for flowers to open. Space between limbs is also important for camellias.

Branches should be trimmed so they do not touch the ground. Limbs touching the ground act as ladders for ants and other insects to invade and bring in aphids and scale. Clarence Gordy has another reason--he trims up about two feet from the ground in order to see whether or not a coral or rattle snake has taken up

residence under the shade.

This may be unimportant, but on new plants I usually cut off all guard leaves across the petiole (Figure C). The guard leaf is immediately below each new branch. If those guards and spontaneously growing leaves along trunks are removed with a stub of petiole, the stub dies, drops off after healing at base and it seems that no die back enters that limb. I think camellia leaves live up to four years before dropping naturally.

Most gardeners are puzzled with the pruning process. Just a few years ago, growers didn't want to even pick a bloom off their camellias much less cut off a trunk or limb. If pruned correctly and at correct times, old plantings can be renewed by heading back. Selective pruning of burned, frozen, and damaged limbs can give a camellia a new life. Growers who show blooms can prune in September to limit buds, balance plants with root systems, make spraying easier, and actually improve quality of blooms. An important point must be remembered: the new bush you want to grow may take judicious pruning not one year, but over two or three years. When a bush is topped the hormone, auxin, moves down the plant and causes much new lateral growth, one has to be very selective in rubbing out excess growth and only keeping the shaping branches.

Greenhouse growers, out of necessity may be more drastic with pruning and will keep unshaped plants that would be considered ugly and would not be tolerated in a landscape. My greenhouse is not a place for spectators. If I have a plant with only one limb with good healthy buds, so be it. Sometimes that plant, lacking in good looks, will produce a very pretty flower.

Pruning is just like painting. The most difficult part is getting started and continuing until the task is done. Oh...use paint thinner or charcoal lighter fluid to get the black wound paint off your body.



Figure C—Marked leaves are guard leaves.

Lack of Chlorophyll in Leaves

At the August meeting of the Mid-Carolina Camellia Society, a member brought in a camellia branch with beautiful foliage yet many leaves were mottled yellow and showed a lack of green chlorophyll. When told it was **probably** a virus she remarked, “but it came from a white variety.” I told her that I would **suspect** that a red camellia grafted on the roots of that white camellia that has mottled leaves would have a variegated bloom. To my knowledge, no one has ever found the real cause of this phenomenon but it doesn’t seem to affect flowering or bloom quality. Her mottled leaf specimen looked perfectly healthy.

Many growers, including myself, look for mottled leaves when wanting a camellia that has more variegation than just enough to make it miss a blue ribbon at a show. The leaf virus seems to me to be associated with bloom virus although in some cases, it could be lack of proper nutrition in the soil. Also, I have purchased “foliage” plants sold for the beauty of leaf variegations rather than flower variegations: *Golden Spangles* and *Tago* are examples. Because these foliage plants have “patterns” of color, probably genetic, couldn’t random mottling as the one described above be genetic?



Atlantic Coast Camellia Society
Annual Convention

September 16 & 17, 2011

at beautiful

Litchfield Beach & Golf Resort
US Route 17
14276 Ocean Highway
Litchfield Beach, South Carolina 29585

Convention Rates:

| | |
|-------------------------|------|
| Entire Convention: | \$90 |
| Friday Sept. 6 only: | \$25 |
| Saturday, Sept. 7 only: | \$65 |
| ACCS Dues: | \$15 |

Saturday Night Banquet
Please choose between
Prime Rib or
Crab Cake Stuffed Flounder

Registration is by check only. Registration must be
received no later than September 9, 2011
No Refunds after September 9, 2011

Send registration form (page 14 or online at
<http://www.atlanticcoastcamelliasociety.org> -
follow the link to the convention information)
and check to:

Bonnie Serpas, Treasurer
Atlantic Coast Camellia Society
229 Green Street
Santee, SC 29142

Tentative Schedule

More information is available on the website:

<http://atlanticcoastcamelliasociety.org>

Friday, September 16, 2011

- 10:30-12:00 am ACCS Board Meeting
- 1:00-4:30 pm Special Events (information available on website)
- 5:00-9:00 pm Welcome Party and Bar-B-Que Dinner (6:00 pm)

Saturday, September 17, 2011

- 7:00-9:00 am Breakfast on your own
- 9:00-10:00 am Bloody Marys, Screwdrivers and Coffee Bar
- 10:00 am-12:30 pm General Meeting with Auction following
- 2:00-3:00 pm Education Program: Gene Phillips - "Hybridizing Camellias in a Historical Setting"
- 2:00-4:00 pm Judges' Re-Accreditation Symposium, Elaine Smelley & Geary Serpas (preregister on website, please)
- 3:00-4:00 pm Education Program: Buck and Tyler Mizzell - "Packing and Transporting Camellia Blooms"
- 5:30-7:00 pm Refreshments/Open Bar
- 7:00-9:00 pm Dinner & Guest Speaker: Randolph Maphis

Litchfield Beach & Golf Resort

**US Route 17
14276 Ocean Highway
Litchfield Beach, South Carolina 29585**



Hotel Rates

Make reservations directly with
Litchfield Beach & Golf Resort,
Litchfield Beach, South Carolina
(800) 845-1897

Special Rate Code is "Camellia"
Rates guaranteed through September 9, 2011

Option # 1 - Summer House - 2 queen beds &
small kitchen & balcony with pool or lake view -
\$97.00 + 15% tax per day

Option # 2 - Seaside Inn - Suite - 2 bedrooms, 2
bathrooms, full kitchen & common room -
\$147.60 + 15% tax per day - limited availability

REGISTRATION FORM FOR ACCS CONVENTION

September 16 – 17, 2011

Litchfield Beach, South Carolina

• **PLEASE REGISTER ME FOR THE FOLLOWING:**

| | No. | Amount |
|--|-------|--------|
| All Events - | | |
| \$90 per Person (Meals as Listed) | _____ | _____ |
| Or daily Rate | | |
| Friday - | | |
| \$25 per Person (incl. Friday night BBQ) | _____ | _____ |
| Saturday - | | |
| \$65 per Person (Includes Banquet) | _____ | _____ |
| ACCS Membership - | | |
| \$15 per person or per couple | _____ | _____ |

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED

INFORMATION:

Name1 – Include Title _____

Name2 – Include Title _____

Name1 – For Name Tag _____

Name2 – For Name Tag _____

Address _____

City/State & ZIP Code _____

Phone Number _____

Email Address _____

Please Indicate Choice for Banquet Entrée

Prime Rib # _____

Crab Cake Stuffed Flounder # _____

Fill Out, Make Checks Payable to ACCS. Checks must be received by September 9 – all fees are non refundable after this date. After September 9, add \$15 per person:

**Bonnie Serpas, Treasurer
Atlantic Coast Camellia Society
229 Green Street**

Scenes from the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society Board Meeting

(in conjunction with Mid-Carolina Camellia
Society Spring Picnic)

at Pete and Donna Denton's Home

Photos provided by Warren Thompson



Donna Denton
Richard Mims



Jim Dickson
Tony Smith



Bonnie Serpas, Treasurer
Mack McKinnon, President
Christine Smith, Secretary



ACCS Board of Directors
Glenn Capps, Bonnie Serpas, Mack McKinnon,
Christine Smith, Tony Smith, Judy Capps,
Cheryl Thompson, Jim Dickson



Pete Denton



Leland Williams
Bonnie Serpas
Mary Kay Hall



Mary Gail Chamblee
Jimmy Richardson



And the Camellia Auction
goes on ...



Auctioneer Buck Mizzell & Cary Chamblee,
Andy and Edie Cross, and
Mary Gail Chamblee, with Pat Pinkerton
and Mary Kay Hall in background.



Tyler and Buck Mizzell,
Bonnie Serpas, and Jim Brogden



Jim, Sharon, and Lawanda Brogden



Bonnie and Geary Serpas
Christine Smith



Tom and Peggy Camp



Tyler Mizzell, Pat Pinkerton, Jo Ann Campbell,
Buck Mizzell. Background: Pete Denton,
Bonnie Serpas, Mary Gail Chamblee

Camellia Misadventures: An Introduction

Bubba Hybrid, B.S., D.C.M

(reprinted with permission - *The Camellia Journal*,
December 2005-February 2006, pages 12-13)

Welcome to *Camellia Misadventures*, a discourse on life in the Camellia world. My name is Bubba Hybrid, and I will tell you more about where I got my name shortly. I have a B.S. degree, and that should be self explanatory; I also have my doctorate in Camellia mistakes or misadventures if you prefer, my D.C.M., so let's just call me Dr. Bubba.

Until 5 years ago, I was a very successful Camellia grower. In the 1970's I bought a house with an established yard which contained a dozen three foot tall Camellia bushes. That these bushes might have names somehow escaped me, and by the time the thought occurred to me, any evidence of tagging or nursery labels was long gone. But I was content to simply enjoy them for the many and beautiful flowers they produced each winter.

Over a period of 25 years the bushes grew and prospered in spite of my best efforts (Figure 1). Because there were boxes of fertilizer at the store that said "Azalea/Camellia Food" I managed to throw a spare handful or two on my Camellias when I fed my Azaleas. They were watered whenever God saw fit to send rain, or whenever the sprinkler system saw fit to water the grass. Periodically I would realize that the bushes were getting so tall that if I were going to be able to get to the flowers on the



top I would need to “prune” the bushes, so armed with a hedge clipper or a saw (Figure 2), I would remove the top 2-3 feet to get them back to my size (something over 6 feet).



In the 25 years I lived with these bushes they were never bothered by insects, scale, petal blight, etc., or if they were they must have sprayed themselves or been self-healing, because I never sprayed them. I am sure they never had “die back” because they were still there and green. In spite of all the other things I did not do, or did wrong, I did rake up the old blooms, pick them up, and dispose of them.

I enjoyed the flowers and had an assortment of red, white, pink and striped (I called them striped because I didn’t know the word “variegated” then). I loved to cut the flowers and bring them into the house because it meant I would get to chase ants all over the kitchen counter. I have never seen anything that liked Camellias better than ants do, and to this day, I still love to go to Camellia Shows and kill ants that are running all over the tables. Here’s a tip for you. You can tell which blooms were picked the day of the show because they have a higher “ant count,” and faster ants, than those which have been in the refrigerator for several days.

But as they say “all good things must come to an end,” and two things happened to curtail my reputation as a successful Camellia grower. The first event was that I moved away from the house with the yard and the cooperative Camellias, and I moved to a house with no Camellias in the yard. This, by itself, would not have been bad, except the second thing was that I stumbled into the midst of a Camellia Show soon thereafter. This was an eye opener!

When you are accustomed to a dozen nameless Camellias, and you suddenly find yourself among 800 Camellias blooms that all have names, you get a sudden feeling of stupidity. (Of course, if you were an anteater you would have thought you had died and gone to heaven.) It’s one thing to deal with differences in color,

but these blooms had different shapes as well, which I had never noticed in my previous life. And if this is not enough, there were also differences in bloom sizes, and there were varieties called japonica, reticulata, and hybrid. (I liked that last one so much I changed my name. Bubba Hybrid sounded like a he-man and would be okay for a guy growing flowers; Bubba Reticulata sounded kind of strange; Bubba Japonica reminded me too much of the war; I couldn't spell Bubba Nittidissima; and I was afraid Bubba Sinensis would come out sounding more like "senseless.")

So anyway, here I was looking at 800 blooms. I knew then I was in trouble because I can't even call my 5 children by their right names, so how in the world could I learn the names of this many camellias. I was pretty good in math, however, so I thought I would use those permutations and combinations I learned in junior high to figure out how many possible types of camellias there were. So I took 6 shapes times 3 varieties, times 5 sizes, times 6 colors and determined that there could be at least 540 different camellias. I knew that there was probably some margin for error in this calculation, but when the man at the information table told me there were 6000 named varieties, I knew that some camellias must look a lot alike.

The folks at the Camellia Show were really nice and full of information. They showed me how to join their Club (they call it a Society, but I think its more like a Club)(, and gave me two camellia plants to take home. They even gave me plants that had name tags so I would know the names of at least two camellia flowers (if I were lucky and could keep them alive long enough for them to bloom). Then they invited me to come to the next meeting of the Society where they were going to have an auction and sell some more plants. I figured with a little luck and some green money I had an instant camellia garden just waiting for my previously honed skills.

The auction was great fun and I took home 8 more camellia plants. It was now time for me to make a major mistake. Armed with my collection of 10 plants, I began to look around my yard for a place to plant them. I had a newly landscaped area inside my fenced back yard which needed something green and living, so I planted 4 of the plants, and they did well (Figure 3).

The mistake came when I decided to place the other six in my side yard. This area has partial shade and although it has some slope, it looked good to me and I figured the slope would help it drain well, so on a Tuesday I planted my other 6 camellias. On Thursday morning I went by to check on them and found that the plants were now only 1/3 as tall as they were when I planted them. First, I checked to see that they had not sunk into the ground



(like into quicksand), and I was able to determine, with only a little research, that the bottom of the plant was all there, and where I had put it, and that what was missing was the top part. It is a pity that camellias don't carry a warning sticker that deer find them very tasty. We knew we had deer in the neighborhood because they had eaten all of my wife's hostas before we could get the fence around the back yard. Now that I had discovered that deer also like camellias it is amazing how many anti-deer products you see at the store that you didn't notice before. Also the folks working at the nurseries will tell you that deer like camellias—if you know enough to ask the question.

Well, things have gotten better and there is a lot more I can tell you about camellias, and what can happen when you have a little bit of knowledge but try to act like you have a lot of knowledge. Come back soon and we will look into other mistakes and misadventures, including my experiences with camellia propagation.

Blooms Away,

Dr. Bubba

Reprint from *Atlantic Coast Camellias*, Sept. 2011 issue

EXPERIENCE AND RESEARCH ARE THE BEST TEACHERS

By Richard Mims

What works for me might not work for you. My soil differs from your soil; therefore my amendments might not give you the Ph and porosity you need to grow your camellia planting. One thing we do know, our research universities know from actual research the needs of plants and how to determine those need from soil samples. I could tell you in this article what excellent camellia growers Jim Smelly, Larry Barlow or Chuck Ritter use in preparing soil for camellias. It probably wouldn't work for you. The very best advice I or anyone else can give, however, is have your own soil tested and find out what elements you must add for your camellias to flourish. First, you find that out, and then experiment with the additives that people tell you about.

Over the years, different people have given different ideas on pruning. One person will say **do not** prune when sap starts moving up in the spring. Another will say **to delay** pruning camellias until the sap starts rising in the late spring. Because these are opposites, it doesn't seem that both could be correct, but they are. This means that the first thing a reader should think about when hearing advice is the growing zone (address) of the author. The problem for the reader is that Number one is talking about the semi-tropics where the period of dormancy is not the same as throughout the Atlantic Coast area. The latter is an article I read the other day while researching for the article in this issue on pruning. That research study presented statistics on mortality rates of rejuvenation pruning at different times during the winter.(1) I also agree with the latter from my personal experience with mortality rates from pruning. Dr. Baxter said: "Data revealed that plants cut back during the fall (September, October and November) did not survive. Most of the plants cut back in early winter (December and January) also died. However, plants cut back in late winter to early spring (February and March) survived and grew vigorously." His statistics are in the article. I have seen another research study that will back this one up but cannot find it to reference for you.

Such is the confusion of people who are just starting out with the camellia hobby. One of our new society members approached me and said, "You advised that I fertilize this way. Buck Mizell

advised that I fertilize ‘thataway’ and Geary Serpas advised that I fertilize “whichaway.’ Who should I believe?” My answer was: “Believe Buck. He wins more (protected) flower shows than anyone in the United States.”

Shade is so very important in growing camellias—or should I say hours of sunlight—or should I say dappled shade of pine trees when you don’t have pine trees—or should I say grow under lathes (which is permissible to show as unprotected in California but must be shown as protected in the southeast). If you don’t have 50% shade from any of the above, plant shade trees at the same time you start a camellia bed. Shade trees (especially pines) grow fast. Also, check the sun’s angles at different times of day and plant using structures as shade on yours or your neighbor’s property. Also use those structures as shelters for less hardy non *reticulatas* and *reticulatas*.

A gardener’s own temperament and work ethic has a great affect on what is right for him or her or what is wrong. I just as well say it: “Some of us are lazier than others.” I personally love to hold a hose to assure myself that a pot gets the correct amount of water. The reader might use drip irrigation or a timer to water once or twice a week. Automation is great but one must remember that more plants are killed with too much water than not enough water. (Watering is considered a gardening art in England). Also you must keep in mind that show plants must not be stressed because of lack of water or anything else. Such negligence causes bud drop and flowers to be smaller.

I think back when I first started the camellia hobby. I was downright frustrated when I would receive entirely different answers to the same question depending on which camellia “expert” talked to me. I understand now that back in the ‘50s and ‘60s the hobby was extremely competitive. Cameliaphytes would discover something to produce better show flowers but would consider their knowledge the same as secret family recipes and not tell anyone. (example: early clandestine use of gibberelic acid). I wonder how much useful advice was buried in graves with some of those great camellia growers.

Back then, or as we say, “in the good old days,” quadruple the number of people or more enjoyed the camellia hobby than do now. Even small communities had annual camellia shows. I attribute that to the fact that television, computers, and the cell phones that young people now glue to their ears had not been invented. The closest fantasy available along those lines at the time was Dick Tracey’s TV watch. Anyway, time is now devoted to games and TV addiction rather than gardening.

We now are bombarded 24 hours a day with talking heads who want us to believe “their opinion” rather than giving us truth. Because we are not now blessed with an overabundance of people pursuing the camellia hobby, most of us know each other and try to, in every way possible, give or should give true advice based on research or at least garnered from vast reading or personal experience.

I say to new camellia growers: read everything you run across on the subject; collect publications and books, ask questions, absorb the many different answers to choose what you think is the best and use them as guidelines. Make up your mind as to what you think is best for your situation. If you use advice, try to get it from your local club and people who enjoy just about the same camellia growing conditions that you do. Your pride may be hurt when judges choose what you think is a lesser bloom over your beauty. At least keep trying what you think is best for your camellias and treat it as you do your favorite sport team—if you don’t win this year, “There is always next year.” Isn’t it wonderful that God created in us the awesome abilities to forgive and to forget?

I got the idea for this article from an article called “Doing Your Own Thing” by Richard Bird from England.(2) I dearly love the truth of Bird’s statement, “It is the experience which makes a gardener, not advice, however kindly meant.” What he is saying is that there are few rigid rules in gardening (or camellia growing). If what you are doing this year doesn’t work, try something different next season. I will have to continue to bombard you with my “opinions” based on about sixty years of growing camellias until more of you contribute articles for publication in *Atlantic Coast Camellias*.

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1. Studies on Cutting Back Camellia Plants, Luther W. Baxter, Jr. and Steven N. Jeffers, *The Camellia Journal*, February – April, 2002, American Camellia Society, p. 26
 2. “Doing your own thing”, Richard Bird, Editor, *Growing From Seed*, Winter 1989/1990, volume 4, Number 1, *The Seed raising Journal* from Thompson & Morgan., England, p. 19





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