

THE
Camellia
REVIEW





INSIDE COVER: 'PAINTED DESERT' *Photo by Bradford King*

FRONT COVER: 'STAR ABOVE STAR' *Photo by Bradford King*

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THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

THE TIMES ARE A CHANGIN'

BY BRADFORD KING

Autumn is the beginning of another camellia season. The colorful *C. sasanqua* lead the way, peaking in November. It is also time to mark your calendars for Society meetings and shows.

The Southern California Camellia Society meets the third Thursday at 7:00 p.m. in Ayres Hall at the Los Angeles County Arboretum from October through April except December.

On October 16 the program featured a video of “Camellia Species, Flowers, and Pods.” Brad King also demonstrated how to collect seeds and germinate them.

Why do you need to know this? Nuccio’s will be closing the nursery doors, so how will you get new cultivars or have rootstock for grafting? The



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point is camellia life in California, after Nuccio's closes, will be very different than what it has been for the past 90 years.

Since the times are a changin', so is the camellia raffle. One dollar per ticket placed in front of the plant you want.

Why this change?

The raffle will highlight camellias no longer available at Nuccio's as they prepare to close. You increase your chances of winning a specific camellia by placing more tickets in front of it.

We are pleased that Jim Nuccio will be the presenter at the November Society meeting on the 20th. This may be the last time we have a speaker from Nuccio's. No date has been set for closing the nursery. Tom Nuccio is alive and well but no longer able to do presentations.

Mark your calendar to attend the Judges Symposium on Saturday, January 10, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Los Angeles County Arboretum in the Bamboo Room. All camellia people are invited to learn more about camellia cultivar identification. This program is much more than preparing camellia show judges.

The first camellia show is scheduled for January 24 and 25, 2026 at the Los Angeles County Arboretum in Ayers Hall.

Bloom placement: 7:00 - 10:30 a.m. Judging: 10:30 a.m. Open to public: Saturday 1:00 - 4:30 p.m.; Sunday 9:00 am - 4:30 p.m.

The Huntington Gardens show will be February 7 and 8. We have added a class for 'Valentine Day' and 'Valentine Day Variegated' to help celebrate love and romance. It is interesting that the Huntington is so well attended we are not able to have a show on Valentine's Day or Chinese New Year. Advanced registration is required on all weekends.

On February 28 and 29, the camellia show will be at the Los Angeles County Arboretum in Ayers Hall.



'OLD GLORY'

The final Southern California show is on March 7 and 8 at the Bakersfield Racquet Club sponsored by the Camellia Society of Kern County. Please join us in celebrating beautiful camellias.



'APPLE BLOSSOM'



THE CAMELLIA SEASON

Begins

BY BRADFORD KING

The camellia season officially begins September first according to the Nuccio's. The colorful *C. sasanqua* lead the way peaking in November. Let's go shopping!

NUCCIO'S NURSERIES

Our first stop is Nuccio's Nurseries located in the foothills of Altadena, California. They began in 1935 and continue to be famous for their camellias and azaleas. This will most likely be our last time to shop at Nuccio's, as they will close due to the devastation of the propagation areas of the nursery in the Eaton fire and because Tom is 78 and Jim 75. These are my picks listed alphabetically.

'Apple Blossom' has a single white to light blush flower with pretty pink petal edges. It is also grown by Monrovia Nursery, a wholesale nursery that distributes to garden



'BIG WHEEL'



'BONANZA'



'CHANSONETTE'

shops around the U.S. It was introduced by Coolidge Nursery in 1933.

Jim Nuccio reported that 'Big Wheel' had been in the nursery for 20 years before they introduced it in 2023. The semidouble flower is a large flat deep rose red with well-spaced narrow petals that occasionally are fluted. It grows fast, upright, and open.

If you like red camellias that bloom freely, then a good choice would be 'Bonanza'. It has a large peony flower and is one of the best early bloomers, which means it may have flowers before November.

The lovely lavender pink flower of 'Chansonette' makes a good show in the garden. The name means a little song. The flower is an irregular formal double. This cultivar is also propagated by other nurseries. For example, a few five-gallon plants can be found in San Gabriel Nursery. This nursery, located in San Gabriel, California, celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2023. 'Chansonette' is also available at garden centers that carry Monrovia Nursery camellias.

'Dazzler' is a Nuccio's introduction. It has an early blooming brilliant rose red semidouble flower. It blooms freely year in and year out.

An iconic white *C. sasanqua* with a lovely rose border is 'Double Rainbow'. It was introduced and



‘DAZZLER’



‘DOUBLE RAINBOW’

named by Nuccio's as it has the same colors as the single flower of ‘Rainbow’.

‘Egao’ is one of the most popular sun camellias. The large pink semidouble flowers bloom on an upright bushy small tree. It is a late bloomer filling in between the *C. sasanqua* and *C. japonica*. It has both species in its genetic makeup.



‘EGAO’



'HUGH EVANS'



'KANJIRO'

Looking for an early profuse bloomer? Tom Nuccio and I are most impressed with 'Hugh Evans'. It has lovely pink flowers with long twisting petals. It was named for Hugh Evans who 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. Hugh Evans is remembered as one of the horticulturists who helped define the Southern California landscape.

'Kanjiro' was bred in Japan where it is one of the most widely grown cultivars. It is popular in the U.S. for its vigorous abundant brilliant rose red flowers that may have a dusting of white frosting on the semidouble petals. It grows vigorously in an upright manner. There are always camel-



'MOUNTAIN MOONRISE'



'OLD GLORY'

lias at Nuccio's not listed in their catalog. 'Mountain Moonrise' is an example. It isn't listed, because it is a shy bloomer until it becomes a mature small tree. However, it has the largest sun camellia flowers you will ever see. The flowers are very large and colorful with shades from white to a lovely pink.

'Old Glory' is a Nuccio's introduction. It has a white semidouble flower with wavy petals and deep rose pink on the petal edges and is named for the American flag "Old Glory" due to its wavy petals like an undulating flag.

Nuccio's have registered 20 sun camellias. A good example is their 'Painted Desert'. The large single is pale pink to white shading deep rose red on the petal edges. Tom Nuccio loves its golden stamens.

The Japanese sun camellia 'Shishi-Gashira' is widely grown in Japan and the U.S. This is because the low compact shrub blooms profusely with small bright rose red flowers. The bees love the flower, consequently it sets seeds readily. The pods are like small marbles with thin visible hair. The pods open in the fall among small dark green foliage.

There are six white camellias listed in the Nuccio's catalog. Their biggest seller is 'Setsugekka', which has a large semidouble flower with



'PAINTED DESERT'



'SHISHI-GASHIRA'



'SETSUGEKKA'



'SILVER DOLLAR'



'STAR ABOVE STAR'



'STARS 'N STRIPES'

ruffled petals. It grows vigorously in an upright manner.

On the other hand, 'Silver Dollar' grows in a compact mounding manner with a medium peony flower. Clear bright white flowers in a variety of forms and different growth habits to choose from are available at Nuccio's.

One of the most beautiful of the fall blooming sun camellias is 'Star Above Star'. The medium white flower shades to lovely tones of lavender pink. One row of petals is offset from the other row of petals giving this semidouble a distinctive starlike form.

Striped sun camellias are rare. One that stands out is 'Stars 'n Stripes'. While it is actually a non-reticulata hybrid, it tolerates sun and looks like a *C. sasanqua*. The single white flower has rose red stripes. It is a Nuccio's introduction.

One of the most popular and widely grown *C. sasanqua* is 'Yuletide'. It is a favorite due to the brilliant red single flower with bright yellow stamens that blooms in the holiday season. It is a sturdy compact upright grower.

GREEN'S NURSERY

Bobby Green operated Green's Nursery started by his father in 1932. Bobby developed a series of *C. sasanqua*

dwarf camellias trademarked as The October Magic Camellia Series. They are part of Sunset Plant Collection. Bobby began developing them in 1990.

Bobby's signature plant was *C. sasanqua*, which led him to breed 12 cultivars that comprise The October Magic Series. Bobby has retired and closed the nursery. I found the Sunset Plant Collection October Series at Home Depot. While they grow in full sun, they need some relief from late afternoon sun in California. They provide fall and early winter color.

October Magic cultivars were bred to have lovely dark green foliage especially suited for landscaping. They remain small, compact, and do well in the foreground area, under windows, and as a hedge.

The three most popular are 'October Magic Ruby', 'October Magic Orchid', and 'October Magic White Shi-Shi'.

'October Magic Ruby' has abundant vivid red flowers that in cold may have a purple tint. The growth habit is a compact 3 to 4 feet tall and 5 to 6 feet wide.

I have been growing it in a pot the last three years and have appreciated its compact growth and pretty red semidouble to peony formed blooms.

'October Magic Orchid' has pink



'YULETIDE'



'OCTOBER MAGIC RUBY'



'OCTOBER MAGIC ORCHID'
credit Bobby Green



‘OCTOBER MAGIC ORCHID’ BONSAI

‘PINK-A-BOO’

buds with a range of pale pink to white flowers. The growth habit is slow, compact, and conical. It can occasionally throw an upright branch, which may need to be pruned in June before it sets buds during the summer. It will reach 4 to 5 feet and keep a narrow form of 3 to 4 feet. The evergreen foliage is a dark glossy green. It does well in partial sun and makes an excellent landscape plan.

Since I have limited space for new plants, I created a bonsai. The slow narrow growth has horizontal branches that needed to be wired, and the vertical central limbs needed to be cut back. I was most impressed with the abundant bud set and small glossy green leaves.

The newest member of the October Magic series is ‘October Magic White Shi-Shi’. It has all the good qualities of ‘Shishi-Gashira’ but with a porcelain white formal double flower on a compact low-growing plant.

MONROVIA NURSERY

This wholesale nursery began in Southern California in 1926 by Harry E. Rosedale, Sr. Today they have separate nurseries in several regions of the U.S. that deliver plants throughout the country. They grow a variety of camellias, eight of which are fall blooming sun camellias.

They registered *C. sasanqua* ‘MonDel’. The “Mon” stands for Monrovia and “Del” for the daughter of the man who discovered this sport. They market this outstanding *C. sasanqua* as ‘Pink-A-Boo’. It has a single small to medium sized flower with seven petals and a mild scent. It is a pink sport of ‘Yuletide’.

CONCLUSION

As a camellia lover, it is most enjoyable to visit a camellia specialty nursery when flowers are in bloom. A list of camellia nurseries is provided in the American Camellia Society Yearbook. However, using the internet you can find a wide range of nurseries and garden shops that sell camellias. Many will sell online and several nurseries offer mail ordering.



'OCTOBER MAGIC WHITE SHI-SHI'

Camellias Honoring Southern California

There are five red camellias bred in Southern California that were named for local cities. They are 'Arcadia', 'Covina', 'Miss Bakersfield', 'San Dimas', and 'San Marino'.

ARCADIA

Meyer Piet and his friend Lee Gaeta hybridized camellias in the 1970s and 80s from Meyer's home in Arcadia, California. They registered 16 new *C. reticulata* hybrids mostly named for family and friends. 'Arcadia' was introduced to honor the city where he and his wife Bev raised their family. This very large rose red semidouble to loose peony flower was registered in 1979.

The city of Arcadia is 13 miles from Los Angeles. It is best known nationally for the Santa Anita Racetrack and the Los Angeles County Arboretum.

COVINA

Dr. Burdock registered 'Covina' in 1888 making it one of the first camellias bred in Southern California. It is a very tough camellia that will tolerate



'ARCADIA'



'COVINA'

Southern California Cities

BY BRADFORD KING

more sun and heat than other *C. japonica*. The profuse small red semidouble to rose form double blooms in midseason. Nuccio's say, "It is one of the finest *C. japonica* for full sun culture."

BAKERSFIELD

Bakersfield is a city of around 4,000 people in Kern County. It is the largest city in the county and serves as the county seat. The Miss Bakersfield Pageant is held annually. A teen, Miss, and Mrs. are crowned. A bright red camellia was named 'Miss Bakersfield' in 1982 by Ted Alfter of Bakersfield. It has 50 to 60 petals that form a loose peony to full peony flower. This 'Kramer's Supreme' seedling first bloomed in 1973. A beautiful flower honors talented women from Bakersfield.

SAN MARINO

San Marino is a residential city incorporated in 1913 and one of the most expensive and exclusive neighborhoods in the Los Angeles area. George Smith



'MISS BAKERSFIELD'



'SAN MARINO'

Patton, an attorney, was the first mayor, a friend of Henry E. Huntington, and father of General George S. Patton. San Marino is the home of The Huntington Library Art Collections and Botanical Gardens, the “Best” place to visit in Southern California.

The *C. reticulata* ‘San Marino’ has a large dark red semidouble flower with wavy textured petals. It was introduced in 1979 by Bill Goertz, a resident of San Marino and a camellia enthusiast.

SAN DIMAS

The name comes from San Dimas Canyon in the San Gabriel Mountains, which serve as background for the city. San Dimas is named in Spanish for Saint Dismas, the “good thief” mentioned in the Bible at Jesus’s crucifixion asking to be remembered when Jesus comes into his kingdom. San Dimas incorporated as a city in 1960. It is now known for its western art, equestrian activities, and small-town feel.

Mr. C. W. Thomas wanted a red camellia to be named San Dimas and to be planted near city hall. In 1971, Nuccio’s Nurseries agreed to name a large red *C. japonica* ‘San Dimas’. The flower is a wavy semidouble with occasional petaloids. It blooms early to midseason on an upright spreading plant with dark green foliage. The variegated version is more popular, because the white markings contrasting with the red petals make it a beautiful bloom.



‘SAN DIMAS’



‘SAN DIMAS VARIEGATED’



‘MATHOTIANA SUPREME’

WALKING AMONG *the Camellias at Nuccio's*

BY BRADFORD KING

When walking at Nuccio's Nurseries we can get to see camellia trees in bloom. While most are growing in black plastic pots, 'Mathotiana Supreme' grows in the ground and has three large limbs full of flowers in February. It was planted by cofounders Joe and Juluis Nuccio. This sport of 'Mathotiana' was introduced in 1951 by Flowerwood Nursery. A mass of very large red irregular semidouble flowers looked magnificent. Loose petals covered the ground. We no longer see it at camellia shows since Marilee Gray passed. However, I found a great single that would make a strong showing in a camellia show "Old Timers" class.

In 1981, Nuccio's introduced a miniature dark red anemone flower with white petaloids edged in red named 'Lipstick'. Notice that each tiny flower on the tree is consistent in color and form. It also looked good on a recent Nuccio's display table.

Under the canopy of California live oaks is a collection of very large stock plants that are wonderful when in full bloom. They are illustrated here by



'LIPSTICK'



'LIPSTICK' DISPLAYED BY NUCCIO'S

'Francie L. Variegated' registered in 1964. The Nuccio's crossed *C. saluenensis* 'Apple Blossom' with *C. reticulata* hybrid 'Buddha' to produce this cultivar.

Nuccio's has registered several light yellow camellias, one of which is 'Golden Glow'. It has a nice creamy white flower that deepens to light yellow at the base of each petal. The back of the petals are soft yellow with a light pink hue. The medium semidouble flower blooms late. When looking at a single flower up close, it does have a nice yellow glow.

Formal doubles comprise only 8% of the *C. reticulata* hybrids. Therefore, it is fun to see one when strolling the beds of flowers at Nuccio's. 'Jack Mandarin' has a medium to large red formal double to rose form flower with undulating petals. The rich color and formal double form are undoubtedly why Jack named



'FRANCIE L. VARIEGATED'



'JACK MANDARICH'



'GOLDEN GLOW'



'GOLDEN GLOW'

this cultivar for himself. He registered 13 other *C. reticulata* hybrids.

Nuccio's propagates about a dozen camellias grown for their foliage. 'Gin'yo-tsubaki' and 'Golden Spangles' were seen in bloom on this walkabout.

The small narrow dark gray green heavily serrated leaves on 'Gin'yo-tsubaki' are beautiful and very unusual. It has small, tubular red single flowers that appear mid to late season. The plant is very compact, slow, and sturdy in its growth habit. The small flower and distinctive foliage make an interesting bonsai.

'Golden Spangles' is a sport of 'Mary Christian'. The lovely green leaves, marked with a light yellowish irregular central pattern, make a beautiful plant. It has a pretty small pink rose flower that blooms mid to late season.



'GIN'YO-TSUBAKI'



'GOLDEN SPANGLES'



C. sasanqua COLLECTION

MEASURING UP!

BY BRADFORD KING

Flower size is determined by genetics and influenced by growing conditions and culture. When a camellia is registered, it is required to determine its typical size. The American Camellia Society registration for new camellias requires a photo of the bloom with a ruler to show its size. This information gets published in the *Camellia Nomenclature*.

However, many well-known older *C. sasanqua* were released without their size. This is illustrated by ‘Apple Blossom’. Coolidge Nursery introduced it in 1933 here in Southern California before it went out of business in the 1980s. It has continued to be propagated by Nuccio’s Nurseries and Monrovia Nursery, because it has a white single flower with a lovely pink edge. It grows vigorously and reliably with abundant flowers. When ‘Apple Blossom’ is measured, it is typically a medium bloom (3 to 4 inches)

Even when a cultivar size has been reported, different sources may list different sizes. This was one of the reasons the *Camellia Nomenclature* was published in order to have clarity about names and plant characteristics. However, older cultivars released before 1950 had no formal registration requirements.



'APPLE BLOSSOM'



'KANJIRO' AS 3.5" — A MEDIUM

When 'Kanjiro' was released is not documented, but it has been grown for many years in Japan. The Japanese Camellia Society describes it as the "most popular and widely grown and raised variety in Japan." In *Camellias in Japan* it is described as a medium to large red flower. Nuccio's describe it as a brilliant rose red semidouble with no listed size.

The *Camellia Nomenclature* reports it has a small to medium semidouble rose pink flower shading to rose red on the petal edges. Note that the shading may look like a dusting of white on the petals, which is often described as "frosting." It most often has a medium flower.



'PINK-A-BOO' WITH VARIABLE SIZES



Camellias In Japan describes ‘Shishi-Gashira’ as having a medium flower while the *Camellia Nomenclature* reports it as a small. My observations indicate it is usually small but may become a medium as it ages and the petals spread out. However, it rarely reaches 3.5” and frequently is just around 3.”

Many cultivars are registered with a size range. This is illustrated by the profuse blooming ‘Pink-A-Boo’. When Monrovia registered ‘MonDel’ marketed as ‘Pink-A-Boo’, it was reported to have small to medium flowers with seven petals. After enjoying its beautiful abundant floral display, we can easily see small and medium flowers with 5 to 7 petals and occasionally a flower with 8 petals.

Another example of a flower with a range in size is ‘Egao’. The beautiful pink semidouble has both medium and large flowers on the same plant

The early blooming bright red semi peony flower of ‘Bonanza’ is described as large by Nuccio’s and medium in the *Camellia Nomenclature*. It is most often three to four inches, which is a medium as observed in its photo.



'SHISHI-GASHIRA'



'BONANZA'

It was awarded the Ralph Peer Sasanqua Award in 1965.

Some of the most widely grown *C. sasanqua* have medium blooms. This is illustrated by 'Chansonette' and 'Star Above Star'.

'Chansonette' (Little Song) has an unusual lavender pink irregular formal double flower. It was the first camellia to be awarded the Ralph Peer Sasanqua Award when it was established in 1959.

'Star Above Star' has the most camellia show winning points in the species class most years. The white flower with lavender pink edges has a row of petals with a second set of petals offset resembling one star over another star. It is a showy offset flower with many fans even though it can be a temperamental grower. It was awarded the Ralph Peer Sasanqua Award in 1969.

There are small single blooming *C. sasanqua* that are excellent landscape



'CHANSONETTE'



'HUGH EVANS'



plants. They are illustrated here by 'Hugh Evans' and 'Yuletide'.

'Hugh Evans' has a mass of early pink flowers with twisting petals. The holiday favorite 'Yuletide' has brilliant red flowers and a mass of golden stamens. It may be in bloom for Thanksgiving and still have a few flowers for New Year's. It is a popular Nuccio's introduction that grows in an upright compact sturdy manner.

In closing, the largest *C. sasanqua* bloom I have seen is Nuccio's 'Mountain Moonrise'. The white semidouble flower with pink edges easily reaches 4 to 5 inches. It is not listed in their catalog but has been available at the nursery.



'STAR ABOVE STAR'



'MOONRISE'

HIGO TREASURES FROM JAPAN:

‘SAKURA-TSUKASA’

BY BRADFORD KING

‘Sakura-tsukasa’ (Lord of the Cherries) has a lovely light pink flower with six petals and 100 to 120 white stamens in a spreading circle. It blooms mid-season but is a slow growing variety suitable for a pot or in the ground. This old variety originated in Kumamoto Prefecture, Japan.

Franco Ghirardi, in his *Higo Camellia* book, describes several varieties with circular stamens like ‘Sakura-tsukasa’ as second tier because the circular stamens are not as highly thought of as flared stamens. In Japan, Higo camellias with two or three ringed layers of stamens are called *waji*. They account for less than 15% of the Higo camellias. They are less popular than those with a cluster of spoke-like stamens known in Japan as *umeji*.



‘SAKURA-TSUKASA’



C. gaudichaud

CAMELLIA SPECIES:

C. GAUDICHAUD

BY BRADFORD KING

This evergreen species has abundant small white wavy petals. The plant grows vigorously in an upright manner blooming early to mid-season. The bark has a cinnamon tone. It is native to China and is found in subtropical forests. In China, the leaves are used to make tea, and the seeds are pressed to make cooking oil.



RABBIT

PARTING SHOT:

BUNNY RABBITS

BY BRADFORD KING

Rabbits, also known as bunny rabbits or just bunnies, are small mammals. According to the internet, there are over 300 breeds of domestic rabbits and 13 wild rabbit species, which include seven types of cottontails.

The *C. japonica* 'Cottontail' has a miniature white full peony flower introduced by McCaskill Gardens in 1965. It is rarely seen today except in public gardens like The Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California.

The Chinese year of the rabbit is expected to be calm and help bring balance to life. In China there are popular expressions referring to the rabbit's intelligence and cunning nature. For example, a rabbit has three burrows, just as a crafty person has more than one escape plan.

Nuccio's are skillful camellia propagators. A good example is 'Bunny



'BUNNY EARS'



'BUNNY EARS' FLORAL DISPLAY

Ears', a *C. rosaeflora* hybrid registered in 1999. The miniature to small pink flower has raised petals like a bunny's ears. When Jackie Randall saw the raised petals upon



'COTTONTAIL'

visiting Nuccio's, she suggested they name it 'Bunny Ears'. This cultivar produces clusters of flowers up and down its stems. It blooms in mid to late season on a vigorous bushy upright plant.

One of the advantages of cluster blooming camellias is that they are good cut flowers making a colorful floral display.



'STARS 'N STRIPES'



‘YULETIDE’