

The *Camellia*
REVIEW



Front Cover: 'Yuletide'
Photo Credit: Bradford King

Inside Cover: 'Junior Prom'
Photo Credit: Bradford King



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Thoughts From The Editor

Bradford King, Editor



The 2017 winter rains broke the five-year drought in Southern California which helped leach salts and other contaminants from the soil. However, the summer heat waves that exceed 100 degrees continue to stress many plants including camellias. The mantra is to always keep camellias moist especially those in pots and new garden plantings. A Nuccio recommendation which is well worth following is to sprinkle camellia foliage late afternoon on hot days (90 plus degrees). This cools the plants and adds moisture in our hot dry desert climate.

This fall's cover story describes some of the outstanding *Camellia sasanqua* which bloom in autumn. They make outstanding landscape plants in a sunny location. All of them can be found at Nuccio's Nurseries where you can get a free copy of the Southern California Camellia Societies Sun Camellia book with the purchase of a plant. Anne Dashiell continues to inform of us what is new at Nuccio's this

season.

In this year's Camellia Review we have added a new department "Higo Treasures From Japan" which will highlight one of the many beautiful Higo Camellias from Japan. This issue has my personal favorite 'Ohkan'.

Camellia culture continues to be of interest to readers seeking to grow healthy camellias. Therefore, Alvin Gunn's article "Transplanting Camellias" was reprinted because it contains useful information on repotting and potting up camellias. In addition, several camellia problems and diseases can be identified by foliage damage which is discussed in the article "Foliage Damage".

We are pleased to have two articles from writers from Northern California who are brother and sister. Don Bergamini has compiled a list of the winning camellias from the 2017 season. This list is useful in selecting cultivars to add to your garden. Don introduced 'Chris Bergamini' in 1995 naming it for his grandson. You will note that it placed second in the 2017 winners for the miniature class. Its image appears on the back cover. Irene Bergamini first tells us a little about growing up with her father's camellias and how she gravitated to photography. Irene's article "Translucent Camellia Photography" is beautifully illustrated and a creative addition to this issue.

While Joe and Linda Tunner decided to retire from writing "Parting Shot", we have continued to include the parting shot as a photo and brief story for your enjoyment.

We are always looking for camellia articles and writers to publish. Deadlines for submitting articles to Editor Brad King (bdk@usc.edu) are SPRING: February 1, 2018, FALL: September 1, 2018, WINTER: December 1, 2018.

C. Sasanqua: The Best Fall Blooming Camellias by Bradford King

The beautiful fall blooming sun tolerant *Camellia sasanqua* herald the camellia season. They originate in Japan where they have a long history and are their most popular camellia. The native species always have small white flowers borne on a fine textured shrub or small tree. The cultivated varieties have a wide range of beautiful colors many of which are fragrant. They usually have numerous single or semidouble flowers with many having delicate fluted or ruffled petals. They are

widely grown in the United States, New Zealand, China and Australia. They may be grown in pots, as hedges, espalier as well as in the landscape. They may be used as a single specimen in a sunny garden location, or clusters of mixed cultivars or a mass planting of one variety.

The original *C. sasanqua* had unimpressive small single white flowers, however, today there are many white cultivars with medium and large flowers that make excellent candidates for your garden. ‘Setsugekka’ (Snow, Moon and Flowers) has a large semidouble white flower with ruffled petals. This Japanese cultivar has become popular in America. The Japanese frequently give picturesque descriptive names to their cultivars.



‘Setsugekka’



‘Mine No Yuki’

The cultivar ‘Mine No Yuki’ (Snow on the ridge) is another example of a picturesque name. Often in America growers give a cultivar an English name for marketing. In this case, it was renamed ‘White Doves’ also a good description of this cultivar which has a white semidouble flower. The plant grows laterally and low to the ground suitable for a planter or a ground cover.

The Nuccio’s introduced and named a large creamy white single flower ‘French Vanilla’ which captures the color of this wonderful cultivar.



'French Vanilla'



'Hugh Evans'

An early blooming single pink with curly petals is 'Hugh Evans'. It is a profuse blooming variety that typically is the first camellia to bloom in my garden. When the flower falls, the beautiful petals shatter making a lovely welcome mat for the coming season.

'Choji Guruma' (Wheel of Anemone) is a graphic name for this miniature light pink anemone flower with deeper pink tones on the edges of the petals and petaloids. It is one of a very few anemone *sasanquas* and the most well-known with this form.



'Choji Guruma'



'Double Rainbow'

C. sasanqua 'Rainbow', 'Double Rainbow', 'Painted Desert' and 'Old Glory' have white flowers with beautiful rose red borders. These names are just as colorful

as their blooms. ‘Rainbow’ has a large single white flower with a red border and ‘Double Rainbow’ has a semidouble flower with a rose red border. The combination of a white flower with a red or pink border is one of the popular color combinations found in *C. sasanqua*. A rainbow is caused when sunlight reflects inside a raindrop and the much less common double rainbow is caused by a double reflection of sunlight inside the raindrops. This occurs only when the drops are centered on the sun itself.

‘Painted Desert’ has a large flower with showy stamens. The Painted Desert is known for its brilliant varied colored rocks, even shades of lavender. It is in Arizona and part of the Petrified Forest National Park.



‘Painted Desert’



‘Old Glory’

Nuccio’s Nurseries named a single to semidouble medium white flower with a deep rose red to pink tones ‘Old Glory’ for its wavy petals that resemble an American flag flying. The original Old Glory flag is now a weather-beaten 17- by 10-foot banner that has been a patriotic symbol used today to describe the American flag.

There were initially no red *sasanqua* flowers; however, through hybridizing a few beautiful red cultivars have been introduced. One of the very best is ‘Bonanza’ which has a large deep red semidouble flower. Bonanza is defined as “a large amount of something desirable” which fits this camellia to a T.

Another example of a red camellia with a great name is ‘Dazzler’. It has a semidouble rose red flower that dazzles the eye with its numerous early flowers. It is a Nuccio’s introduction.



'Bonanza'



'Dazzler'

The most popular red *sasanqua* is another Nuccio's introduction. 'Yuletide' blooms late season typically during the Christmas season. The brilliant red single flower with bright red stamens grows on a sturdy compact upright plant. Yuletide in America refers to Christmas or the Christmas season and in Japan is a common name for the *Camellia sasanqua*.



'Yuletide'



Yuletide Landscape Plant

Judges Speak
by Don Bergamini
Photos by Bradford King

This was a very rainy show season. Did the weather affect what won this show season? There were some new cultivars that made the trophy table with wins such as ‘Margie’, ‘Laverne Norris’, ‘Beautiful Day’, ‘Desert Moon’, ‘Kwan Yuen Special’, ‘Linda Lee Ehrhart’, ‘Robert Ehrhart’, ‘String of Pearls’, ‘Golden Glow’ and ‘Joanne Gaeta’. Did these cultivars like the rain and bloomed better than usual or will we see them again in the coming years? We will have to wait and see.



‘Laverne Norris’



‘Holy Pure’

Some of the very new cultivars were successful this year. Cultivars such as ‘Julius Nuccio’ did well both in singles and multiples classes. Other newer cultivars that did well were ‘Ferris Wheel’, ‘Barbara Goff’, and ‘Holy Pure’.

There were some old stand-bys that made the trophy table as well in the single and multiple class; such as ‘Astronaut’, ‘Pink Perfection’, ‘Shikibu’, ‘Magnoliaeflora’, ‘Herme’, and ‘Snow Chan’.



‘Snow Chan’

Looking forward to a great season in 2018.

SINGLES

Japonica Lg/Vlgs

Julius Nuccio	6
Junior Prom	5
Carter's Sunburst	4
Elegans Splendor	4
Lady Laura	4
Ferris Wheel	3
Elegans Champagne	2
Kramer's Supreme	2
Laverne Norris	2
Mary Edna Curlee	2
Nuccio's Bella Rossa Var	2
16 others with 1 each	



'Julius Nuccio'

Japonica Mediums

Cherries Jubilee	4
Astronaut	3
Firedance Var	2
Happy Harlequin	2
Nuccio's Gem	2
Ragland Supreme	2
17 others with 1 each	



'Cherries Jubilee'

Smalls (any species)

Little Babe Var	5
Tama Peacock	4
Ave Maria	3
Demi-Tasse	3
Hishi-Karaito	3
Freedom Bell	2
Pink Perfection	2
Red Devil	2
Red Hots	2
Spring Daze	2
Tudor Baby Var	2
8 others with 1 each	



'Little Babe Var'

Miniatures (any species)

Man Size	5
Chris Bergamini	3
Night Rider	3
Ann Clayton	2
Baby Sis Pink	2
Little Michael	2
Shikibu	2
Something Beautiful	2
10 others with 1 each	



'Chris Bergamini'

Reticulata / Reticulata Hybrids

Barbara Goff	8
Frank Houser	7
Frank Houser Var	3
LASCA Beauty	3
Harold Paige	2
Holy Pure	2
Lauretta Feathers	2
Miss Tulare	2
Phyllis Hunt	2
Terrell Weaver	2
17 others with 1 each	



'Barbara Goff'

Non-Reticulata Hybrids

Senritsu Ko	5
Taylor's Perfection	4
Buttons N' Bows	3
Island Sunset	3
Julie Var	3
Coral Delight Var	2
Darleen Stoner	2
Joe Nuccio	2
Lucky Star	2
String of Pearls	2
12 others with 1 each	



'Senritsu Ko'

Species

Egao	3
Yuletide	2
6 others with 1 each	

MULTIPLES

Japonicas

Nuccio's Carousel	5
Julius Nuccio	4
Ragland Supreme	4
Royal Velvet	4
Firedance Var	3
Fire Falls	3
Magnoliaeflora	3
Nuccio's Bella Rossa Var	3
Dixie Knight Supreme	2
Elegans	2
Herme	2
Marie Bracey	2
Prima Ballerina	2
Showtime	2
Snow Chan	2
27 others with 1 each	

Boutonnieres (any species)

Pink Perfection	6
Man Size	4
Maroon and Gold	4
Red Devil	4
Tama Electra	4
Freedon Bell	3
Night Rider	3
Spring Festival	3
Hishi Karaito	2
Nitidissima	2
Red Hots	2
Shikibu	2
Sweet Jane	2
Takanini	2
Tama Peacock	2
11 others with 1 each	

Reticulata / Reticulata Hybrids

Frank Houser	10
Frank Houser Var	6
Valley Knudsen	4
Terrell Weaver	3
Barbara Goff	2
Valentine Day	2
6 others with 1 each	

Non-Reticulata Hybrids

Island Sunset	4
Lucky Star	4
Hot Stuff	3
Tulip Time	3
Waltz Time Var	3
Buttons N' Bows	2
High Fragrance	2
Jury's Yellow	2
6 others with 1 each	

Species Multiples

Shishi-Gashira	3
3 others with 1 each	

A Brief History of California

by Bradford King

The oldest camellia in California with a documented history is 'California'. It came to America on a Japanese tramp steamer in 1888 as a three year old seedling. Webster Cate, a local rancher, purchased it off the dock in Redondo Beach Harbor for twenty five cents. He planted it beside Durfee road in Pico Rivera. In 1901, thirteen years later, it first bloomed a very large rose red flower and became known as 'Durfee Road Pink'. The ranch became Irving's Camellia Nursery started by John C. Irving's parents when he was 4



'California'

years old. In 1942 on the recommendation of Vernon McCaskill, a prominent camellia nursery owner, it was renamed 'California'. John Irving grew up alongside the 30 foot camellia growing next to the house. He worked twenty years in the nursery before deciding to sell the family residence and move to West LA. He was a steam and power engineer who had continued the Nursery on a part time basis. He told a newspaper reporter, "In youth it sheltered me and I'll protect it now".

When Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Peer became aware that the Irving's Nursery would be sold and the tree cut down, they decided to save it. Ralph Peer was a past American Camellia Society President and ardent camellia collector. He was also a music producer who founded the Southern Music Publishing Company. Ralph Peer bought the plant for \$500 in 1959. Mrs. Peer reported that her husband was planning to purchase her a fine necklace but when they learned that the 'California' camellia was about to be destroyed they decided to spend the many thousands necessary to move the 30-foot plant with a trunk diameter of fifteen inches to a place of honor at their home "Park Hill" in Laurel Canyon on Hollywood Blvd in Los Angeles California.

James (Jimmy) Tuliano oversaw moving the fifteen ton tree the twenty miles. They took six months to gradually dig and cut its massive root system to insure its survival. The men had to carefully crawl under the root system to construct a wooden carrying crate. A crane was needed to load the truck. The chosen location was on a terraced hillside that was inaccessible to heavy trucks. Therefore a wooden

track was built down from a street above the 200 foot embankment. The plant was lowered with ropes and pulleys. Half way down there was a loud crack followed by three more as the ropes broke and the tree slid precipitously down the track. Jimmy and his crew held their breath helpless to respond as they watched the plant bounce and miraculously land in the hole they had prepared. 'California' was home!



After twenty years, the tree suffered from Armillaria, a soil fungus, that attacks the roots of many plants. The central trunk died but many of the roots survived and sent up suckers. Three of these are now its new trunks. When Ralph Peer II decided to sell his parents estate, they wanted it to be saved again. They paid for it to be transported to its current home in the Huntington Botanical Gardens camellia

collection in San Marino, California. The move was completed on January 29, 2002. The original trunk is completely rotted away but the three trunks are fifteen to twenty feet tall and produce many large red blooms every year.

Camellia Foliage Damage

Story and Photos by Bradford King

Camellias have beautiful evergreen leaves that are attractive all year. Flowers nestle among the foliage making a wonderful display. However, occasional damaged leaves are found. This is a cause for concern. What is the cause? What can be done to resolve the problem?

SUNBURN

In my experience the most common problem is sunburn. In Southern California we usually have hot dry summer weather but this year we continued to have high temperatures deep into fall with very little rain. In addition we have water restrictions which may also be a contributing factor. Camellias need to be moist at all

times, neither soggy nor dry. A few sunburned leaves serve to warn the grower to move potted camellias to a more shaded area or find other solutions. Jim Fitzpatrick uses garden umbrellas to increase shade for some of his small camellias. I added a roll up shade where I grow grafts and seedlings. During the summer it was not needed but in the fall the sun has moved such that they get full sun light from 12 to 3pm which began to burn foliage especially in the 90 degree heat. Perhaps you too have discovered creative ways to add shade for your camellias.



Roll up shade

When the plant is in the ground, investigate. Did shade trees die or get pruned so there is too much sun on nearby camellias? If so, will the pruned tree grow back to provide adequate shade or do you need to consider other ways to increase shade. Adding a layer of mulch around camellias is a good strategy to increase moisture and periodic late afternoon sprinkling of foliage will also be greatly appreciated by camellias. If you use an automatic watering system, is it providing water to all the camellias? I have had plants die when a sprinkler tube is clogged or disrupted. As plants grow and fill in, the sprinklers may not reach some plants that in the past received adequate moisture. In years when we receive adequate rain camellias may survive but in this drought camellias and other established plants may not survive without additional water being provided.



Sunburn



Needs repotting

FERTILIZER BURN

Appropriate amounts of cottonseed meal as a camellia fertilizer are not likely to cause fertilizer burn, but too much blood meal, Miracle-Gro for acid loving plants, and commercial granular azalea and camellia fertilizers can cause fertilizer burn. In addition slow release fertilizers release their nutrients when watered which may be too frequent. In general a nitrogen level over ten needs to be used very carefully as it can cause burned leaves.

The solution to fertilizer burn is easy. Use less fertilizer and be sure plants are watered well. Never fertilize a dry camellia. A good approach is to water the day prior to fertilizing. The general rule of thumb is to fertilize every 6 to 8 weeks from April through September. In addition remember the obvious— small plants need less fertilizer than large. Pots may require more frequent but smaller amounts of fertilizer. Over fertilizing is more a problem than no fertilizing. Less is more when fertilizing camellias.



Pestalotia

SUMMER FUNGUS

Tom Nuccio showed me examples of pestalotia, a summer fungus that will damage the top foliage of some camellia cultivars. The damaged branches need to be removed and the pruning shears sterilized with bleach. Tom reported that there

was no cure but he plans on spraying with copper as a preventive measure in the spring. The fungus apparently doesn't remain in the plant and attacks only certain cultivars.

CHLOROSIS

A single yellow leaf among dark green foliage is an old leaf being shed which is a normal part of the camellia life cycle. While the yellowing of a number of leaves is usually "chlorosis" which is a deficiency of magnesium or iron. Magnesium is not usually a problem as it is available in a form that is readily used by the plant. While iron is in most soil, it may not be in a form that can be used by the plant. Chlorosis is easily treated by applications of commercial iron chelate for plants. Iron chelate is iron in a water soluble form which is readily available to plants. It may be used as a foliage spray or applied to the soil.

Carefully read the label to be sure that the nitrogen level in the product is low (less than N 10) as too much will damage plants. Follow the manufacture's directions for camellias.

OTHER LEAF DAMAGE

On occasion damage to foliage in a potted camellia is seen. The foliage has multiple dark brown to black spots and the leaf edges are yellow as seen in the photo. The Nuccios have seen it but are unaware of what it is called. It is most likely due to depleted soil that lacks necessary micronutrients. The solution is to repot or pot up the infected plant with a loose well drained potting mix with humus. If seen on a plant in the ground remove old leaves or mulch around the camellia and sprinkle coarse peat mulch cover with a thin layer of pine bark and water. Camellias planted too deeply or smothered with leaves or mulch may die. In the spring when new growth first appears, fertilize with a product that contains nitrogen, potassium, potash and trace minerals including iron every 45 to 60 days through September.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have had five years of drought with more days during the summer and fall that reached or exceeded 90 degrees. Many trees have died. The first in my neighborhood were several beautiful European White Birch. According to Daniel Goyette, arborist for The Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens, this species was the first to succumb and has been followed by Alder trees and some southern Magnolias. Even the California Oaks that have survived low rainfall for years become stressed when there are multiple days of 100 degrees and up. The drought and high heat produced what is described as the tipping point,

making trees more vulnerable to disease and insect infestation that can cause death to mature trees. Remember camellias originally come from Southeast Asia where the climate is just as warm as California but has high humidity and more rain; therefore, we need to provide both ground moisture optimally with a drip system augmented by sprinkling camellia foliage with a hose in the late afternoon or evening to keep them at their best.

Hope abounds as we have had many rainy days in 2017 which helps leach out accumulated salts in the soil and provide some drought relief.

Camellia Species: *C. Oleifera*
by Bradford King

C. oleifera is a Chinese species that is an important source for edible oil also known as tea oil or camellia oil. The oil is obtained from the seeds. *C. oleifera* is widely distributed with over 3 million hectares cultivated for oil production in China. It can be found in forests, foothills and banks of streams at elevations from 300 to 4000 feet. The small single white flower is not impressive thus the plant is generally not used as a landscape plant even though it is easy to grow. It has potential to become an oil producing plant in the southeast where Dr. John Ritter of the University of Georgia has explored its uses. The seeds can be pressed to yield an edible oil that is usually 80% monounsaturated fat and is high in antioxidant content.



C. Oleifera

However, this camellia species is best known in America for its cold tolerance. Dr. William Ackerman used *C. oleifera* 'Plain Jane' and *C. oleifera* 'Lu Shan Snow' in his cold hardy camellia breeding program. He used these cultivars in making thousands of controlled crosses with many other species and varieties. These seedlings were field tested for cold hardiness and ornamental value. This extensive breeding program led him to introduce 51 cold hardy camellias of which many have *C. oleifera* in their background.

What's New At Nuccio's: Long-Blooming Camellias

By Anne Dashiell

Photos by Bradford King

Camellia season is fast approaching, it's time to start thinking about what new camellias you want for your garden this year. 'Shock Wave', a *non-reticulata* hybrid Nuccio's introduction, is high on the list of landscape plants with a new bright pink with a bluish tinge flower. This is a new color for camellias, likely the result of a cross with *C. pitardii*, though since this is a chance seedling no one knows for sure. This single, slightly bell shaped bloom is stunning on the bush but may not do well on the show table due to its slightly irregular shape.



'Holy Pure'

New in the catalogue this year, though not new to Southern California growers are 'Julius Nuccio', a brilliant dark red semidouble *japonica* named for one of the Nuccio's founders and Sheng Jie, (Holy Pure) a lovely white flower tinged with pink edges. This *C. reticulata* was introduced by John Wang in 2007. The flower is large to very large semi double to rose form double. Several of its charms are the ability to set blooms on even very young plants and sets seeds on a good-looking upright plant. It is a controlled cross between *C. reticulata* 'Suzanne Weathers' and *C. japonica* 'Kona'.



'Shock Wave'

Camellias make beautiful bushes or small trees any time of the year but it is their blooms that have given them the name "The Queen of Winter." Gardeners who wish to have them show off their queenly style for as long as possible should consider varieties with an early to late blooming season. Besides those mentioned above others to consider include 'Nuccio's Bella Rosa Crinkled', 'Koshi-No-Yoso'oi', and 'Little Lavender'. All are available at Nuccio's in one gallon pots.

Camellia Art: Translucent Camellia Photography

By Irene Bergamini

(Irene Bergamini came along with brother Don to the 2017 SCCS Camellia Show at the Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden. As the show opened and the public began to come in, Irene was quietly going about her work with light box, camera and a plethora of willing subjects. I'm so excited to introduce Irene and her luminous, artistic, photography to you! – Beth Stone)

I remember as a child that we had camellias growing in the shadier parts of our yard. My weekly chore was to pick up leaves under all the plants which had a mulch layer of pine needles. This meant that the leaves had to be picked up by hand and could not be raked. I disliked plants for that reason. I thought I would live in a concrete jungle when I grew up to avoid this awful task. Fortunately, I grew to appreciate the beauty and value of plants. The camellia actually became a part of my family heritage.

When he was around 12 years old, my brother decided to sneak a few of my Dad's best blooms and entered them in a local show where they won prizes. As a result, my father and my brother became deeply involved in this wonderful hobby and it has been passed on to other members of the family.

Even though I did not catch the camellia fever, I do appreciate their beauty. I inherited and have some of my Dad's plants in my yard.

My passion and hobby became photography. I photograph many subjects including flowers. I take photos of flowers in my yard, in the wild, at shows and exhibits. Composition, lighting, time of day, camera settings all come into play. It became a natural progression that the camellia would become a subject of my work. Besides, my brother's yard is practically like my own private nursery, except I can never pick his best blooms during "show-time".

I recently took a photography workshop called "Photographing Flowers for Transparency" with Harold Davis, a world-renowned photographer. The techniques learned allow for a very artistic approach to the photograph. The photographer composes, highlights, paints, and stylizes their images just as a painter would create an interpretation of the subject on canvas.

The images used in this article begin with a high-key layer stack. A high-key image is light and bright tending toward the white side of the histogram. A composition of the flowers is made on a light box which backlights the blooms. The camera is mounted on a tripod and multiple shots of the composition are taken. The multiple photos are taken at different exposure settings (bracketing), increasing the exposure until the last photo taken is almost white.

The images are then uploaded to a photo processing program. I use Photoshop. Post processing is where the artistic eye comes into play. I begin with the lightest photograph and add a new layer of the second lightest photo. By using a hide-all layer mask, I paint in more of the image. I continue to add consecutive layers, from light to dark and painting in the desired amount of color. The control of the light and dark portions of the photograph, provides the illusion of transparency. Once the layers are completed, the image is flattened. At this point I may need to touch up a flower blemish or bring out a stem hidden behind a petal or enhance the yellow of a stamen. I continue to add layers to the image using a variety of filters. Additional software programs used were Nik and MacPhun. The enhancements hopefully make the image "pop".



Image A

By changing the mode to LAB color, the background becomes black.



Image B

Application of different color modes, filters and textures evokes a different mood or affect when viewing the image. (Images C, D, and E)



Image C



Image D



Image E

The Higo Treasures from Japan:
'Ohkan'
by Bradford King

'Ohkan' also spelled 'Okan' means "Kings Crown" in English. It has a medium white flower with a lovely rose red border and about 160 stamens that have white filaments. It has a beautiful unforgettable flower. Its slow growth makes it easy to keep in a pot or to bonsai.

'Ohkan' mutated from 'Yamato nishiki' (Brocade of Ancient Japan) in 1980 and was registered in 1982. 'Ohkan' has itself mutated: 'Kyokkokan' and 'Nago no Haru'.



'Ohkan'



'Potted 'Ohkan' In Bloom

The Japanese Higo rule of "go ben senkaku" expresses the aesthetic principle which a top Higo cultivar seeks to reach. There are five "go" petals, arranged on a flat plane "ben" with three central main petals creating a triangle "senkaku". This is illustrated in the image of the three 'Ohkan' blooms with the larger flower on the right a superior flower than the other two blooms.



Trio of 'Ohkan' flowers in bloom

From The Archives: Transplanting Camellias

By Alvin Gunn

(Editor's note: This article on how to replot and pot up camellia was first published in the November 1963 Camellia Review. The information provided is as good today as it was then.)

The transplanting of container grown camellias into other containers can be done any time of the year. There are many indicators that a plant should be transferred. If the leaves have small brown spots on the outer edges, or the tips of the leaves dry up, this is usually an indication that the soil isn't porous enough, and has built up an accumulation of salts from the water or fertilizers. This accumulation burns the feeder roots. Poor color of leaves or weak growth and the loss of foliage in the center of the plant indicates the plant is root bound or the soil isn't good. This may happen to a plant which is in a too large container for its roots. A plant that dries out rapidly may have used up all the soil and be root bound. Many collectors will replot all new plants so that the soil is consistent for watering and fertilizing.

A healthy vigorous plant should be replotted about every two years.

An easy way to remove the roots from a pot is to hit the pot on all sides with a mallet or the heel of your hand. This will usually loosen the roots enough to pull the pot off. If the roots look healthy with lots of white feeder roots, shake the roots or hit the root ball with your hands to loosen the soil around the roots. If the ball is a solid mass of brown roots or the roots do not look healthy, it is wise to bare root the plant. Wash all the soil from the roots with a coarse spray of water. The size of the root ball will dictate the size of the container to be used. The ideal movement of camellias is from a one gallon pot to a two gallon then to either a three or five gallon pot.

Plan the planting of the plant so there is not more than two inches from the top of the roots to the top of the container. The soil should be moist before starting. Pack the soil firmly around the roots so there aren't any air pockets. Flood the plant three or four times to make sure the soil is wet and firmly settled. The top roots should not have more than a quarter of an inch of soil on them regardless of the depth the plant may have been planted.

This is an excellent time to prune away any dead branches or branches that cross through the center of the plant. Cut back any weak or spindly growth. Take off any of the flower buds which will not be able to open normally. It is not necessary to prune a container grown camellia heavily because of transplanting. A daily sprinkling of camellia leaves is beneficial and particularly a newly potted one. Water the plant only when it needs it. Occasionally double watering is helpful in flooding out accumulated salts. If the roots over balance the foliage, such as in a new graft, over watering can cause roots to rot and new foliage to drop off.

Do not fertilize the bare rooted plant for at least three months, and then only lightly the first time. Thereafter every 45 days. Many growers have found a couple of applications of Vitamin "B" at monthly intervals beneficial.

Watch the plant to see there isn't any foliage drop or loss or loss of color in the leaves. If this happens prune away 1/3 of the plant, and put it where no sun will be on it until it is established. Do not worry about new growth drooping on a warm day as long as the soil is moist and the new growth is back to normal the next morning.

Parting Shot:
Christmas Beauty
by Bradford King

Christmas is a holiday observed on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration among billions of people worldwide. It celebrates the birth of Jesus of Nazarene as Christ.

The beauty of Christmas is celebrated with decorations, cards, tree trimming, gifts to family and friends and holiday parties. A beautiful red camellia with green foliage floating in a bowl makes a wonderful table decoration during the holiday season.

‘Christmas Beauty’ is a *Camellia japonica* with a large bright red semidouble flower with fluted petals. It was introduced in 1958 by Vernon Howell, Pelahatchie, Mississippi.



‘Grand Slam’ in a bowl



‘Christmas Beauty’



'Chris Bergamini' Photo by Bradford King