

THE
Camellia
REVIEW





INSIDE COVER: 'CORAL DELIGHT' *Photo by Bradford King*

FRONT COVER: 'ISLAND SUNSET' *Photo by Bradford King*

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Bradford King, Editor • bdk@usc.edu

Karen Harrison, Associate Editor

Michelle Glush, Graphic Design • mglush@mac.com

Barbara Council, Membership

Southern California Camellia Society,

PO Box 1312, La Canada CA 91012

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THOUGHTS FROM THE EDITOR

IT'S TIME TO FERTILIZE!

BY BRADFORD KING

Spring is the season for camellia fertilizing, pruning, and picking up all the spent blooms. It's also fun to see camellia pods developing. I mark all the controlled crosses and remove pods that will not be harvested.

There are a few late blooming camellias still with flowers such as 'Spring Fling' and 'Spring Formal'. This year we have identified one of the latest to bloom—'Optical Illusion'. The interesting yellow semidouble flower with straplike petals was bred by Dr. Clifford Parks. He got the yellow hue from *C. flava* rather than *C. nitidissima*. My first bloom was a gibbed flower in mid-April. It has buds promising to open as late as June. This cultivar appears to like sunlight



BOARD OFFICERS

President, Bradford King • bdk@usc.edu
Vice-President, James Fitzpatrick • JJF4849@yahoo.com
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Membership, Barbara Council • barbjaponica@outlook.com

DIRECTORS

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Susan Stull • susan.stull@icloud.com



‘OPTICAL ILLUSION’

more than other yellow camellias. I got my plant from Nuccio’s, but it is available through Camellia Forest owned by Cliff’s son David Parks. It is good to know that Nuccio’s plans to stay open until later in the year. Jim runs the nursery with help from his wife Judi, Tom, and staff.

My new book *Ornamental Camellias* highlights award-winning camellias and the best camellias bred around the world. It is on sale at the Huntington Gift Shop and the ACS Gift Shop and will make a great gift for Father’s Day.

In 2026, when Nuccio’s closes its doors after 90 years, the Camellia Review will celebrate their camellias with stories and articles in each issue. Therefore, if you have a personal memory talking about Nuccio’s, please send it to me for publication.

We plan to keep the Nuccio’s azaleas and camellias alive for years to come in our gardens and hearts...



'BUTTONS 'N BOWS'

AMERICAN BRED HYBRIDS ARE *Special*

BY BRADFORD KING

The non-reticulata hybrids are most frequently *C. saluenensis* and *C. japonica* crosses with lovely soft colored tones. The plants are typically bushy and upright in growth with neat green leaves, which make them good candidates for the shaded areas in the landscape where they produce a mass of flowers year after year. Hybrid camellias historically account for five percent of the new camellia introductions. They are the third most popular camellia behind *C. japonica* and *C. reticulata*. The most outstanding non-reticulata bred by Americans are discussed here..

‘Buttons ‘n Bows’ has a beautiful small pink formal double flower that shades to a deeper pink on the petal edges. Julius Nuccio jokingly said, when naming this flower, “I hope this won’t ruin my manly reputation.”

In 1975, Kramer’s Brothers Nursery registered ‘Coral Delight’. It is a cross between *C. saluenensis* and the pollen parent ‘Dr. Tinsley’, a *C. japonica* cultivar. The small to medium semidouble bloom is a deep coral pink. The plant grows slowly in a compact bushy manner making it a strong candidate for under windows or places that require a small semidwarf plant.



‘CORAL DELIGHT’

‘Coral Delight Variegated’ has very lovely white blotches on the coral petals. It is a classy looking flower that is capable of winning in the non-reticulata class at a camellia show and looks wonderful in the garden landscape.



‘CORAL DELIGHT VARIEGATED’



‘FREEDOM BELL’

‘Freedom Bell’ has a small bright bell shaped semidouble flower. It produces an abundant amount of almost identical flowers. These make for great trays of like blooms at a camellia show and a wonderful display in the garden.

‘Island Sunset’ was introduced by Nuccio’s Nurseries in 2002. It is one of the newer hybrids with coral colored tones. The flower has a rich coral pink bloom that is toned lighter in the center. The medium to large flower is semi-double and blooms in mid to late season making it a good camellia to extend the flowering season in your garden. The pink coral colored tones of ‘Island Sunset’ are a welcome addition to the camellia color palette, especially in the garden landscape.

‘Lucky Star’ has a wonderful medium star shaped semidouble rich or-



‘ISLAND SUNSET’



‘LUCKY STAR’



'LUCKY STAR VARIEGATED'



'SPRING DAZE' OPEN

chid pink flower. It blooms mid to late season on an upright somewhat bushy plant.

'Lucky Star Variegated' is the virus variegated form of 'Lucky Star'. The medium pink semidouble has a star-like shape with a mass of white blotches on the pink petals. Gary Schanz was successful in getting a high white virus into this cultivar, which he shared with Nuccio's. This is the variegated plant they propagate for sale.

'Spring Daze' was introduced by Kramer Brothers Nurseries, Rancho Cucamonga, California. They were known for their azaleas, camellias, and gardenias. Ben Mackall married August Kramer's daughter Marie in 1937. After August Kramer died, Ben and Marie managed the nursery until 1986.



'SPRING DAZE' FORMAL DOUBLE



'EGAO CORKSCREW'

They built their reputation on azaleas and camellias.

The most popular and widely distributed of their hybrids is ‘Spring Daze’. This small to medium blush white flower with beautiful coral pink petal edges was awarded the Harris Hybrid Award in 2016. Due to different microclimates, it may be a formal double or rose form double, which when open looks like it is a peony form.

‘Egao Corkscrew’ was discovered by Jim Nuccio. He found a unique cultivar with zigzag branches growing in a bed of ‘Egao’ plants at the nursery. The twisting growth habit was aptly name. Jim jokingly says since the bed looked out at Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, California, perhaps stray radiation had caused its strange growth habit.

When this camellia sport (a genetic mutation from ‘Egao’) was propagated, it was determined that flowers were also different from ‘Egao’. Roughly half are loose peony, and the others are semidouble. Both flower forms have wavy petals unlike the large smooth petals of ‘Egao’. The flower color is clear pink like ‘Egao’. It makes a good container plant or bonsai and will do well in the ground best planted in the foreground.

‘Shibori Egao Corkscrew’ is the variegated form of ‘Egao Corkscrew’. The white blotches on the pink petals make a wonderful camellia. The zigzag growth habit lends itself to bonsai, as the showy flowers will bloom on a small plant. Bonsai flowers are the same size as the ones in a pot or in the ground. Some may find this flower too large for the small foliage, especially when grown as a bonsai. Others will enjoy the large dramatic bloom! Like ‘Egao Corkscrew’, there are two flower forms—semidouble and loose peony.



‘SHIBORI EGAO CORKSCREW’ SEMI-DOUBLE



‘SHIBORI EGAO’ LOOSE PEONY



TAKING A SECOND LOOK

BY BRADFORD KING

Twenty years ago I grafted 'Frank Houser' and 'Royal Velvet' onto the limbs of a variegated 'Debutante'. I love variegated camellias, but I am not a fan of 'Debutante Variegated'. I have no idea how it became infected, as it came with the house that we purchased in 1985.

Last year a main limb sprouted 'Debutante'. I let it grow, and this year it bloomed. I picked a well-formed flower to bring indoors with several other early blooming *C. japonica*. The more I observed it, the more it impressed me. The color is a lovely shade of light pink, and the mound of petals hid its stamens forming a full peony flower. 'Debutante' has been around since the early 1900s released by Magnolia Gardens. It is worth taking a second look at her.

There are other older camellias that are worth a second look, such as 'Mathotiana', 'Flame', 'C. M. Hovey', and 'Kimberley'.

'Mathotiana' originated in Belgium and was imported in the 1840s to Mag-



'DEBUTANTE' IN BLOOM AT DESCANSO GARDENS

nolia Gardens. It has a large to very large rose form double dark red flower, sometimes with a purple tint. When did you last see it entered into a camellia show? When it holds a bud center, like the photo, it makes one do a double take!

I am amazed at how many red camellias are registered every year, some even going on to receive ACS awards. But are these new red flowers really better than the old?

I remember talking about the red *C. japonica* 'Flame' with Jude Nuccio before he passed. He reminded me that while 'Flame' is rarely seen these days, it is as good or better than most red camellias.

'Flame' came to the U.S. in 1917 from Japan imported by Domoto Brothers Nursery. This is the Northern California Nursery begun by Toichi's father and three uncles. It went out of business during the 1930s, years before Toichi purchased land in Hayward, California, to open his nursery specializing in camellias. He was in high school in 1917 and worked after school and weekends in the Domoto Brothers Nursery.

There are more than 200 red formal double camellias that have been registered. One of the first introduced in America is 'C. M. Hovey' also known as 'Colonel Fiery'. This 1853 bloom was registered by Charles Mason Hovey in Boston, Massachusetts.



'MATHOTIANA'



'FLAME'

He was the owner of Hovey and Company, a 40-acre nursery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a noted breeder, propagator, and distributor of fruit trees in the 1800s. He had to grow and breed camellias in his conservatory. It has stood the test of time continuing to be one of the best red formal double camellia blooms

When visiting Nuccio's with Lynn, we spotted a plant with a mass of single crimson flowers loaded in a truck for delivery to the Descanso Gardens gift shop. It made me take a second look. It was 'Kimberly' in full bloom. She has a medium cup shaped flower with red stamens.

'Kimberley' came from Japan to England in 1923 and on to America with one lovely specimen being taken home due to taking a second look!



'C. M. HOVEY'



'KIMBERLEY' IN FULL BLOOM



A BRIDGE IN GARDEN OF
FLOWERING FRAGRANCE
AT THE HUNTINGTON GARDENS



CAMELLIA *Bridges*

BY BRADFORD KING

A bridge is a structure constructed to pass over obstacles like a river, ravine, or railroad tracks. A camellia bridge is a flower that is used to overcome obstacles in producing new and distinctive seedlings.

BRIDGE USED FOR FRAGRANCE

A bridge camellia may be fragrant but not an especially attractive flower. Consequently, the bridge camellia would be bred with a beautiful flower in the hopes that it will make a fragrant outstanding flower. Camellia bridges are illustrated by James Finley's fragrant breeding program, which produced 30 fragrant camellias. The most popular is 'High Fragrance'.

This is how Finley did it. First, he crossed *C. japonica* 'Tiffany' with *C. lutchuensis* to get 'Scentuous', which has a small semidouble white flower with a flush of pink on the back of its petals and a sweet scent. This was one pillar of his camellia breeding program.

The second pillar was a hybrid seedling produced when 'Scentuous' was crossed with 'Salab', another fragrant camellia. When this 'Scentuous' X 'Salab' seedling was used as the pollen plant on 'Mrs. Bertha A. Harms', it produced other seedlings of which the very best was named 'High Fragrance'.



‘HIGH FRAGRANCE’

Finley introduced ‘High Fragrance’ in 1986 from his nursery in New Zealand. The peony flower is a medium pale ivory pink with deeper pink shading on the petal edges. It is a beautiful bloom with a lovely sweet perfume scent.

BRIDGE USED FOR YELLOW

In Japan, Tadao Yamaguchi had a yellow camellia breeding program. He introduced six yellow camellias that are propagated by Nuccio’s Nurseries. Many camellia growers are most impressed with ‘Senritsu-ko’, because it has a small to medium rose form to formal double flower, which is a beautiful light yellow with lovely peach pink petal edges.

First, Yamaguchi crossed *C. japonica* ‘Hatsu-arashi’ with *C. nitidissima*



‘KICHO’ X *C. nitidissima* = ‘SENRITSU-KO’



'SENRITSU-KO' AS A FORMAL DOUBLE

to get 'Kicho'. He then crossed it back with *C. nitidissima* to produce 'Senritsu-ko'.

The pale yellow single flower of 'Kicho' is unimpressive but has yellow in



'SENRITSU-KO'

its genes and sets seeds, making it a good bridge to produce a more complicated beautiful flower when back crossed. The result was the beautiful rose form double to formal double 'Senritsu-ko'.

CONCLUSION

Creativity and patience are the hallmarks of hybridizers using camellia bridges to produce new distinctive and beautiful seedlings.



Outstanding BLACK RED CAMELLIAS

BY BRADFORD KING

When black and red are combined, it makes a bold and dynamic color symbolizing power, passion, danger, and defiance. Red accentuates black's power, while black highlights red's energetic spirit. In combination, they make memorable camellias.

The most dynamic of black red camellias is 'Black Magic'. The medium semidouble flower has thick glossy petals. It has holly-like leaves that are deeply serrated. It blooms mid to late season on an upright loose growing plant. It sets buds but at times is reluctant to open up and show its beautiful face.

The oldest black red camellia is 'Kuro-tsubaki' (the Black Camellia), which dates to 1896 in Japan. This *C. japonica* cultivar has a small semidouble flower with red stamens.

Oz Blumhardt bred two striking black red non-reticulata hybrids using 'Kuro-tsubaki' as the seed parent. 'Black Opal' has a small to medium semi-double flower that inherited its black red color from 'Kuro-tsubaki'.

Black opal is an especially rare and valuable gemstone. The opal is the month of October's gemstone. The finest opals have been found in Australia and New Zealand.

'Night Rider' also inherited its very dark black red color from 'Kuro-tsubaki'. The miniature to small semidouble is widely grown.

A night rider is a masked member of a secret band of riders who commit acts of violence to terrorize and punish others.

A spectacular brilliant dark red camellia was named 'Julius Nuccio' to honor the retired cofounder of Nuccio's Nurseries in 2014. Sometimes it



'KURO-TSUBAKI' IN BLOOM



'BLACK OPAL'

blooms a black red flower and other times a brilliant dark red. This large to very large irregular semidouble flower blooms mid to late season on a vigorous upright plant.

Midnight occurs at twelve o'clock at night and can also refer to life and death or good and evil. It is used in naming black red camellias like 'Midnight', 'Midnight Variegated', and 'Midnight Magic'.



'NIGHT RIDER'



'JULIUS NUCCIO'



'MIDNIGHT'



'MIDNIGHT VARIEGATED'

'Midnight' has a medium semidouble to anemone flower that blooms midseason. The variegated form, with white markings on the black red petals, is a striking flower.

'Midnight Magic' has a very dark maroon medium peony flower. It is a late bloomer that grows in a columnar manner.

'Midnight Magic Variegated' makes a striking bloom when black red with sharp contrasting white markings.

COLOR PERSONALITY TRAITS

People who like dark red are confident, action oriented, and are not afraid of risk.



'MIDNIGHT MAGIC'



'MIDNIGHT MAGIC VARIEGATED'



‘TAMA PEACOCK’

CAMELLIA BARK

BY BRADFORD KING

Bark is the outer layer on camellia stems and limbs. The outer bark includes dead tissue, while the inner bark has living tissue necessary for the plant to thrive. Many products are produced from bark such as roof shingles and the spice cinnamon.

Most camellia bark comes in shades of brown and gray. Usually, it is smooth as illustrated by ‘Wildfire’. Other camellias have textured bark as illustrated by ‘Tama Peacock’.

A few camellias have reddish bark tones that add to the attractiveness of the plant. The best example is ‘Night Rider’ whose young stems and leaves are black red. It also has red roots as seen in the image of Tom Nuccio holding it.

When mature, ‘Night Rider’ bark is a lovely reddish brown with lovely green foliage and dark red flowers. It makes a lovely garden plant with show winning blooms.



'WILDFIRE'



TOM NUCCIO HOLDING 'NIGHT RIDER'



'NIGHT RIDER'



PEONIES AND CAMELLIAS

BY BRADFORD KING

The peony is a spring blooming herbaceous perennial plant that is widely cultivated. Cut flowers are usually available in June. The mass of bright colorful petals gave name to the camellia flowers with 30 or more petals that may or may not show their stamens. Camellias that have a full peony flower show little or no stamens. This is illustrated by the beautiful 'Margaret Davis'.

The loose peony formed flowers show their stamens. It is also a beautiful bloom as illustrated here by 'Nuccio's Jewel', which can be full peony or loose peony as shown here.

Both camellias and peonies have a range of bright colorful flowers. Red camellias and peonies are numerous and are some of the most widely grown. They are illustrated here by a very dark red full peony and the dark red loose peony of 'Candy Apple'.

'Easter Morn' has very large lovely pale pink loose peony flowers. The pink peony cut flowers were buds when purchased and took several days to fully open and show their stamens.



'NUCCIO'S JEWEL'



RED PEONY

The large white peony cut flowers took several days to open. The buds had a tint of pink that disappeared as the flower opened. It retained a full peony form before the petals began to shatter. The incurved irregular petals



'CANDY APPLE'



'EASTERN MORN'

were a striking bright white. The large 'Snowman' camellia has a highly built pure white flower that opens showing golden stamens.

Peonies and camellias are grown for their wonderful flowers. Camellias



PINK PEONY



WHITE PEONY

are evergreen shrubs or small trees that typically bloom in the winter. Peonies are perennial spring flowers with a short blooming season. Both are long-lived plants.



'SNOWMAN'



C. transarisanensis

CAMELLIA SPECIES:

C. TRANSARISANENSIS

BY BRADFORD KING

The tiny white single flower inspired the nickname snow bell for this camellias species from Taiwan. The leaves are very small and so is the seed pod. It grows slowly forming an upright bushy plant that blooms midseason. The flower has a slight scent.

HIGO TREASURES FROM JAPAN:

‘HI-NO-MARU’

BY BRADFORD KING

‘Hi-no-maru’ (National Flag of Japan) has a deep red flower, pink filaments, and 120 to 150 stamens with 6 or 7 wavy petals. The yellow pollen on pink filaments surrounded by dark red petals makes an especially attractive bloom. It is an old cultivar that dates to 1912.



‘HI-NO-MARU’



PARTING SHOT:
'HAPPY HIGO'

BY BRADFORD KING

While the traditional Higo camellias all come from Japan, 'Happy Higo' was introduced by Nuccio's in 1992. It has a large to very large flower which makes it the largest higo style flower to be introduced. The flat single red flower has a mass of yellow stamens. It has seven large rippled petals. It grows well in a pot or in the ground as it grows vigorously blooming in midseason.



‘CUPCAKE’



‘LUCKY STAR’