

THE  
*Camellia*  
REVIEW





**INSIDE COVER: 'DRAGON FIREBALL' Photo by John Wang**

**FRONT COVER: 'ELEGANS CHAMPAGNE' Photo by Bradford King**

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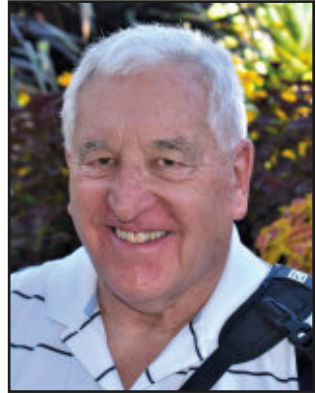
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THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

# WINTER IS A CAMELLIA WONDERLAND

BY BRADFORD KING

Winter is peak camellia blooming season with its beautiful flowers. A walk in the garden in the morning is the time to see which camellias have opened up to show their beautiful faces. Look for a few to cut and bring indoors to enjoy during the day. One large bloom floating in a bowl is simple and attractive. A stem of miniature flowers with their foliage makes a pretty arrangement. Groups of three or five flowers make the dinner table centerpiece.



Winter is the time to graft camellias. Do you have a seedling or sport no one has? If so, make a couple of grafts. For example, several of us wanted to

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grow ‘Dragon Fireball’ which is not available at Nuccio’s. We found a friend who shared scions with us to graft. Sharing scions among friends and acquaintances is part of the fun of growing camellias and another good reason to be a member of a camellia society. This issue has an article, “Dragons,” which includes ‘Dragon Fireball’.

Love an old camellia hard to find in a Nursery, why not graft it? If the plant is mature learn to do “air layering” to get a good-sized rooted plant in a year. If a camellia typically buds up but fails to open, see if this issue’s article “Camellia Bullnose Flowers” offers a viable solution. If all effort fails to get this cultivar to open, it’s time to use it as rootstock. This can be done in two ways: an approach graft or cleft graft. These grafting methods are well documented on websites and printed literature. Learning something new is an opportunity to help us age gracefully. When a graft takes, it can bloom in two years, while cuttings take at least five years to bloom. In addition, camellia cuttings are hard to get to root without a misting system.

This camellia season we have shows and in person Society meetings. Please join us! We maintain social distancing and wear face masks as required by the LA County Board of Health.

Stay Safe and Healthy!





BUD WITH POLLEN

# THE CAMELLIA MIND AT WORK AND PLAY

BY BRADFORD KING

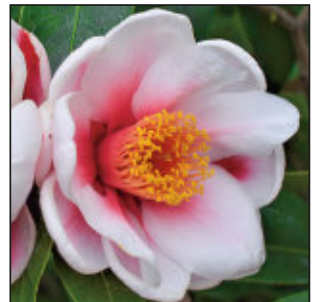
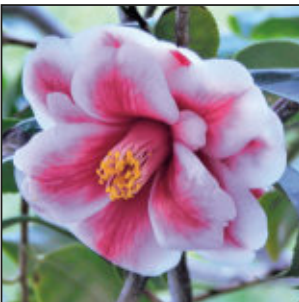
The camellia mind is that part of you that thinks, feels, desires, remembers, and imagines all things camellia. If it interferes with work or relationships, it has become an obsession, which is not good....time to seek help.

The winter season stimulates the camellia mind. While annuals die, perennials become dormant, deciduous trees lose their leaves, and the ever-green camellias produce bright, beautiful, colorful flowers.

## JANUARY

This is the month that many *C. japonica* begin blooming. I look forward to 'Tama no Ura' which has a small red flower with a nice wide white edge. Since the border is genetic, it has also been widely used in hybridizing to get flowers with a picotee edge. My favorite is 'Tama Peacock' which has a maroon flower that shades into the white border. It sets seeds regularly. 'Tama Peacock' is the seed parent of 'King's Cup' which has a white cup shaped flower with a maroon center like a splash of wine in a goblet.

Hybridizing camellias is possible whenever camellias are in bloom. Usually this is the month to start. Hybridizing begins with a goal, for example, of a medium to large camellia with a white border. Consequently, one parent must



'TAMA PEACOCK' X 'SAN DIMAS' = 'KING'S CUP'



**'GRAND SLAM' IN A CRYSTAL BOWL**

have a genetic white border like 'Tama Peacock'. The other parent should be medium or larger such as 'San Dimas.' This was the parentage for 'Kings Cup.'

The second step is to choose a ripe bud to emasculate which will have pollen placed on the stigma.

Next comes waiting...did the controlled cross take? When a seedpod is produced, it brings joy. Continuing to observe it develop is part of the fun of hybridizing.

Some camellia nurseries and hobbyists have had great success in producing distinctive seedlings by letting the bees do the pollinating. This has been the strategy at Nuccio's Nurseries for over 75 years and more recently by Pat Johnson. She has the land to plant hundreds of seedlings and to choose the best to introduce, many of which have been propagated by Randolph Maphis. Pat has named many for camellia folk.

## **FEBRUARY**

This may be the shortest and coldest month of the year, but it is camellia heaven with *C. japonica*, *C. reticulata*, and the nonreticulata hybrids bloom-



ing in the garden. Walking in the garden each morning, you can see which new flowers have opened. When there is a show to enter, it means deciding when and what to pick. Many will pick the morning of a show, while others pick the day before, but a few will choose to pick and store flowers in a refrigerator. Is this work or play...it feels like both to me. What say you?

Regardless, if you just enjoy looking at the flowers, it is a pleasure. Even more fun is picking your favorites for a home display. Simply float them in a bowl or arrange a floral display, whichever is most enjoyable. This clearly is fun, not work!

This is the month to graft. Why? To reproduce a plant you have hybridized, can't find in a nursery, or just because you want more of them. I only graft camellias I can't find at Nuccio's. Consequently, it is seedlings I am evaluating for potential introduction, ones I have registered, or camellias not propagated at local nurseries. It is great fun to get a scion from friends in the southeast of varieties not seen often in California. This has included 'Seafoam,' 'Miss Sally,' 'Daddy Mac,' and 'Bobbie Fain Variegated.' When a graft takes, it is good fun, and in two or three years when it has its first flower, it is even more fun.



**'JULUIS NUCCIO' READY TO GO TO A CAMELLIA SHOW**



A GRAFT OF 'DADDY MAC'



A GIBBED 'BUTTONS 'N BOWS'

Both natural and gibbed nonreticulata hybrids will bloom this month. The small formal double 'Buttons 'N Bows' looks good on the plant, at a show, or floating in a bowl.

Likewise, natural and gibbed *C. reticulata* hybrids will be seen at camellia shows and look stellar in the garden. This is illustrated by 'Lasca Beauty' which has a very large semidouble flower with thick textured petals. It was bred by Dr. Parks when he worked at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum and named by using the first letters in the name of this county arboretum.

Another very popular *C. reticulata* bred by Dr. Parks is the very large 'Dr. Clifford Parks' which has a red flower that blooms with several forms from semidouble to full peony. It is a classic red camellia rated as a top pick by both Tom and Jim Nuccio.



'LASCA BEAUTY'



'DR. CLIFFORD PARKS'



‘YIAO HUANG WEI ZI’

## MARCH

Some of the most impressive *C. reticulata* cultivars hold off blooming until this month. ‘Yellow and Purple’ (‘Yiao Huang Wei Zi’) was registered in 2012, but I didn’t find one until 2021. It has a medium formal double creamy flower with touches of yellow in its center and violet pink, not true purple, on the petal edges. It stands out because it has numerous white formal double flowers which are uncommon characteristics for *C. reticulata* hybrids. It is so much fun to get a great camellia bred by our friend John Wang. It doubles the pleasure.

One of the largest peony formed red *C. reticulata* is the late blooming ‘Harold L. Paige.’ It is, therefore, a good candidate to gib so it will produce blooms for camellia shows. I find flowers into April here in Arcadia, California, which extends the camellia blooming season. It is the last to bloom in my garden which makes for a good ending for this article.



‘HAROLD L. PAIGE’



'FLAMINGO'

# WHY CAMELLIAS AND BIRDS?

BY BRADFORD KING

What made you passionate about camellias? We each have a story to tell. What is yours? I saw my first camellia as a youngster at a spring flower show in Boston. It was *C. japonica* 'Pink Perfection' grown in a conservatory and placed at the entrance to Horticultural Hall. It was also the first time I heard the word japonica. Dad correctly told me it meant from Japan, and identified it as an evergreen flowering camellia bush. However, it was not until we moved to California in 1985 that a flame of passion was ignited. Seeing bright beautiful flowers in cold winter months did it for me after growing up in New England. My neighbors were satisfied to tell me their colors but were clueless as to their names. Fortunately, they told me about Nuccio's Nurseries in Altadena. Jude Nuccio identified five of the six camellias I showed him on my first visit. He was stuck on a medium semidouble white bloom. He called over a trim man of about sixty dressed in a clean bright T-shirt who quickly identified it as 'Alba Superba.' This was how I met Julius Nuccio. Over the next few years, as my collection was built, I met his sons Tom and Jim who now run the nursery.



'ALBA SUPERBA'

I learned about birds and gardening on my grandparent's farm in East Taunton, Massachusetts. Pop was a civil engineer who ran the Taunton water company but kept, chickens, ducks, geese, and an old horse named Goldie. Dad and Pop plowed and planted a large vegetable garden every year. Mom and Gram harvested, cooked, baked, and canned. We bonded over meals and walks to the pond



A WESTERN BLUEBIRD



*C. sasanqua* 'BLUEBIRD'

picking blueberries and identifying birds and flowers.

We competed to see the first bluebird return to the nesting box seen from the kitchen window. Gram usually won, as the kitchen was her domain. It was the first bird I added to my Life List. It is still a favorite, especially as it has rebounded from near extinction due to the use of DDT. Today I enjoy Western Bluebirds finding bugs in the grass and brooding their young.

As you know, there are no blue camellias, but there are several with a bluish pink flower like the *C. sasanqua* 'Bluebird.' Whenever I see it, memories of my grandparents and parents are triggered.

The iconic bird in the Los Angeles Arboretum is the Peacock. Lucky Baldwin created a garden paradise in the early 1900s and imported three



PEACOCK



'TAMA PEACOCK'

pair of Peacocks from China. The flock has grown to about 250 on this ranch that has become the Arboretum. The pea hen and her chicks are light brown which makes them blend with their environment, while the male struts and shows his beautiful tail to attract her and ward off competitors.

The *C. japonica* ‘Tama Peacock’ is a small to medium maroon flower with a white border. What makes it flashy like a Peacock is the way the maroon washes into the white border on upright petals.

A flock of flamingos in various tints of pink are a great bird sighting as is a cluster of *C. japonica* ‘Flamingo’ flowers nestled among its foliage. We don’t see either very often. Flamingos are the national bird of the Bahamas and in the USA are popular plastic lawn ornaments. Did you know the ancient Romans ate their tongues as a delicacy? Thanks to the internet, we both now know this piece of trivia. Thank you, Alex Trebek. I have only seen ‘Flamingo’ in The Huntington Botanical Gardens.

Almost everyone knows seagulls, but only some can identify the dozens of types. The one we see at most ocean beaches and inland at local dumps is the Herring Gull whose image appears here. The Japanese named a medium white camellia with upright petals like the wings of a gull ‘Miyako Dori’ which means sea gull.

People frequently ask “what is your favorite camellia?” It changes for me to the most beautiful bloom in the garden. However, my favorite birds are the Hummingbirds. On the east coast the Ruby Throated Hummingbirds are migratory except in Southern Florida. We can see them at feeders and in the mountains where they breed every summer.



**PEA HEN AND HER CHICKS**



**RUBY THROATED HUMMINGBIRD**



**'MIYAKO DORI'**



**A HERRING GULL**

In Southern California we have both migrants and permanent residents. The most prolific residents are the Anna's Hummingbird, and the most beautiful are the male Allen's Hummingbirds. Every year one male dominates the front feeder keeping watch among the camellia foliage for any intruding males. The photo shows a male Allen's Hummingbird among the blooms of 'Adolphe Audusson Variegated' and a 'Prima Ballerina.'



**MALE ALLEN'S ON THE FEEDER**



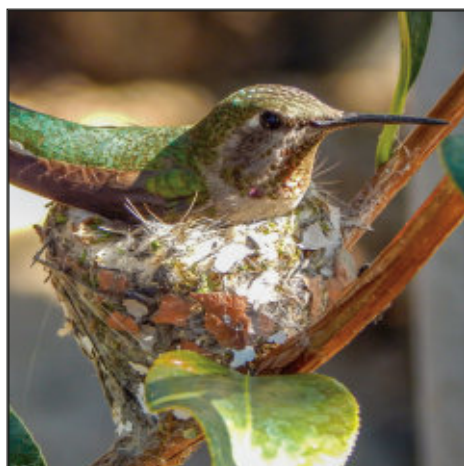


**TWELVE HUMMINGBIRDS**

On the backyard feeders during the summer, there are too many females, fledglings, and multiple males, plus an occasional migrant, for one male to dominate the feeder as is seen in the photo of a dozen hummingbirds. I have seen them nesting in camellias and this female Anna's in a rose bush

It is exciting when a new graft or newly purchased camellia has its first flower. The parallel with bird watching is seeing a new bird to add to the Birding Life List. I added the fine gentleman Black Chinned Hummingbird on a bird watching trip in 1978 in the Grand Canyon and his photo in 2020 on my hummingbird feeder.

In conclusion, gardening and bird watching are intimately connected for me to family. The pleasures of both have been passed on to our children and grandchildren.



**FEMALE ON ITS NEST**



**BLACK CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD**

# Dragons

BY BRADFORD KING

The dragon is a large winged, horned, four-legged fire breathing mythical creature that is popular in folk lore and fantasy literature. They appear in the “Hobbit by J. R. R. Tolkien and “Harry Potter” by J. K. Rowling. In Chinese culture, the dragon is associated with good fortune. Marvelous dragon balloon sculptures and light shows highlight dragons in American garden shows. There are insects, fish, and several flowers named for dragons, including camellias.

The last several years the Los Angeles Arboretum has had a festival of lights that features balloon statuary. The most impressive of all the features is a huge dragon swimming in a lagoon. It is an awesome sight at night all lit up.







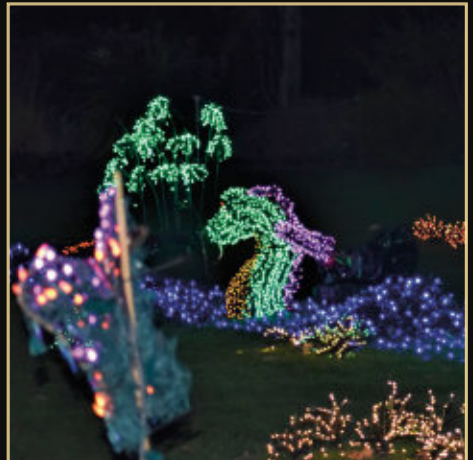
**'NUCCIO'S DRAGONFLY'**

In the Bellingham Botanical Garden in Washington, hundreds of beautiful lighted animals, insects, flowers, and cartoon characters can be viewed. One of the favorites is the "Blue Dragon."

The dragonfly is a carnivorous insect found near water. It is a familiar



**A DRAGONFLY**



**THE BLUE DRAGON**



**'DRAGON'S BREATH'**

feature on pottery, paintings, statues, and jewelry. They are symbols of courage, strength, and happiness in Japan but sinister in European folklore. Poets like Lord Tennyson admired them for their bright colors and agile flying.

We admire hibiscus and azaleas for the range of their beautiful colored flowers. Hibiscus hybridizers have bred many wonderful and varied new hybrids. 'Dragon's Breath' has a dark fire red petal with a central splash of gray resembling fire and smoke.

Nuccio's Nurseries has introduced five "Dragon Azaleas." They are an unusual cluster blooming spider chrysanthemum-like azalea which are eye catching. In 1999, they introduced 'Nuccio's Purple Dragon' which inspired them to call them the "Dragon Azaleas." They are illustrated here by 'Nuccio's Dragonfly.'

Two dramatic characteristics of dragons are flying and their ability to spout fire. The 'Dragon Fireball' camellia name is a wonderful way to describe a fire breathing dragon, and a camellia from Japan captures its flying ability. John Wang used *C. japonica* 'Merry Christmas' as the seed parent and pollen from 'Virginia W. Cutter' to get the beautiful red with genetic



**'DRAGON FIREBALL'** Photo by John Wang'

white marked anemone flower of 'Dragon Fireball' ('Longhuozhu').

'Hiryu,' a *C. vernalis*, has a profusion of small crimson red flowers that one can imagine flying around the garden. "Hiryu" means flying dragon.

The attractive *C. reticulata* hybrid 'Ragged Dragon,' bred in Oregon, has a large semidouble flower. The orange red flower color reminds us of a fire breathing dragon.

In closing, I wonder when we will see 'Honglong Wuhan,' a *C. azalea* seedling bred in China. The name means "red dragon dancing in the sky." '



**'RAGGED DRAGON'**



**'HONGLONG WUHAN'**



CLUSTER OF 'HIRYU' FLOWERS

# BULLNOSE CAMELLIA FLOWERS

BY BRADFORD KING

In building construction, bullnose is a rounded convex trim used in masonry work and ceramic tile. In camellias, it is when new flowers fail to open. This is more frequent with complicated forms like formal double, rose form, and anemone camellia blooms. Cool moist weather is a factor in causing bullnosing. Sunny days help flowers open. However, some camellia cultivars are more prone to bullnose than others. For example, 'Elegans Supreme' and 'Elegans Champagne' bullnose more frequently than 'C. M. Wilson' and 'Elegans Variegated' even though they are in the Elegans family sharing genetics that produce anemone blooms.

When 'Elegans Splendor' and 'Elegans Champagne' do bloom, they are very beautiful. This is illustrated by 'Elegans Champagne,' this issue's cover flower.

While 'Black Magic' is a semidouble flower, it is noted for bullnosing due



**BULLNOSE BLOOMS ON 'ELEGANS CHAMPAGNE'**





**'BLACK MAGIC' BUD**

to its thick waxy petals which make it a heavier flower than most semidouble camellias. Those of us who grow it wonder if buds will open. When it fully opens, it can be a show winning bloom.

### **WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT BULL NOSING?**

When a potted cultivar is prone to bullnosing, it makes sense to move it to a warmer sunny location to see if that will help the buds open up.

With cultivars that are prone to bullnosing, a good strategy is to reduce buds to one bud per stem. In addition, these cultivars are good candidates for gibbing in order to get them to open. During winter, it is helpful to provide fertilizers with high levels of potassium,



**'BLACK MAGIC' AS A SHOW WINNER**



**BULLNOSE BLOOM OF 'JUNIOR PROM'**

especially to those known to bullnose. Since camellias are dormant in the winter, care should be made to keep nitrogen 3 or less. Higher levels may cause the plant to break dormancy and produce new foliage, making it vulnerable to cold temperatures and even death.

Another strategy is to pick the bullnosed flowers and place in a warm room. I like to use warm water mixed with a flower preservative like chrysal to help it last longer.

In the photo of the white bud of Junior Prom, note it has many black flecks which are the ash from the Bobcat fire blown by the Santa Ana winds. Pools, plants, streets, and walks had a layer of black soot every time the wind reappeared. I use a leaf blower and the California rake (hose water) to clean the plants and the patio.



**'JUNIOR PROM'**

HIGO TREASURES FROM JAPAN:  
**‘MIYAKO-NO-HARU’**

BY BRADFORD KING

‘Miyako-no-haru’ is an early blooming Higo, usually the first Higo to bloom. The name is translated as “spring comes to town” or “spring comes to the capital.” It has a medium to large pink bloom with less than 100 stamens. It grows vigorously and upright with small oval leaves. The green pistil is taller than the 70 to 90 stamens. The small number of stamens for a Higo relegate it to the second tier. However, the flower is a lovely shade of pink.



PARTING SHOT:

## *Camellia sasanqua* 'HANA DAIJIN' AND ITS SPORTS

BY BRADFORD KING

'Hana Daijin' (minister of flowers) is described in *Camellias of Japan* as having a deep red tubular semidouble flower. It was introduced in 1967. The *Camellia Nomenclature* describes it as a medium semidouble rose pink flower. It is unclear who imported it or how widely it has been grown in the USA. It is listed on Monrovia Nursery's website as a red semidouble flower. Regardless, its sports are interesting foliage camellias that can be found at Nuccio's Nurseries.

'Hana Daijin-Benten' is a foliage sport of 'Hana Daijin'. Nuccio's describes it as having an irregular green leaf with an occasional gray green stripe bordered



'HANA DAIJIN SPECIAL' LEAVES



'HANA DAIJIN SPECIAL'

with a light yellow margin. The large single flower is deep rose pink and has a light musky scent.

When Nuccio's caught a sport with beautiful irregular deep green leaves, a creamy border, and a medium to large single pink bloom, they named it 'Hana Daijin Special'. It blooms early to midseason on a bushy upright plant that sets buds even as a small plant. The lovely leaves attracted me to grow one on a garden path where its foliage is on view in front of other camelias all year long. It blooms in late October into November with a medium single pink flower that has a sweet musky scent.

Since its leaves are interesting and attractive, I purchased one to bonsai. It bloomed at Halloween this year.

The Southern California Camellia Facebook page has a video of 'Hana Daijin Special' growing in the ground and another as a bonsai. The *C. japonica* 'Kaleidoscope' was originated by Nuccio's Nurseries and introduced in 2019. The single flower is white with multiple stripes and dashes of red hues in various amounts. It is like a kaleidoscope in that each flower has different colored markings. One may be almost all white, another with a few markings, and a few almost all red. However, it is most striking with a mass of irregular colored markings in varying amounts and color tones from light red to brilliant red covering much of each petal. This is also the expected color form which is indeed reminiscent of a kaleidoscope.



**'HANA DAIJIN-BENTEN'**



**'HANA DAIJIN-BENTEN' LEAVES**



**'HANA DAIJIN SPECIAL' BONSAI**



*C. longipedicellata*

SPECIES:

## C. LONGIPEDICELLATA

BY BRADFORD KING

The most interesting characteristic of *C. longipedicellata* is the long pedicel (stem) that holds the reddish bud and the resulting flower. The buds open to a small white flower that looks like a miniature parachute. Tom Nuccio and I like this long stem red toned bud but Jim Nuccio doesn't. How would you vote? Two out of three is more than enough votes to win an election. The leaves are dark green and ribbed like a sasanqua. New growth is an attractive bronze hue. The plant grows in an upright manner and blooms midseason.

# CAMELLIAS

## *The Winter Garden Royalty*

*A magnificent book by Bradford King, editor of the Camellia Journal, Camellia Yearbook, and past President of the American Camellia Society.*

# CAMELLIAS



*The Winter Garden Royalty*  
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George Harrison, President of The Pacific Camellia Society, said, “Brad’s book has set a new standard.”

Jack Dewar, a camellia hobbyist from Fayetteville North Carolina, wrote, “Brad, your book is sensational. You have broken the code on value of photography and must be in the top ten in our nation as a purveyor of beauty. You have gone into depth on cultivars more than anyone.”

Alexis Slafer, ACS Board Member, said, “Brad, I was reading your book last night. It is really fabulous & your photos are some of the best I’ve seen in plant books. Congratulations!”

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ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD IN 'WILDFIRE'