

THE
Camellia
REVIEW





INSIDE COVER: *'CHERRIES JUBILEE'* Photo by Bradford King

FRONT COVER: *'ADOLPH AUDUSSON VARIEGATED'* Photo by Bradford King

Published by the Southern California Camellia Society
socialcamelliasociety.org

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOL 84. NUMBER 2

The Cover Photos	2
Invitation to Join	3
Officers and Director	4
Thoughts from the Editor <i>by Bradford King</i>	4

FEATURES

Camellia Petal Fimbriation <i>by Bradford King</i>	7
Nuccio's Booms and Blooms <i>by Bradford King</i>	11
The Huntington Botanical Gardens Honors Ralph Peer <i>by Bradford King</i>	18
Spring in Descanso <i>by Bradford King</i>	23

DEPARTMENTS

Camellia Species: <i>C. tunghinensis</i> <i>by Bradford King</i>	28
The Higo Treasures From Japan: 'Hiodoshi' <i>by Bradford King</i>	29
Parting Shot: Camellia Pollinators <i>by Bradford King</i>	30

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THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

IT NEVER RAINS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

BY BRADFORD KING

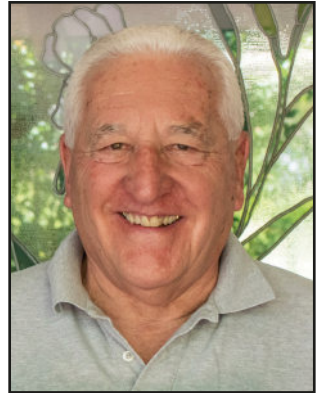
The exception was this winter. We have been in a severe drought for over five years in Southern California until 2023. What a relief to finally get adequate rain. It left us all wondering if we had been magically transported to Seattle, Washington, when it rained day after day.

The camellias loved the moisture, but some of the flowers had conditions, issues, and the dreaded blight.

What did you do to enjoy your camellias?

I found washing the dishes enjoyable as I looked out to see 'Glen 40 Variegated' looking back at me.

When there were breaks in the rain, I took photos of the camellias in



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bloom, picked up soggy wet flowers on the ground, and brought flowers indoors to enjoy.

'Show Time' looked especially pretty when the large pink petals showed rain drops. It was interesting to see both 'Show Time' and 'Buttons 'N Bows' flowers standing upright even in heavy rain.

The heavy blooms of 'Grand Prix' tended to protect their faces by hanging down. When I lifted them up to get this picture, you can see the petals are dry.

'Glen 40' had many late season flowers. During the storms, heavy with moisture, they hung upside down.

This camellia season, due to the cool wet winter, left us waiting for many cultivars to finally bloom. This is illustrated by the vibrant coral pink bloom of 'Island Sunset'. This cultivar peaked after all the shows were over in March.



'GRAND PRIX'

Grouping camellia flowers in a mass display indoors gave pleasure even when there was hail and thunderstorms.



'FIMBRIATA'

CAMELLIA PETAL FIMBRIATION

BY BRADFORD KING

There are camellia flowers that have fimbriated petal edges which make an especially attractive and distinctive bloom. Examples of camellias with serrated petal edges are ‘Fimbriata’, ‘Clark Hubbs’, ‘Hawaii’, ‘Elegans Splendor’, and ‘Ville de Nantes’.

One of the most attractive examples of petal serration is the iconic sport of ‘Alba Plena’. ‘Fimbriata’ has a medium white flower with serrated petals. It was imported from China to England in 1816. Fimbriata is a synonym of serration, hence its name.

‘Clark Hubbs’ has a large brilliant dark red peony flower with a fringe of



‘CLARK HUBBS’



teeth on the petal edges. In the 1970s and 80s, it was a popular camellia show bloom due to its size, rich red color, and interesting serrated petals. Today it is seen in older private and public gardens.

In 1969, a large to very large sport of ‘C.M. Wilson’ was discovered and named ‘C.M. Wilson Splendor’ by Paul Gains. When Julius Nuccio, cofounder of Nuccio’s Nurseries, was shown the beautiful light pink anemone flower with deep serrated petals fully edged in white, he convinced them to change the name to ‘Elegans Splendor’. This change documented that it was a flower mutation from the “Elegans Family.” ‘Elegans Splendor’ has a large to very large flower with deep petal serrations. The anemone flower is a lovely shade of light pink with white petal edges.

In 1961, a pale pink peony flower with frimbriated petals was named ‘Hawaii’ by Paul Gains of the Hamilton and Clark Nursery. It is also a sport from ‘C.M. Wilson’ and part of a trio of camellias honoring the 50th state. The others are ‘Kona’ and ‘Maui’.

In France, the iconic ‘Ville de Nantes’ has upright serrated petals on a dark red flower with white markings. Typically, in America there are few



blooms with serrated petals until late season. However, the medium to large semidouble flower is popular in the states where virus variegated red flowers are desirable.





NUCCIO'S BOOMS AND BLOOMS

BY BRADFORD KING

Nuccio's is booming during Spring with wholesale, retail, and mail orders. There are camellias still in bloom, and the azaleas are at their peak, but did you know that they also have white and pink dogwood, as well as rhododendrons?

The large flowers on 'Julius Nuccio' were everywhere. Even a tiny plant in a one-gallon pot had a very large flower—yes more than five inches.

The pink dogwood purchased 20 years ago from Nuccio's is showing its flowers. While dogwoods are a Nuccio sideline, there are dozens to choose from.

Nuccio's has been growing camellias since 1935. Thousands of seedlings have been propagated over the last 80 years with several hundred introduced by Nuccio's. They have chosen beautiful cultivars in varying colors, size, and forms to propagate. Today, over 100 Nuccio camellia introductions are listed in the nursery catalog which also lists over 200 azalea varieties.

The Nuccio's "Carnival" azaleas are characterized by large flowers, long blooming season, borne on vigorous sun tolerant plants that are outstanding in the landscape and do especially well in sunny California.

Many years ago, the followers of the Catholic religion in Italy started the tradition of holding a wild costume festival right before the first day of Lent. Because Catholics were not supposed to eat meat during Lent, they called their festival Carnevale which



ONE-GALLON POT WITH 'JULIUS NUCCIO'



'NUCCIO'S CARNIVAL'

means “to put away the meat.” A carnival usually involves a public celebration and parade, with some elements of a circus, that culminates in a street party. We celebrate Nuccio’s Carnival Azaleas for the show they provide in



AZALEA DISPLAY AT THE NURSERY



the garden like a carnival party.

Many people like tree azaleas, and there are dozens to choose from at Nuccio's.





'NUCCIO'S WICKED WITCH'

In their azalea breeding program, they used 'Koromo Shikibu', a Japanese native azalea with a single lavender flower and narrow well separated petals. This petal trait has provided a few unusual cluster blooming spider chrysanthemum like azalea flowers. They are eye-catching unique flowers. In 1999, they introduced 'Nuccio's Purple Dragon' which inspired them to



'NUCCIO'S BLUE MOON'



'PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'

call these seedlings “Dragon Azaleas” of which there are five. They are illustrated here by ‘Nuccio’s Wicked Witch’ which has a large single purplish pink flower with narrow well-spaced petals.

Julius Nuccio imported Satsuki Azaleas from Japan where they have been grown for centuries. They are treasured for their adaptability to bonsai



'A BEDFORD'



‘TAHITIAN DAWN’

culture, late blooming season (May-June), dense growth, and their blooming time which is valued for extending the blooming season until spring. One of 17 Nuccio's introduction of Satsuki cultivars is illustrated by 'Nuccio's Blue Moon'.

Few rhododendrons can be found thriving in Southern California, as they struggle in the hot dry summers. They need protection from direct sun but still need bright light to bloom. When we visited Nuccio's 20 years ago, we were delighted to see 'President Roosevelt' because my wife and I loved



the rhododendrons that grew in the Northeast where we raised our family. We found a place in the garden that has allowed it to bloom every year.

Recently, Nuccio's has developed a sideline in offering a couple dozen beautiful spring blooming rhododendrons. They have a variety of growth habits, flowers, and colors. They are illustrated here by 'A Bedford', with a blue and purple bloom, and 'Tahitian Dawn', with light pink flowers.

A visit to Nuccio's Nurseries is always fun, but the warm days of spring, with masses of azaleas in bloom, is a wonderful sight!

In appreciation of Ralph S. Peer

1892 - 1960

Whose passion and expertise
were instrumental to the introduction of
Camellia reticulata from China
to gardens throughout the United States



“IN APPRECIATION OF RALPH PEER”

THE HUNTINGTON BOTANICAL GARDENS HONORS RALPH PEER

BY BRADFORD KING

The Huntington Botanical Gardens continue to add camellias to their collection. The one that got my attention was ‘Tomorrow Park Hill’ which was planted next to ‘California’. Each has a stone marker recognizing the contribution made by Ralph Peer to the camellia world.

RALPH SYLVESTER PEER

Ralph was a talent scout, recording engineer, and record producer in the field of music in the 1920s and 30s. He attended Kansas City High School and later the University of Chicago Naval Reserve Officer’s Training. After the war, he joined the recording industry. In 1924, he supervised the first commercial recording session in New Orleans, Louisiana, recording jazz, blues, and gospel music groups.

Ralph published and recorded country and jazz artists like Fats Waller, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie. The Southern Music Publishing Com-

pany that he founded was very successful in part because he introduced Central American music to the world. He was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1984.

Ralph Peer was active in the camellia societies in the Los Angeles area. In the 1950s, he helped found the Los Angeles Camellia Society serving as the first President. He was a State Director from California to the American Camellia Society Board of Directors from 1954 to 1958 and served as ACS President from 1957 to 1959. He established the Ralph Peer Sasanqua Award for the American Camellia Society and financed J. Robert Sealy's book on the *Genus Camellia*.

He and his wife Monique Iverson Peer were married on January 11, 1940. Ralph Peer II, their heir, was born April 9, 1944. In the late 1940s, Ralph took an avid interest in horticulture, growing and becoming an expert on camellias. Shortly after Descanso Gardens imported the Chinese Yunnan *C. reticulata* to the U.S., Ralph Peer also received a shipment of the Yunnan *C. reticulata* cultivars. Over time he generously shared these cultivars with local growers, Descanso Gardens, and The Huntington Botanical Gardens. These 1948 imports from China to the United States are the beginning of growing and hybridizing new *C. reticulata* hybrids which now number over 800 new cultivars.

Peer's most famous camellia introduction is 'Tomorrow Park Hill'. The bloom is a large to very large light soft pink with deeper pink petal edges variegated throughout with



'TOMORROW PARK HILL'

lovely white markings. It is a sport of 'Tomorrow Variegated'. In 1964, he named this *C. japonica* after his estate "Park Hill." Park Hill comprised five acres overlooking Los Angeles, California, with thousands of exotic plants, including 3,000 different camellia cultivars.



STONE MARKER IDENTIFYING
'CALIFORNIA'



'CALIFORNIA'

'CALIFORNIA'

The oldest camellia growing in California is a large, light rose red semi-double flower with broad thick petals that grows on a spreading *C. japonica* tree. The original plant was purchased

by Harlem Cate at Redondo Pier, Los Angeles, California, in 1888 from a sailor on a Japanese tramp steamer. It was planted in a nursery at Durfee Road, Pico, California, where it was known as 'Durfee Road'. When the property was up for sale, Ralph Peer bought the plant to save it from being destroyed. Monique 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 several thousand to move the plant to a place of honor at their home "Park Hill" in Los Angeles. This was a major undertaking. The roots on one side were cut, then two months later a second side, and so on until it was ready to be boxed.

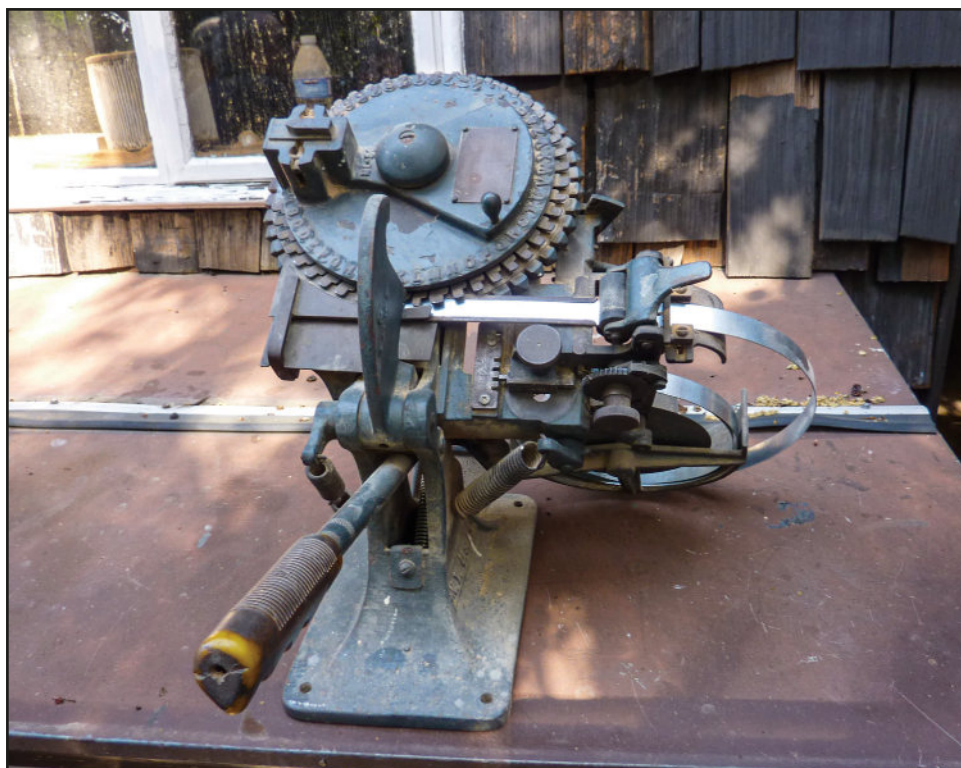
Jimmy Tuliano, the Peer's chief gardener, was in charge. He went into the hole under the tree and daringly cut the tap root. The tree was lifted in April 1959 leaving a seven-foot-deep hole. It was then trucked to the Park Hill property in Laurel Canyon which has rocky slopes that needed terracing to plant camellias.

A good-sized level spot was needed to plant 'California'. The identified

area was down a 200-foot embankment with a 40-degree slope. Wooden rail tracks were constructed including a 30-degree corner. Large ropes and winches were needed to lower this 30-foot-tall tree, with root ball weighing 15 tons, into the prepared hole. Halfway down a large bang was heard as one rope snapped followed in quick succession by all the other ropes. The tree slid to the corner. As those watching anticipated disaster, the tree and root ball bounced through the corner landing safely on its side in the prepared hole. ‘California’ was home! When Ralph Peer II sold Park Hill in 2004, the tree was moved to The Huntington Botanical Gardens where it currently resides.

Over the years, Joey Goldfarb became friends with Jimmy Tuliano, so when Ralph Peer II sold Park Hill, Joey dug several camellias from the Peer estate using wheelbarrows to bring them across the street to his compound. He also received a very interesting object—a 1930 vintage metal label maker used to make plant labels at Park Hill.

In conclusion, Ralph Peer was a major force in camellia history which The Huntington has fittingly continued to honor.



THE LABEL MAKER



‘TARO-AN’



Spring IN DESCANSO

BY BRADFORD KING

With the warm days of spring, people come to walk in Descanso Gardens to enjoy the flowers planted on curving pathways. The iconic Descanso camellias are still in bloom with clivia, cherry trees, and tulips making a beautiful show.

CAMELLIAS

Hundreds of camellia trees are still in bloom in Descanso Gardens with families and friends walking among the mature trees in bloom. ‘Taro-an’, ‘Hishi-Karaito’, and ‘Royal Velvet’ were three of the hundreds still having abundant blooms. ‘Taro-an’ was introduced in Japan in 1936. The medium lovely soft pink flower has rounded petals and heavy golden stamens. Taro-an is also a name given to a Japanese Tea House. The flower is not seen in camellia shows. In Japan, it lost favor as new cultivars were introduced. However, the cluster of five trees planted close together caught my eye in Descanso as they were all in full bloom. We applaud public gardens for growing older cultivars so they are not lost.

Another Japanese cultivar that has never lost favor in Japan or America is



'HISHI-KARAITO'

'Hishi-karaito'. The pink flowers have a fountain of white petaloids that make this small flower popular at camellia shows and in the landscape.

'Royal Velvet' is a popular Nuccio's introduction that is frequently seen at camellia shows and in home gardens. The large semidouble dark velvet red flower attracts attention. Tom Gilfoy grafted the camellia in this photo, among other modern camellia introductions, at Descanso.



'ROYAL VELVET'



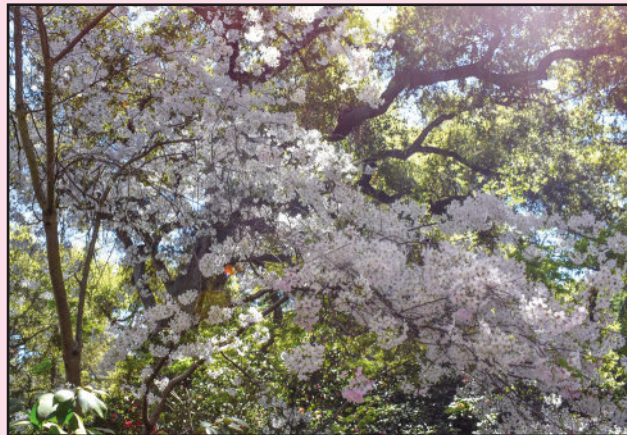
CLIVIA IN DAPPLED SUNLIGHT

CLIVIA

Clivia were discovered in 1815 in the forest of South Africa. They were named for Lady Charlotte Clive, the Duchess of Northumberland, because she was the first to cultivate them. They became very popular in Great Britain and America as house plants. The classic clivia has a vibrant orange trumpet shaped flower borne among long broad blade like foliage. In cold areas, they are an indoor plant, but in mild climates like California they are grown in dappled sunlight. They make a wonderful display among the California live oaks providing a beautiful border on several paths in Descanso.

CHERRY TREES

The blooming of cherry trees in Japan has been celebrated for centuries. The planting of the cherry trees in Washington, D.C. was a gift of friendship from the people of Japan in 1912. We don't have to visit



CHERRY TREE IN BLOOM



CHERRIES AND AZALEA IN BLOOM

Japan or our capital to enjoy cherry trees in bloom. Descanso has a variety of wonderful cherry trees that bloom every spring. Some of the most beautiful are planted in and around the Japanese Garden.



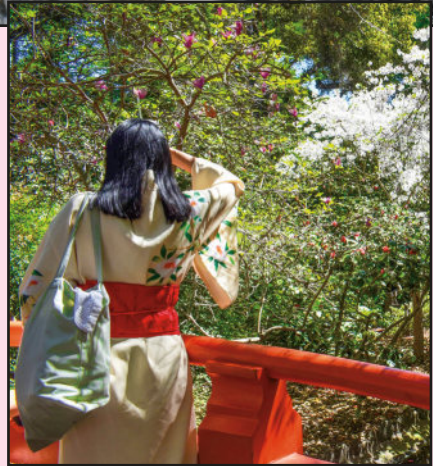
TULIPS



A BRIDE AT DESCANSO

TULIPS

Tulips have been a spring tradition in Descanso for many years. Since they need time in the cold, the bulbs are refrigerated for a few weeks before being planted, as California winters are not cold enough for them. However, with spring warmth the bulbs produce a marvelous array of colors. Hybridizers have done wonders with tulips. For more than 30 years I have enjoyed the Descanso tulips.



A JAPANESE WOMAN

PEOPLE

There are many families with children from babies in carriages to youngsters running through the forest. Couples old and young join in an intimate peaceful stroll in the gardens. Descanso is a wonderful place for wedding pictures. A lovely bride posed from a stone bridge in the gardens.

The Japanese Garden is a favorite of the old and young. This spring a Japanese woman in a beautiful kimono enjoyed the cherry blooms.

Descanso is a place for peaceful walks where in spring you can enjoy the camellias, clivia, cherry trees, and, of course, the tulip beds filled with color.



SPECIES:

C. TUNGHINENSIS

BY BRADFORD KING

This species grows along streams and ravines in Guangxi, China. There is an abundance of miniature pale, yellow flowers borne at the tips of its branches and in the leaf axils. The flowers grow on a visible flower stem called a pedicel which is about a third of an inch long. The bushy plant reaches six feet. It has been used in breeding programs but has not produced seedlings that have been propagated in the U.S. It is one of more than 40 yellow flowering species discovered in China and Vietnam that have been described by scientists. However, only a few have been imported to the U.S. The most well-known is *C. nitidissima*. Other yellow flowering species occasionally seen in the U.S. are *C. chrysanthoides* and *C. flava* which are sold at camellia specialty nurseries and add variety and color to a diverse camellia collection.

HIGO TREASURES FROM JAPAN:

‘HIODOSHI’

STORY AND PHOTO BY BRADFORD KING

This ancient Higo has a scarlet flower that turns violet with age. It has 5 to 7 petals and 120 to 140 small stamens with white filaments. The pistil is also white and is divided into three parts. It grows vigorously in an upright manner and has remained popular in Japan. Ghirardi, in his *Higo Camellia* book, claims the name means “Scarlet Amore.” *The Camellias of Japan*, published by the Japan Camellia Society, translates the name as “Scarlet Menace.” This inconsistency is common in translations if different Japanese characters were used and how the translator perceives the context. For example, a lover may see her partner as an “amore,” but her father could see him as a “menace.” Regardless, the flower is a wonderful vibrant scarlet Higo.



‘HIODOSHI’



PARTING SHOT:

CAMELLIA POLLINATORS

BY BRADFORD KING

A pollinator is a bird, insect, bat, or human who moves the pollen from the male anther of a flower to the sticky female stigma of a flower. In camellias, a pod develops which contains seeds that have genes from the seed parent and the pollen parent.

The most frequent camellia pollinators are the bees. They are in and about the flowers. I ignore them, and they ignore me. The only times I have been stung is when barefoot, and I step on one. The other time is around the pool when they are seeking water. Worker bees collect water to bring back to the hive to help keep it cool, especially in hot summer heat. They need it to digest food and keep the wax honeycombs from melting. They fall in the pool and drown; when removed they go back to the pool water. They seem suicidal, but it is the intense need for moisture that drives them, not hopelessness and depression.

In Southern California, we have seven kinds of hummingbirds. The most



ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD IN 'TAMA NO URA'

common are the Anna's and Allen's who are permanent residents and don't migrate. They move rapidly and quickly among the camellia flowers.

Occasionally, bumble bees will be seen in the garden. They are strong pollinators who dislodge the pollen they collect when their wing muscles vibrate. Unfortunately, they are in serious decline due to climate change and loss of habitat. While I see hundreds of bees a week and dozens of hummingbirds daily since I feed them, it is only once or twice a year that I see a bumblebee visiting my garden.

When a camellia hybridizer makes a controlled cross, they are the pollinator. After emasculation, the chosen pollen is placed on the stigma. I like to use a finger, but others use a soft brush or the anther itself.



BUMBLEBEE IN DOUBLE RAINBOW



HAND POLLINATION



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