

THE
Camellia
REVIEW





INSIDE COVER: ‘TAMA CAROUSEL’ WITH BEE *Photo by Bradford King*

FRONT COVER: ‘HOLY PURE’ (‘SHENG JIE’)

Registered in 2007 by John Wang. It is available at Nuccio’s Nurseries.

Photo by Bradford King

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THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

WINTER IS CAMELLIA BLOOMING SEASON

BY BRADFORD KING

While there are no local camellia shows in 2012 due to covid-19, camellia blooms can be seen by visiting The Huntington by appointment and at Descanso Gardens. Descanso is sponsoring a Camellia Festival in February. Southern California Camellia Society members Beth Stone, Jim Fitzpatrick, George Harrison, Barbara Council and I loaned camellia plants to Descanso for two entrance displays. In addition, Barbara Council, Beth Stone and George Harrison make camellia flower arrangements to put on display in the Japanese Garden.



The *Camellia Review* article “Beautiful California Bred Nonreticulata Hybrids” highlights the most beautiful introductions by Kramer Brothers, McCaskill Gardens and Nuccio’s Nurseries.

In “The Circus is Coming to Town” you will learn that Nuccio’s Nurseries introduced ‘Circus’ this season. It is the beautiful strawberry sport of ‘Ferris Wheel’ which will win points next year when the camellia shows resume.

“John Wang’s Breakthroughs in Camellia Breeding” describes his breeding program for developing light colored *C. reticulata* hybrids. The article is illustrated by his beautiful photos. The one we see is ‘Holy Pure’ (Sheng Jie) which is the cover photo. It is now possible to get his 2012 introduction ‘Yiao Hung Wei Zi’ at Nuccio’s. The name means “Yellow and Purple,” however, the medium formal double *C. reticulata* hybrid is a lovely light pink with deeper pink petal edges with an undertone of pale lavender pink.

Stay safe and healthy.



'J. C. WILLIAMS'

BEAUTIFUL CALIFORNIA BRED NONRETICULATA HYBRIDS

BY BRADFORD KING

Breeding between two different camellia species in modern times begins with John Charles Williams when *C. saluenensis* was introduced to the western world in 1917. John Charles Williams of Caerhays Castel in Cornwall, England, was a major sponsor for George Forrest plant collecting trips to China. Williams received seeds from Forrest of *C. saluenensis* which he shared with Col. Stephenson Clarke. They found the plants grew well, flowered freely and readily set seed. They began to make controlled crosses with *C. japonica* cultivars. In 1923 Williams' first crop of seedlings developed. The best seedling was named 'J. C. Williams' in 1940 to honor Williams who had died in 1939. This is the birth of "The Williamsaii Hybrids." Today there are 500 *C. saluenensis* hybrids ranging from miniature to large including new coral pink and lavender pink cultivars.

California hybridizers were on the forefront of breeding beautiful new hybrids without *C. reticulata* in the crosses. Kramer Brothers, McCaskill Gardens and Nuccio's Nurseries have introduced several wonderful new hybrids that continue to be enjoyed today.

KRAMER BROTHERS

The nursery was founded on Long Island, New York, in 1896 by Otto and August Kramer. They moved to California in 1929. They were known for their azaleas, camellias and gardenias. Ben Mackall married August Kramer's daughter Marie in 1937. After August died, Ben and Marie managed the nursery until 1986. They built its reputation on azaleas and camellias. When the nursery closed, the land was sold to the San Antonio Community Hospital.

The nonreticulata hybrids they introduced are outstanding. Those that have survived the test of time are some of the show winners we exhibit today. These include 'Angel Wings', 'Coral Delight', 'Coral Delight Variegat-



'ANGEL WINGS'



'CORAL DELIGHT'

ed, 'First Blush', 'Kramer's Fluted Coral', 'Kramer's Fluted Coral Variegated', 'Pink Dahlia' and 'Spring Daze plus other cultivars less well known today. The four best we continue to see regularly in public and private gardens, that also win at camellia shows in California, are described and illustrated below.

'Angel Wings' is a cross between 'Dr. Tinsley' and *C. saluenensis* that resulted in a lovely medium semidouble light pink flower with narrow upright petals. The way the petals stand up look like the wings of an angel.

One of the delightful results of breeding with *C. saluenensis* is the new coral pink color tones. This can be seen with 'Coral Delight' and 'Coral Delight Variegated.' The small to medium semidouble flowers are deep coral pink. It is a cross using *C. saluenensis* as the parent and pollen from 'Dr.



'CORAL DELIGHT VARIEGATED'



'PINK DAHLIA'

Tinsley.’ The white markings on the coral pink make an especially pretty bloom in the variegated form.

When Ben Mackall discovered a medium lavender pink dahlia shaped formal double flower with slender pointed petals, he and Marie named it ‘Pink Dahlia.’ The name fits this beautiful flower perfectly. It illustrates the beauty of the lavender pink color tones that can be inherited from a *C. saluenensis* seedling.

‘Spring Daze’ has a small white flower with beautiful rosy pink petal edges and at times a formal double light pink flower with coral pink edges. It also throws a white flower with blush colored petals that becomes deeper on the petal edges. It is, therefore, one of the few flowers where two forms may be sent to the contention table at a show. Which do you like best?

MCCASKILL GARDENS

Vernon McCaskill was a prolific camellia hybridizer who owned and operated McCaskill Gardens located in Pasadena, California. McCaskill Gardens introduced eight nonreticulata hybrids between 1930 and 1988. Most of these cultivars are not seen anymore, but the one we do see is ‘Waltz Time.’

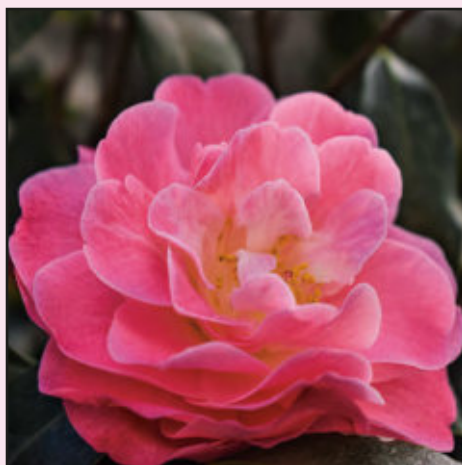
‘Waltz Time’ is a cross between the hybrid ‘Williams Lavender,’



‘SPRING DAZE’



‘SPRING DAZE’ IN APRIL



‘SPRING DAZE’



‘WALTZ TIME’



‘WALTZ TIME VARIEGATED’

which has a single medium lavender pink flower, and the *C. japonica* ‘Kuro Tsubaki,’ which has a small black red semidouble flower. The color was inherited from ‘Williams Lavender’ and the form from its pollen parent. The abnormal gene that gives ‘Kuro Tsubaki’ its dark red color is not in evidence. The lilac pink medium flower blooms midseason on a vigorous bushy upright plant. The variegated form was introduced in 1962 by McCaskill and is even more popular. The wonderful white markings on pink petals makes a striking bloom which is capable of winning crystal at a camellia show.



‘ISLAND SUNSET’



'BUTTONS 'N BOWS'



'JOE NUCCIO'

NUCCIO'S NURSERIES

Joe and Julius Nuccio began the Nuccio's Nurseries in 1935 in their parent's backyard. After World War II they purchased forty acres in Altadena, California, which is the present location. Today the Nursery is run by Julius' two sons Tom and Jim. Joe's son Julius worked in the nursery full-time for 47 years until he retired. He died in 2020. Nuccio's Nurseries has introduced 205 new camellias of which at least 20 are nonreticulata hybrids. The most popular are highlighted here.

Two that have been given American Camellia Society Awards are 'Island Sunset' and 'Buttons 'n Bows.' They won the Kathryn and Les Marbury Award made to the originator of the best small or small to medium *C. japonica* or nonreticulata hybrid.

'Island Sunset' has a medium semidouble flower with rich coral pink petals that become progressively lighter in the center. It is easy to imagine walking on the beach at sunset in the Caribbean islands and seeing a sunset that resembles 'Island Sunset.' The shades of pink and coral make a wonderful bloom. Hybrid camellias are noted for being floriferous and having new color tones.

'Buttons 'n Bows' has a small beautiful light pink formal double flower that shades to deeper pink. It is one of the favorites of young women and children with the ruffled pink formal double flower resembling buttons and bows on a party dress. It wins as a single and trays of like blooms at camellia shows.



'FREEDOM BELL'

In 1991 a nonreticulata hybrid seedling of 'Garden Glory,' with a lovely orchid pink flower with incurved petal tips that are a deeper tone of pink, was introduced by Nuccio's Nurseries. It is a medium formal double that blooms early and may continue to have flowers throughout the camellia blooming season. The two-toned pink colors on a formal double flower, with the distinctive attractive incurved petals, make 'Joe Nuccio' a wonderful addition to a camellia collection. When I asked Tom and Jude how they named the flower 'Joe Nuccio,' Tom said his father Julius persuaded them. Jude recalled that his father really liked the flower which was the clincher. 'Joe Nuccio' is a great camellia that commemorates one of the founding fathers of Nuccio's Nurseries.

The small semidouble bright red flower of 'Freedom Bell' has numerous identical blooms year after year. It does well, therefore, in trays of 3 and 5 at camellia shows. The mass of flowers makes a show in the garden.

The miniature formal double to rose form double 'Buttermint' has creamy to pale yellow flowers. This *C. kissii* hybrid has clusters of buds up and down the stems. While the flowers easily shatter, the profusion of flowers makes an attractive display on an upright plant that blooms over a long period of time—early to late season.



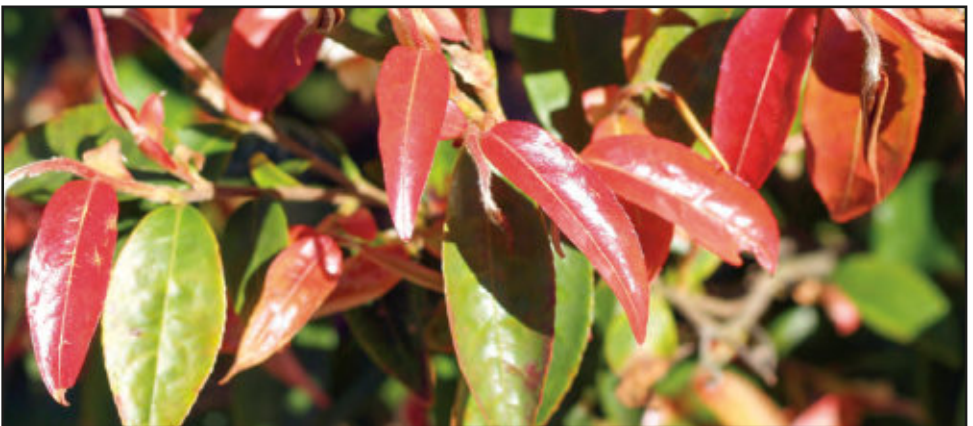
'BUTTERMINT' CLUSTER

CAMELLIA SPECIES:
C. ASSIMILIS

BY BRADFORD KING

This camellia is grown for its beautiful new light maroon foliage that as it matures turns green. The small single white flower blooms mid to late season and looks pretty among the leaves. The plant develops into an attractive shrub with a lacy look reaching 8 to 10 feet when mature. It is a species that has been used to make tea but is not in mass cultivation like *C. sinensis* (the tea plant).

It originates from China and specifically from Mt. Victoria, Hong Kong. It can be grown in mild climates with little frost. Despite its ornamental qualities, it has not been used often as a landscape or breeding species. If you like camellias that are distinctive and not widely grown, this species can be found at Nuccio's Nurseries.



C. assimilis FLOWER AND FOLIAGE Photos by Gene Phillips



C. NITIDISSIMA



'DAHLONEGA'

THE CAMELLIA GOLD RUSH

BY BRADFORD KING

There are more than 40 yellow camellia species that have been identified growing in China and Vietnam. The best known is *C. nitidissima* variety *nitidissima* generally just known as *C. nitidissima*. It has been used to develop new yellow camellias because the small cup shaped flower is a lovely deep shade of golden yellow.

THE DAHLONEGA GOLD RUSH

Dahlonega, Georgia, was the site of America's first gold rush in 1828. Dahlonega is Cherokee for gold. For many years, the pale creamy to light yellow of the formal double 'Dahlonega' was the best yellow toned camellia. It was introduced in 1986 by Dr. Walter Homeyer. It is a lovely small to medium camellia that slowly grows on an upright plant with nice gray bark. 'Dahlonega' is a very attractive plant with many flowers that tend to become more yellow as the bloom matures on the bush.

THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

When James Marshall found gold at Sutter's Mill in Coloma, the California Gold Rush began on January 24, 1848. The news of gold brought about 300,000 people to California boosting the economy and helping to promote statehood. It also inadvertently assisted in bringing camellias to Sacramento, California.

Julius Nuccio, one of the founding brothers of the Nuccio's Nurseries, actively sought to develop a yellow camellia using *C. nitidissima* as a parent. He was able to propagate five seedlings that have found their way into the camellia world. They introduced 'Lemon Drop', an off white to pale yellow semidouble in 1981; followed by 'Honeymoon', a creamy white with yellow at the base of the petals in 1992; 'Golden Glow', a creamy white medium semidouble with light yellow at the base and a slight pink tone on the edges



'LEMON DROP'



'HONEYMOON'

and back of the petals in 1994; 'Lemon Twist', a creamy pale yellow flower in 1996 and 'Buttermint', a miniature cluster blooming very creamy to pale yellow rose form double in 1997.

Three of the best yellow hybrids from Japan were introduced to California by Nuccio's Nurseries. Two are the work of Mr. Tadao Yumaguchi who back crossed 'Kiko' on *C. nitidissima* to get light-yellow hybrids. 'Ki-No-Senritsu' (Yellow Melody) has a lovely peony to loose peony formed flower that thrives in deep shade where it grows moderately fast but is a shy bloomer.

The most beautiful is 'Senritsu-Ko' (Golden Child) which has a light yellow



'SENTRITSU-KO'



'GOLDEN GLOW'



'KI-NO-SENRI TSU'

low small to medium formal to rose form flower with peach pink edges. It grows moderately fast in an upright open growth pattern. It sets multiple buds and flowers easily in midseason. In Southern California it has many more rose form flowers than formal double. It too prefers more shade than a typical *C. japonica*.

A small single light-yellow flower with slender red stripes named 'Kogane Nishiki' (Golden Brocade), bred by Kozro Yoshikawa, is also propagated by Nuccio's Nurseries.

In conclusion, hybridizers like Dr. Clifford Parks have continued to introduce yellow camellias today. Most recently he introduced 'Optical Illusion,' a winner at the American Camellia Society show at Norfolk, Virginia, in 2020.



'KOGANE NISHIKI'



'OPTICAL ILLUSION'



'EVENING GLOW PEARL'



'FINE PURE' *Photo by Bradford King*

JOHN WANG'S BREAKTHROUGHS IN CAMELLIA BREEDING

BY BRADFORD KING • PHOTOS BY JOHN WANG

Since most of the *C. reticulata* hybrids have red and pink colored flowers, John Wang devoted himself to going in a new direction—to breed light colored cultivars. John Wang has two breeding strategies to get light colored *C. reticulata* flowers. One is using the white *C. japonica* 'Kona' with the *C. reticulata* 'Suzanne Withers' which has a white flower with pink tones that get deeper on the petal edges. This is how he bred 'Holy Pure', 'Fine Pure' and 'Evening Glow Pearl.'

'Holy Pure' (Sheng Jie) has a large to very large semidouble bloom with pink buds that open to a creamy white tinged with pink that gets darker on the petal edges. It was awarded The Charlotte C. Knox Reticulata Award by the American Camellia Society in 2018 and is propagated by Nuccio's Nurseries.

He varied the white japonica strategy beyond 'Kona' using other combinations of light-colored japonicas like 'Elaine's Betty', 'Nuccio's Jewel' and nonreticulata hybrid 'Honeymoon.' When he used 'Elaine's Betty,' it produced 'Lake Erhai Pearl' which is an alpine fault lake in Yunnan, China. The name means "ear shape sea" which is the shape of the lake.

Nanshan is a District in the city of Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province. 'Nanshan Purple Jade' is a cross between *C. reticulata* 'Suzanne Withers' and 'Nuccio's Jewel.' This bloom has also been referred to as 'South Mountain Lavender Jade.'

'Putuo Purple Light' is a cross between 'Suzanne Withers' and 'Honey-



'HOLY PURE' Photo by Bradford King



'LAKE ERHAI PEARL'

odds of generating a lighter colored bloom because color is controlled by the genes. That is, by reducing the dominance of the red genetic loading, there is a greater probability of getting light colored flowers. This is illustrated by 'Eighteen-Year-Old Maiden' which has a large white flower with patches of pink and red on the outer petals.

John has bred fragrant, yellow and other beautiful camellia cultivars. He

moon.' Mount Putuo is famous in China as one of the four sacred Mountains of Buddhism.

John has given a Chinese name to all his cultivars, but the English names have been used in the *Camellia Nomenclature* followed by the Chinese name. This is illustrated by 'Shining Jade' whose Chinese name is 'Jing.'

The second breeding strategy is to reduce the *C. reticulata* to 25 percent which he reasoned would increase the



'SOUTH MOUNTAIN LAVENDER JADE'



‘SHINING JADE’

bred ‘Suhzuo Embroidery’ which has a lovely yellow tinted bloom and the fragrant ‘Westlake Lotus.’

He used ‘Merry Christmas’ as the seed parent and pollen from ‘Virginia W. Cutter’ to get the beautiful anemone red flower with a genetic white border of ‘Dragon Fireball’ (‘Long-huozhu’). It grows vigorously, upright and blooms in midseason.

John Wang has some breeding practices that have helped him become a successful hybridizer. They are as follows:

1. Pollination is done indoors where there is no interference from rain, wind, bees and temperature changes. Three days after the last flower is pollinated, they are moved outdoors.



‘PUTUO PURPLE LIGHT’

2. Cross pollination is done only with highly selected parents that have one or more characteristics matching the breeding goal. Multiple identical crosses are made to ensure that there are many seeds of the same cross.



EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD MAIDEN

3. All seeds are germinated. He selects the best of these seedlings that match his hybridizing goal.

There are four creative ways John Wang speeds up seedling growth.

1. A large pair of utility scissors is used to carefully cut a few open lines on the hard seed shell. These seeds are soaked in water overnight then most of the seed shell is peeled off.

2. Seeds are germinated in a special mini greenhouse converted from a fish tank equipped with a grow light. The electric heater is placed in a long and narrow jar covered by aluminum foil to prevent water evaporation.

3. Garden perlite pasteurized in a microwave is used as the media to germinate seeds. Each pot is individually enclosed with a transparent poly bag. When two small leaves appear, water soluble fertilizer, fortified with trace elements, is applied.
4. In March, the seedlings can be as tall as 6 inches and are ready for approach grafting. These grafted seedlings can bloom in one to two years. Several of Wang's new camellias are unregistered and propagated in China. This is illustrated by '2018#3' which is a *C. reticulata* hybrid. The beautiful



'SUHZUO EMBROIDERY'



'DRAGON FIREBALL'



'WESTLAKE LOTUS'

large formal double flower has smooth petals with light pink edges shading to white in the center.

A *C. reticulata* hybrid propagated in China and the USA has small to medium white to creamy petals with a central splash of red. It has a fitting nickname 'Red Heart.' This rare white toned semidouble has red anthers and red pollen. It has pink on the petal edges, and the center turns brown when the pollen dries. In the future we hope to see it registered and distributed in America.



'2018#3'



'RED HEART'



'FERRIS WHEEL'



'FERRIS WHEEL' RED SPORT



'FERRIS WHEEL' BLUSH SPORT



THE CIRCUS IS COMING TO TOWN

BY BRADFORD KING

When we were young there was great excitement when the circus came to town. I can recall as a youngster seeing the circus train pull into town and watching the animals, clowns and other performers march through town to where the big top was being set up. Years later we took our kids to the “big top” but it was an indoor stadium. Today children have movies, TV, video games, iPhones and may never feel the excitement of a circus coming to town. As a camellia lover, you will be excited that ‘Circus’ is coming to town.

‘CIRCUS’

In September 2020 Nuccio’s Nurseries introduced ‘Circus.’ It is the beautiful strawberry sport of ‘Ferris Wheel.’ It too has a large to very large semidouble to loose peony flower with flared stamens and wonderful pink and red stripes.

A ‘Ferris Wheel’ plant can sport four different flowers: ‘Ferris Wheel’ (semidouble, loose peony and occasionally anemone formed blooms), a red semidouble with one or two white stripes, a blush bloom and the strawberry sport now named ‘Circus.’

Tom Nuccio and I like ‘Circus’ best, followed closely by ‘Ferris Wheel.’ Jim and Tom Nuccio have no intention of propagating the other two sports as they are not distinctive which is the key criterion for introducing a new cultivar.

I found it interesting to see that the new foliage on ‘Ferris Wheel’ and ‘Circus’ are different. This is due to the genetics of these two cultivars.

Tom Nuccio reported that these foliage characteristics are stable. In addition, the red sport has new foliage like ‘Circus’ but never like ‘Ferris Wheel.’



TRIO OF 'CIRCUS'

A THREE-RING CIRCUS

One of the most exciting parts of a circus is that there are three rings with entertainers doing something different in each ring plus loud music and colorful clowns running around honking horns and clanging bells. Exciting but confusing!

THERE IS A THREE-RING CAMELLIA CIRCUS COMING TO TOWN.

Monrovia is propagating a sport of 'Nuccio's Bella Rossa.' The trademark name is 'Vestito Rosso,' but its registration name is *C. Japonica* 'MonBella.' The plant label description says it has an abundance of beautiful crimson red flowers with glossy new midnight red foliage. The foliage image on the Monrovia website looks like what we see on 'Bella Jinhua.' However, the two plants Tom Nuccio got from Monrovia in October did not



'BELLA JINHUA'



NEW LEAVES ON 'FERRIS WHEEL'



NEW LEAVES ON 'CIRCUS'

have dark red on the leaves. Is this the same as the Chinese sport of 'Nuccio's Bella Rossa' named 'Bella Jinhua' (Red Leaved Bella)? They both have large red formal double flowers. It is well known that a camellia can mutate in different places and times.

At a circus we are challenged to look from ring to ring, eyes darting here and there until one performance is so engrossing, we stay focused on it. In this camellia three-ring circus we need close observation of the flower, foliage and growth habits to determine if they are different cultivars.



'BELLA JINHUA' LEAVES

HIGO TREASURES FROM JAPAN:

'ASAHI NISHIKI'

BY BRADFORD KING

In 1956 'Asahi Nishiki' (Morning Brocade) was registered. It has a white flower with 6 or 7 petals with crimson blotches and stripes in variable amounts which make an elegant bloom. Like all Higo camellias it has 130 to 200 central stamens which in this case are yellowish white. The pistil is also yellowish white with the stigma divided into 4 or 5 parts. The green leaves are narrow and medium in size. It can be grown in the ground or a pot and makes an attractive bonsai due to the pure white flower with crimson markings on the large petals. While not widely grown in America, a good example can be found in the Higo section of The Huntington Botanical Gardens where this photo was taken.





'BILL WOODROOF'

PARTING SHOT:

BIG RED RETICULATA: A GUYS FLOWER

BY BRADFORD KING

While the majority of camellia hybridizers are men, they most often name their introductions for their wives and daughters. However, there are exceptions because many men's favorite flowers are big and red.

Bill Woodroof, the first editor of the *Camellia Nomenclature*, was noted for declaring that a show winning flower needed to be big and red. Therefore, in 1989 Nuccio's named a very large scarlet semidouble to loose peony *C. reticulata* for him. 'Bill Woodroof' blooms midseason on a vigorous upright compact plant.

Bill Goertz from Duarte, California, named a large red semidouble to loose peony *C. reticulata* hybrid for himself in 1985. It blooms mid to late season on an upright compact plant. Another example of a large red *C. reticulata* hybrid named for a man. This time one he actually bred himself. The contrast of white markings on a red bloom is striking

One of the best *C. reticulata* hybrids is 'Harold L. Paige.' It is still a popular show flower because it has a very large bright red rose formal double to peony



'BILL GOERTZ'



'HAROLD L. PAIGE'

flower. The Huntington's plant is twenty feet tall and blooms every year. It is a late season bloomer that may need to be gibbed to enter a camellia show.

Al Gunn and Bill Goertz collaborated in introducing a very large semi-double flower with many curled petals for Al.

Hulyn Smith from Valdosta, Georgia, was another man who loved big red flowers. He named one of his favorite *C. reticulata* camellias for his friend Ray Gentry. 'Ray Gentry' has very large semidouble to loose peony red flowers with golden stamens and filaments. It grows vigorously, upright and blooms mid to late season. It was introduced in 2004 and has won many points in the Southeast camellia shows. It has only recently been grown in Southern California now that Nuccio's Nurseries is propagating it for sale. There is also a variegated form that has its fans.



'AL GUNN'



'RAY GENTRY'



'HAROLD L. PAIGE' IN BLOOM AT THE HUNTINGTON



‘RED HOTS’