



Gainesville Camellia Society

Affiliated with the American Camellia Society

Editor: Anna Langford

February 2026

President's Message

I hope that all of you survived the freeze okay. We lost a lot of blooms and a lot of limbs from the wind, but that appears to be it. The shows are also about done for the season. All of the in-state shows are done. I am excited to start grafting a few plants and am thinking about approaching Christopher about learning it as well. We will be signing up to work at the spring festival here at Kanapaha next month. This is always fun – you get to meet a lot of people. The meeting in Jacksonville with the Garden Club was fun, and I think people are excited about Camellias. I am looking forward to our visit from Forrest Latta. He is a very powerful speaker. You will be blessed. See you all on Sunday.

Debbie Ellis, President



Drama Girl variegated

Minutes for GCS Meeting – January 18, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 2:06 pm by our President, Debbie Ellis. She welcomed new members Roman Subbotin, Don Durham, Cathy Hostis and Diane Biernaki. Diane is actually a dues paying member who has not attended a meeting before today. She's retiring soon and will be an active member going forward. Diane and all new members were given a "welcome to the club" camellia plant.

Old Business

A motion was made and seconded to accept the December, 2025 minutes. The motion passed.



Elaine



Barenice Beauty

Rick Davis reported that the plant sale went very well with only 14 plants remaining (out of 705), which is just enough to provide new members with a free plant and a few for auction.

Charles Simon reported that the Show was also a success with 890 blooms on display and nearly 700 in competition. Charles also reported there was a few percent shortfall of expected sale proceeds. Some pre-sale money had not been turned in yet and there were some sales-lot discounts. He said we would have better tracking of sales and revenues next year.

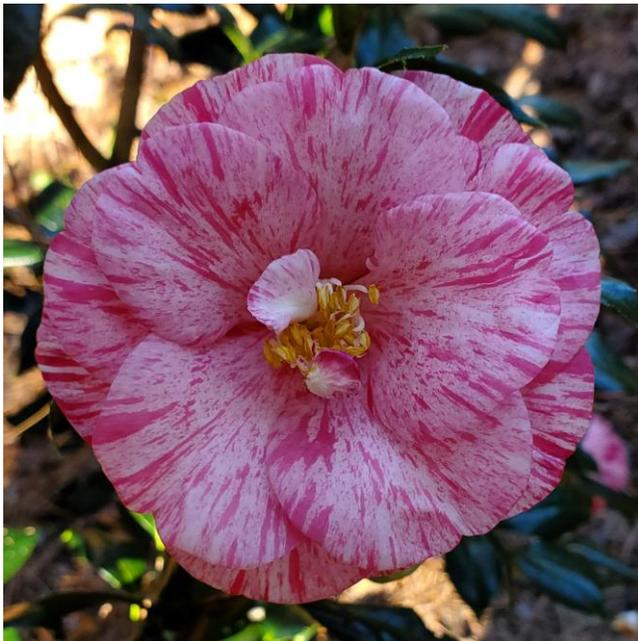
Charles also reported that the Show cost \$4,150 this year including prize money of \$2,350, table rental of \$950, breakfasts, lunches, Judge's bags and incidental expenses. He also noted that we spent ~\$7,000 on purchased plants.

Jerry Hogsette reported that both the Lakeland and Orlando Shows had good turnouts. At the Lakeland plant sale there were many plants from Jon's Nursery in Eustis, Florida that were very impressive and sold well. Charles stated that the 2027 GCS plant sale will feature 100-150 plants from Jon's Nursery.

John Swanson announced that the Middle Georgia Camellia Society will have their Show on February 28 at Masee Lane Gardens. Phil Leilich reminded everyone that the American Camellia Society (ACS) 2026 National Convention will be held in Charleston, SC, on February 19-22.



Brenda Beach



Anita

Several members reported free or discounted admissions to a number of botanical gardens because of their membership in the ACS. Everyone was encouraged to join ACS which can be done on-line for a small fee.

New Business

The January 2026 Treasurer's report was presented by Merry Reid.

Checking:	\$5,209
Savings:	<u>\$19,812</u>
Total:	\$25,021

All bills and prize monies for the Show and Plant Sale have been paid. Merry also reported that we have an additional four mail-in dues-paying members. We look forward to seeing these folks at an upcoming meeting

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer's report. The motion passed.

Educational Program

Wally Belgard introduced Senior University of Florida Horticulture and pre-med student Brian Do who presented a detailed lecture on Blazing Star (*Liastris Spicata*), a native 'pollinator magnet'. These long-blooming perennial wildflowers bloom in September and October at the same time as sunflowers. Their tall spikes of star-shaped purple, blue or white flowers complement the yellow sunflowers and make an excellent vertical addition to gardens and woodlands.

Brian described 19 species of *Liastris* and how to identify each of them by their differing morphologies including bloom colors, pappus shapes, leaf shapes, flower arrangements and presence or absence of hairs on the stems.



Bloom colors include white and shades of blue and purple. These drought tolerant perennial plants can grow up to six feet tall and live for 15-34 years. Their growth is stimulated by fire and cutting them results in increased flower production.

The bulb of the plant has been used by Native Americans historically to treat a range of illnesses. Today *Liastris spicata* is primarily indicated for **edema (dropsy)**, particularly due to liver, spleen, or kidney diseases. It is also used as a vascular stimulant and for treating colic and diarrhea.

Brian described experiments with potting medium for liastris plants. He used mixtures of peat, pine bark and sand and found that non-peat native mixes did nearly as well as the peat-containing mixes. The results showed that non-peat potting soil can be used to propagate these plants, thus saving a non-renewable resource and reducing associated greenhouse gas emissions.

Of interest to our club was the funding source for this and other horticulture research. The horticulture students have a poinsettia sale every December and last year sold over 4,000 plants that earned \$70,000! (Editor’s note: In contrast GCS sold 705 plants this year that grossed ~\$22,000.)

The lecture ended and there were many questions from club members. This was a most exciting and informative scientific lecture by an outstanding young man!

The meeting ended at 3:30 PM and was followed by a plant auction and refreshments.

**Charles Simon for
Cat Spurgeon, Secretary**

Date and place of meeting		Refreshments	
		Food	Drinks
2/15/26	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	Mona Rippe	Rick Davis
3/15/26	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	Charles & Diane Simon	Charles & Diane Simon
4/19/26	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	Victoria & Amanda Watson	Linda & Howard Eckinrode
5/17/26	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	Summer Potluck Party	Wally Belgard

2026 Show Schedule		
February 28-29, 2026	Middle Georgia Camellia Society	Fort Valley GA

Follow Us on Social Media

The Gainesville Florida Camellia

Society <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61570106033309>

GCS Facebook Message

Board: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2046931395806031>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/gainesville_camellia_society/

If you have some photos you would like to share of your camellias, but are not on social media sites, consider sending them to Cat Spurgeon and she will get them posted for you. Ensure you include the variety and/or cultivar, if you have a short story regarding the camellia, you are invited to include that as well. The purpose of this is to create awareness of the local varieties that our members are growing. This also helps with getting more people interested and involved with identifying the camellias in their yard and around town. Contact Cat at acsgrville@gmail.com or 321.615.2229 for more information or to submit your photos.

New GCS Shirts

Gainesville Camellia Society has official shirts available in two styles: Polo (light blue) and regular t-shirt (stone blue and white). Sizes available range from Small to 3XL for both styles. The cost for either shirt style is \$20. Please contact Cat Spurgeon at acsgrville@gmail.com or 321.615.2229 to get yours ordered.



Dues

The annual dues for Gainesville Camellia Society are due at this time. The amount is \$15 for an individual or \$20 for a couple. Please mail a check for your dues to the Treasurer:

Merry Reid
7631 Monongahela Avenue
Keystone Heights FL 32656
reidm729@gmail.com

Officers

President: Debbie Ellis
1st VP & Show Chair: Charles Simon
2nd VP & Program Chair: Wally Belgard
Treasurer: Merry Reid
Secretary: Cat Spurgeon

Board Members

Carter Brenneman
Rick Davis
Jay Ellis
Deborah Engquist
Jerry Hogsette
Phil Leilich
Sanford Porter
Jill Reid
Charlie Rye
Ron Stevens
Irma Velez

Monthly Meeting of the Gainesville Camellia Society

Date: Sunday, February 15, 2026
Place: Kanapaha Botanical Gardens
Program: Forrest Latta, ICS VP-America and ACS Historian will speak about the 2027 joint ACS and ICS Convention, which will be held in Mobile, AL, Macon, GA, and Savannah, GA.

The Gainesville Camellia Society meets at 2 pm on the third Sunday of each month from September through May in the GRU Conference Room at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. Any changes to meeting dates, times, or venues are posted in this newsletter.