

THE
Camellia
REVIEW





INSIDE COVER: 'CILE MITCHELL' Photo by Bradford King

FRONT COVER: 'CORAL DELIGHT' Photo by Bradford King

Published by the Southern California Camellia Society
socialcamelliasociety.org

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THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

BLOOMING IN THE RAIN

BY BRADFORD KING

Winter is peak camellia blooming season, which makes a garden walk every morning a pleasure. It is particularly so when a seedling blooms. It is always interesting to see what it looks like and, if distinctive, all the better. A newly opened gibbed bloom looks good, but keeping an eye on it the next few days can be exciting as it keeps getting bigger and bigger. The bright small flowers light up in morning sun such as the jewel-like 'Tama-no-ura'. Entering blooms at camellia shows is a fun winter activity. We welcome newbies to enter the novice class, **but all are welcome** to exhibit their flowers.



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This issue has an article “Smile! You’re on Candid Camera,” which has some photos that I hope will make you smile. Happy people and beautiful camellias are a great combination.

“Favorite Camellias Found in Descanso” highlights seven of the cultivars that take center stage in the winter. Read about Jean May and Hugh Evans who were honored years ago to have a camellia named for them.

While we know that sometime in the future Nuccio’s Nurseries will close shop, it isn’t in the cards this year or even next. Many of their introductions are winners at camellia shows which are discussed in “Nuccio’s Are Winners” in this issue. In fact, two new foliage camellias were introduced this year. They are ‘Stained Glass’ and ‘Centipede’. When they bloom, I promise to show them to you in the spring *Camellia Review*.





Smile! YOU'RE ON, CANDID CAMERA

BY BRADFORD KING

This title was the punchline used after the TV reality show *Candid Camera* played a practical joke on unsuspecting people. This show ran from 1948 until 2014. It usually made people smile and laugh, including the person who was the brunt of the joke. Jokes are fun but may also hurt people's feelings. As a photographer, I try to get the best images of people and flowers but never publish a photo that is embarrassing or reflects poorly on the subject. This article shares some smiling faces.





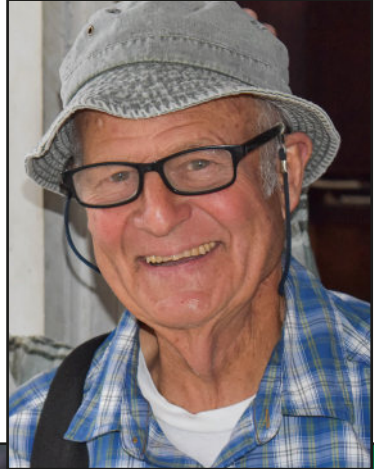
‘OWEN’

Did you ever wonder why people smile? I learned from my studies to become a psychologist that we smile for many reasons. Sometimes because we are happy but also to put others at ease in social situations. A smile may also show more complex feelings such as resignation. Humans can smile as soon as they are born. It is a reflex smile present even in the womb. Consequently, when parents respond with joy to a reflex smile, the baby learns to connect this with attention. Therefore, most babies regularly develop social smiles between six and eight weeks, with some earlier, in response to their loving parents. As babies mature, they may smile when they are happy even when not engaging with a loved one.

According to Ghirardi in the classic *Higo Camellia* book, ‘Hatsu-warai’ means babies first smile. It is paired with my wife Lynn and myself getting to know our first great granddaughter Cora Rae King.

The joy of achievement brought an enthusiastic smile to our almost two-year-old great grandson Owen Bradford Vasquez on vacation when he caught his first fish.

'Egao' (Smiling Face) has a large pink semidouble flower borne on a vigorous upright spreading plant. This is one of the best late blooming sun camellias. Its flowers overlap the fall and winter camellias and was awarded the Ralph Peer Sasanqua Award in 1990. This cultivar was imported by Nuccio's Nurseries, Altadena, California, from Tereda, Japan, and has been widely distributed. Since it came to the U.S. through the efforts of Nuccio's, its smiling face is paired with Tom Nuccio. He is smiling as he is beginning a road trip vacation.



TOM NUCCIO AND 'EGAO'



JIM NUCCIO AND 'EGAO CORKSCREW'

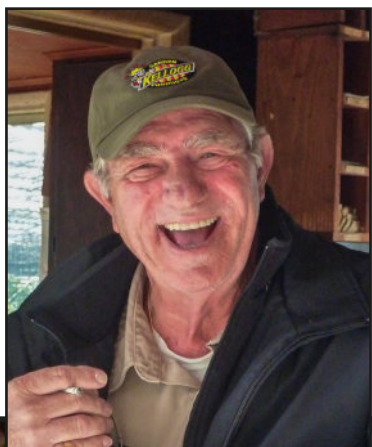
I can only image the look on Jim Nuccio's face when he found an odd-looking plant with zigzag branches growing in a large bed of 'Egao' plants. However, he was smiling when he said it was in a bed overlooking the Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, so perhaps some stray rays of radiation are the cause of the growth mutation. Therefore, it is appropriate to pair Jim with the sport they named 'Egao Corkscrew'. It has a medium flower with heavily ruffled pink petals. Roughly half are semidouble and half full peony formed that grow on zigzag branches.

Jude Nuccio joined Nuccio's after graduating High School in 1957. He co-ran the Nursery with Tom and Jim after their parents retired until he too

retired. Jude was Joe Nuccio's son and a cousin, therefore, of Tom and Jim. He was named for his Uncle Julius Nuccio. Jude is paired with his favorite sun camellia 'Kanjiro', which is one of the very best fall blooming camellias.

Meyer Piet and his friend Lee Gaeta hybridized camellias in the 1970s and 80s from Meyer's home in Arcadia, California. Their best-known *C. japonica* was his last introduction, which was registered after both men passed away. 'Bev Piet's Smile' has a beautiful large dark red and white semidouble to peony flower with yellow anthers.

I got to know Bev Piet before she sold the Arcadia house and moved to San Diego. She was a lovely woman with a great



JUDE NUCCIO AND 'KANJIRO'



BEV PIET AND 'BEV PIET'S SMILE'

smile which is how the camellia got its name. Bev Piet is showing me 'Bev Piet Variegated', a cultivar that Meyer named for her. This photo is paired with 'Bev Piet's Smile'.

The joyful smiles of George and Karen Harrison are captured when they won the George Lewis cup with 'Happy Harlequin' in March 2022. A happy moment and a happy flower to close this story.



GEORGE AND KAREN HARRISON



FAVORITE CAMELLIAS FOUND IN DESCANSO GARDENS

BY BRADFORD KING

The camellia forest is the signature collection at Descanso Gardens with a blooming season from fall to spring, peaking in February. The camellias are in a California native habitat growing under a canopy of Coastal Live Oaks.

In the fall, the Japanese Garden features beautiful *C. sasanqua* cultivars. It was designed by Eijiro Nunokawa and opened in 1966. A curving path that leads to the Japanese Tea House is creatively landscaped with the beautiful shell pink flowers of *C. sasanqua* 'Jean May' and 'Hugh Evans'.

During the winter months, the *C. japonica* flourish in Descanso. Three favorites include 'Berenice Boddy', 'Coronation', and 'Gigantea'. Behind the Japanese Garden on the path to the lilac collection, several 'Berenice Boddy' trees are flourishing. Jones and Boddy introduced this cultivar that was grown from a seedling from Star Nursery. Mr. Uyematsu, owner of Star Nursery, sold his collection to Charles Jones and Manchester Boddy because he was faced with interment along with other Japanese Americans, which

WHO WERE JEAN MAY & HUGH EVANS

I always wonder who the people were who are being honored to have camellias named for them. This is what I discovered researching the internet.

Jean May Colbert was the daughter of Gerbing's Camellia Nursery owner Ralph E. May.

Ralph began his career as a barber but had a passion for growing camellias and azaleas. In 1940, he became the owner and operator of Gerbing Camellia Nursery and Gardens of Fernandina, Florida. He originated 'Jean May' in 1951. In addition, he registered other *C. sasanqua* cultivars 'Barbara Colbert' in 1969 and 'Bart Colbert' in 1971 named for his grandchildren.

Hugh Evans made his fortune selling real estate and insurance in Southern California. This allowed him to purchase three acres in Santa Monica to build a home and garden. In 1923, he began importing exotic plants and experimenting with how they grew in Southern California. He developed a passion for tropical plants that bloomed all year, as well as drought tolerant plants from Australia and South Africa. He had an extensive collection of fuchsia, coral trees, eucalyptus, bougainvillea, hibiscus, and succulents. Those that did well were introduced to Southern California.

In 1930, his sons Jack and Morgan became active in growing and selling plants from the Evans home garden. Hugh, Jack, and Morgan joined with Jack Reeves to open the Evans and Reeves Nurseries where famous people like Clark Gable, Elizabeth Taylor, and Walt Disney were customers. Jack and Morgan were hired by Walt Disney to landscape his home, which led to their involvement in creating landscaping at Disneyland.

We assume 'Hugh Evans' was developed and sold by the Evans and Reeves Nursery.

Hugh is remembered as one of the horticulturists who helped define the Southern California landscape.



'JEAN MAY'



'HUGH EVANS'



'BERENICE BODDY'

meant the loss of his property and business. Jones and Boddy named this Star Nursery seedling for Boddy's wife.

'Coronation' is also located behind the Japanese Garden. It was registered by Vern McCaskill, the owner of McCaskill Gardens located in Pasadena, California. McCaskill Gardens introduced 72 *C. japonica* cultivars and eight non-reticulata hybrids between 1930 and 1988. The very large semi-double white blooms of 'Coronation' stand out in the garden.

Several large trees of 'Gigantea' produce hundreds of large red flowers with three possible forms—semidouble, anemone, or peony—with various amounts of variegation. Looking for the most beautiful to photograph, I



'CORONATION'



'GIGANTEA'



‘DEBUTANTE’

found an anemone bloom with uniform white markings covering the petals and the central petaloids.

Descanso Gardens is noted for its mass plantings of ‘Alba Plena’, ‘Debutante’, and ‘Pink Perfection’, which are found in the camellia forest. They were originally grown for Boddy’s cut flower business. Today we enjoy seeing them growing and blooming in clusters.

If you are a fan of Higo camellias, you will find a good collection in



‘ALBA PLENA’



‘ASAGAO’

Descanso. One example is ‘Asagao’, which has a pale pink irregular flower with flared stamens. The name means “Morning Glory.” Does it refer to a morning glory flower? More likely the glorious beginning of the day.

Poking among the Higo collection, I look for my favorite Higo, ‘Ohkan’, which I have seen in bloom here. Since the quality of blooms is variable, I don’t know what to expect.

I rate the one photographed that day as a B+ for its clear rich color and wonderful cluster of golden stamens surrounded by five full petals. The irregular form is typical, but to get an A, it needs to be more triangular shaped.



‘OHKAN’



‘PINK PERFECTION’



NUCCIO'S ARE WINNERS

BY BRADFORD KING

In recent camellia shows, Nuccio's Nurseries introductions are some of the big winners and not just in California but throughout the U.S. We begin with the very large *C. japonica* cultivars that earned the most show points.

The top winning very large bloom in 2022 was 'Show Time'. The clear light pink semidouble flower has ruffled petals which makes it stand out in the garden and at shows. It won more points in the southeast than in its home state of California.

Two more very large Nuccio's introductions win enough points to be in the top echelon. They are 'Moonlight Bay', which has a pale pink slightly cupped flower, and 'Grand Prix', which has a brilliant red irregular semidouble bloom with textured petals.

There are four Nuccio's introductions with large flowers that make up the top six winners at recent camellia shows. Number one and two are 'Royal Velvet' and 'Royal Velvet Variegated'. They have dark red velvet semidouble flowers which grow on a vigorous upright plant and bloom midseason, which is perfect timing for camellia shows. 'Royal Velvet' was named the American Camellia Society 2023 camellia of the year.

The variegated form has dark velvet red petals with mottled and moiré white markings. The contrast of colors is highly valued and gets many judges



'SHOW TIME'



'MOONLIGHT BAY'



'GRAND PRIX'

votes at camellia shows. Some seasons it tops 'Royal Velvet'.

Large to very large flowers are entered in the large class if the show has separate classes for large and very large. Therefore, large to very large flowers like 'Ferris Wheel' and 'Julius Nuccio' compete well winning significant points at shows. 'Ferris Wheel' has a white semidouble flower with pink and red stripes on large petals like the spokes of a Ferris Wheel, which is how it got its name. 'Ferris Wheel' also occasionally has peony or anemone blooms.



'ROYAL VELVET VARIEGATED'



'FERRIS WHEEL'

It is the largest white semidouble flower with vivid stripes which helps it win show points.

One of its show competitors is the large to very large brilliant dark red 'Julius Nuccio'. The semidouble irregular flower is spectacular, which is why it was named for the cofounder of the Nuccio's Nurseries. It blooms in mid to late season, frequently with its natural blooms appearing after the camellia shows



'ROYAL VELVET'



'JULIUS NUCCIO'



'ASAGAO'



'MAROON AND GOLD'

are over. This is why it is a good candidate to gib. It takes gib well increasing in size and with vibrant darker flowers. Since it is a late bloomer, it can be enjoyed in the spring in the garden or floating in a bowl as a home display.

The largest and most competitive show class is the medium *C. japonica*. This is because there are hundreds of entries and dozens of different cultivars that peak in the winter. Nuccio's introductions are always among those



'TAMA PEACOCK'



'RED DEVIL VARIEGATED'

in contention. Most recently their 2006 introduction 'Happy Harlequin' is found nationwide in the top five. The medium to large strawberry pink semidouble, with lovely rose stripes that tone deeper in the flower center, also has white petal margins that improve its looks.

The Nuccio's small class winners are 'Tama Peacock', 'Maroon and Gold', 'Red Hots', and 'Red Devil'.

'Tama Peacock' has a small to medium tubular semidouble flower with a maroon center that shades into the white petals. It blooms heavily early to midseason on an upright plant with arching branches. At a camellia show, there are usually a dozen or more entries, which is a challenge for judges in selecting the one to go to the contention table. I try to bring a dozen 'Tama Peacock' flowers to shows for two reasons. First, to enter single blooms and trays, but second because it is one of those flowers that easily falls off its calix.

Nuccio's registered 'Maroon and Gold' in 1961 making it a winner for over 60 years and counting. The small maroon loose peony flower has golden stamens. The abundant flowers bloom in mid to late season on a vigorous upright plant. Its name describes the flower colors perfectly.

'Red Devil' and 'Red Hots' have red flowers that win points in the *C. japonica* small class. 'Red Hots' has a brilliant red tubular semidouble flow-

er with pointed petals. It is more popular than ‘Red Devil’ which Nuccio’s didn’t list in the 2022-2023 catalog. However, ‘Red Devil’ has recently won more show points in the American camellia world than its older brother ‘Red Hots’. It is interesting that to date there is no virus variegated ‘Red Hots’, but we do see a few variegated ‘Red Devil’.

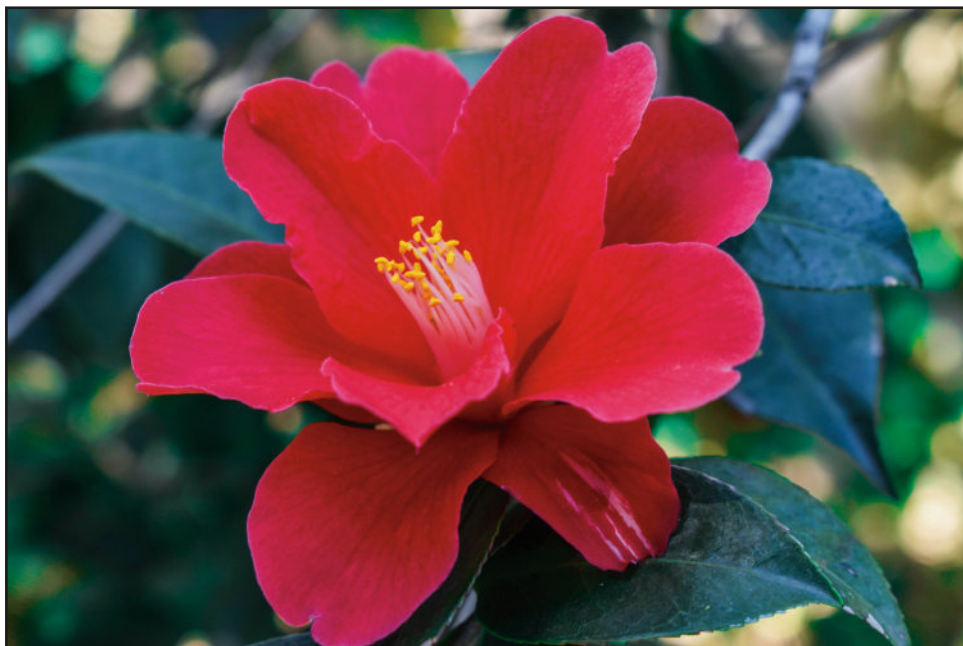
While non-reticulata hybrids come in all sizes, most often they are all placed together in one class.

Two Nuccio’s non-reticulata hybrids that are frequent camellia show winners are ‘Island Sunset’ and ‘Freedom Bell’.

‘Island Sunset’ has a medium semidouble flower that blooms mid to late season on an upright bushy plant. What makes it a winner is the rich coral pink color that shades lighter at the center of the flower and is topped with golden anthers.

‘Freedom Bell’ is a popular winner because it has abundant red bell-shaped flowers. When perfect, it is entered as a single. Since there are usually dozens blooming on the plant, choosing those the same size, form, and color will make competitive trays of like blooms.

In closing, we applaud the winning camellias introduced by Nuccio’s Nurseries and salute Tom and Jim who continue to make the Nuccio family winners.



‘FREEDOM BELL’



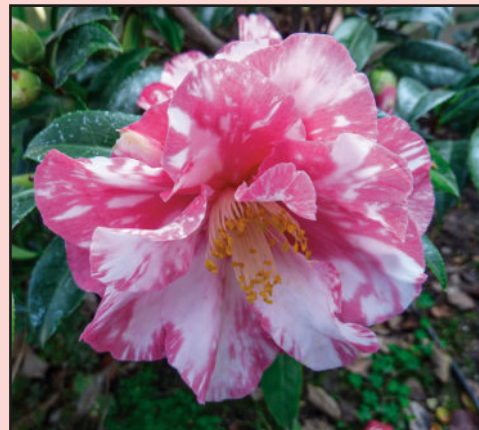
‘CORAL DELIGHT’

CORAL CAMELLIAS

BY BRADFORD KING

Corals are invertebrates that typically form compact colonies in saltwater. The color coral is named for these marine corals that are orange pink. However, coral colored camellia flowers are coral pink. They are one of the new camellia color tones that result when *C. saluenensis* is crossed with *C. japonica* cultivars like ‘Dr. Tinsley’. This is illustrated by ‘Coral Delight’ which was introduced by Kramer Brothers in 1975. It has a small to medium semidouble deep coral pink flower. The bushy compact plant grows slowly, which makes it a good candidate for the foreground or under windows. It is a semi-dwarf plant.

‘Coral Delight Variegated’ is very showy with white blotches decorating the coral pink petals.



‘CORAL DELIGHT VARIEGATED’



'CORAL BOUQUET'



'ETSU-BOTAN'

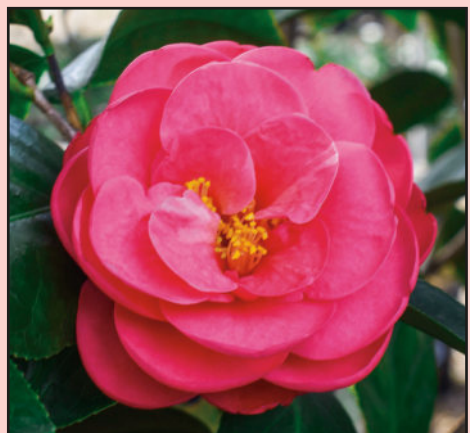
In 2006, Nuccio's introduced two coral cultivars. Tom Nuccio likes the rich coral pink of 'Coral Bouquet'. The flower is a medium to large single with wavy petals.

My favorite is 'Island Sunset', which has a medium vivid coral pink semi-double flower. It has rich coral pink petals that shade lighter in the center where the golden stamens stand upright.

Nuccio's introduced 'Coral Castle', a distinctive cross between *C. japonica* and *C. amplexicaulis*. The flower is a medium semidouble with thick coral red petals and is slightly cup shaped. Tom Nuccio reports it will make a good-looking landscape camellia with large deep green foliage like its parent *C. amplexicaulis*. It is the only American hybrid seedling of *C. amplexicaulis*. There is one from Japan, 'Etsu-botan', whose pollen parent was 'Tama Americana'. It has a large loose peony pink flower with a hint of white on the petal edges.



'ISLAND SUNSET'



'CORAL CASTLE'

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 five to seven petals and 120 to 140 small stamens with white filaments. The pistil is also white which 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 due to which Japanese characters are used and how the context is perceived by the translator. A lover may see a partner as an “amore,” but a chuckhole partner or her father could see him as a menace. Regardless, it has a vibrant scarlet flower.



‘HIODOSHI’

CAMELLIA SPECIES:

C. CUSPIDATA

BY BRADFORD KING



C. cuspidata



'MOONSTRUCK'



'SPRING FESTIVAL'

C. cuspidata grows in the woodlands of Southern China. It is fast growing, cold tolerant, widely distributed, and may not thrive in hot climates. It has been cultivated for many years and has been used in camellia breeding for cold tolerance and cluster blooming hybrids. The white flower is fragrant, sometimes with pink markings on the outer petals. The leaves are pointed and narrow, and it grows into a tall shrub.

Two attractive *C. cuspidata* hybrids are 'Moonstruck' and 'Spring Festival'. 'Moonstruck' has nice red buds opening to single, medium, blush flowers with pink tones in the centers and on the petal edges. Each bloom looks like a full moon that was splashed with pink. It was registered by Nuccio's Nurseries in 1996.

'Spring Festival' is a miniature rose form double that puts out masses of pink to light pink flowers that bloom mid to late season. The new growth is an attractive reddish brown. The plant growth is upright and narrow. This cultivar is very sun tolerant. It was introduced in 1975 by Toichi Domoto and was awarded the John Tyler Miniature Award in 2022.



'KANJIRO' BLOOMS

PARTING SHOT:

C. HIEMALIS

BY BRADFORD KING

This group of camellia cultivars are believed to be hybrids between *C. sasanqua* and *C. japonica*, which makes them interspecific hybrids that are best grouped with *C. sasanqua*. No wild forms have been discovered. Sixty *C. hiemalis* cultivars are described in the *Camellia Nomenclature*, and undoubtedly there are more worldwide. The most popular are 'Kanjiro', 'Shishi-Gashira', and 'Showa-no-sakae'.

'Kanjiro' has a semidouble brilliant rose red flower and is one of the most versatile camellias. It can be a landscape plant, a hedge, a trellis, an espalier, or rootstock for grafting. It is vigorous in its growth habit and is very popular in Japan where it originated. It was awarded the Ralph Peer Sasanqua Award in 1999.

In 1894, 'Shishi-Gashira' (Lion Head) was documented in Japan, but older plants have been found. The first written evidence of it in the U.S. was 1937 in the Domoto Nursery camellia catalog. The small red semidouble to rose form double flower blooms profusely in November to December. Mature specimens will reach five feet by eight feet and maintain their shape



'SHISHI-GASHIRA' IN BLOOM

with little pruning. It will reliably bloom year after year and was awarded the Ralph Peer Award in 1991 and 2006.

'Showa-no-sakae' has a semidouble to peony formed soft pink flower borne on a low growing vigorous plant. This is an early bloomer with abundant flowers. It is useful as a ground cover that can be planted in the full sun. Therefore, when several large California Live Oaks that provided ample shade were destroyed by a winter storm, the hillside in The Huntington Japanese Garden was replanted with them.



'SHOWA-NO-SAKAE'



‘FIREDANCE’



'ISLAND SUNSET'