



Gainesville Camellia Society

Affiliated with the American Camellia Society

Editor: Anna Langford

September 2026

President's Message

Hi Folks.

It's time to get back to the lovely Camellias.

The board members met over the break and we have come up with new ideas for growth of our club.

Our annual Camellia Show will be on January 2, 2027, this year. We will be passing sign up sheets soon. Don't be timid about signing up - there is always someone who can support you in new positions.

I have received well wishes from many of you on the passing of Jay. I thank all of you for your support. I will see some of you at the celebration of life. Wear your Camellia gear. See you Saturday!

The rest of you I will see Sunday as we start off our new season.

Debbie Ellis, President



Silver Chalice

Minutes for GCS Meeting – May 17, 2026

The Gainesville Camellia Society held its final meeting of the 2025–2026 camellia season in May. Members gathered to reflect on a successful year of shows, sales, educational programs, and fellowship.

Several topics were discussed regarding the future direction of the Society, including plans for a summer planning meeting and the potential formation of dedicated committees to help support the Society's activities and events.



Royalty



Camille, variegated

Areas identified for future discussion included membership, education, communications, fundraising, and event planning. Specific committee structures and volunteer opportunities will be discussed in greater detail at the upcoming summer board meeting.

Members also discussed the importance of continued engagement during the off-season and the need to begin preparations for next year's Camellia Show and Sale. Additional details regarding the summer meeting, including the date and location, will be announced as they become available.

Following a brief business session, the meeting adjourned early to allow members to enjoy an outstanding end-of-season luncheon. The spread featured a variety of expertly prepared smoked meats, homemade side dishes, baked goods, and an assortment of artisanal cookies that would have been at home in a French bakery. The meal provided an excellent opportunity for members to relax, share gardening stories, and celebrate another successful year for the Society.



Francis Eugene Phillips



Early Autumn, variegated

The Gainesville Camellia Society wishes all members a productive summer in their gardens and looks forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming summer planning meeting.

Cat Spurgeon, Secretary

Flower photos are from the garden of John Swanson.

GCS Board Meeting July 2026

The Gainesville Camellia Society Board met in July to discuss planning and priorities for the upcoming 2026–2027 season. Primary discussion centered on strengthening committee involvement, planning for the annual show and plant sale, community outreach and philanthropy, and an opportunity to acquire camellias from a Central Florida nursery that is closing.

Committee Structure

The Board discussed establishing several subcommittees to distribute responsibilities among members and encourage greater participation in Society activities. Three primary areas were identified.

Outreach Committee

The Outreach Committee would focus on increasing the Society's visibility within the Gainesville community and attracting new members. Potential activities discussed included partnerships with local gardening organizations, botanical gardens, schools, community groups, and other horticultural organizations. The committee could also assist with educational programs, public demonstrations, social media, printed materials, and promotion of Society meetings and events.

Show Committee

A dedicated Show Committee would assist with planning and execution of the annual Camellia Show and Plant Sale at Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. Responsibilities could include volunteer coordination, setup and breakdown, bloom entry and placement, judging support, plant-sale organization, signage, educational displays, hospitality, and public promotion. The Board discussed the importance of beginning preparations well in advance of the January show and identifying committee leaders and volunteers early in the season. The addition of the Antique category was discussed and the differences in what years constitute Antique. More information will be obtained from ACS.

Philanthropy Committee

The Board discussed creating a Philanthropy Committee to review and recommend organizations, programs, and projects for Society support. The committee would help develop a consistent process for evaluating requests and determining how the Society's charitable funds can best support horticultural education, camellia preservation, public gardens, student scholarships, and community projects. Past recipients and potential future partners were discussed, including horticultural education programs, public gardens, the American Camellia Society, and University of Florida horticulture students in undergrad and masters/doctoral level programs. The Board agreed to provide funding to the masters/doctoral level recipients.

Committee membership and chairs will be discussed further, with opportunities for general members to participate.

Central Florida Nursery Closing / Camellia Acquisition

The Board discussed an opportunity involving a nursery in Central Florida that is closing and has a substantial inventory of camellias available.

There was considerable interest in exploring the possibility of purchasing some or potentially all of the nursery's remaining camellia inventory. The Board discussed several factors that would need to be evaluated before committing to a purchase, including:

- Number and varieties of plants available
- Overall health, size, and condition of the plants
- Purchase price and potential bulk pricing
- Transportation and loading requirements
- Temporary storage and care of the plants
- Availability of volunteers and equipment to transport them
- Potential resale of plants through the annual GCS plant sale
- Retention of unusual or desirable cultivars for propagation, educational purposes, or donation
- Financial risk compared with the potential fundraising value of the plants

The Board agreed that additional information should be obtained regarding the nursery's inventory, pricing, and timeline for closing before a final decision is made.

The possibility of preserving older, unusual, or difficult-to-find cultivars was also discussed. Members noted that an acquisition could provide both a fundraising opportunity for the Society and an opportunity to prevent desirable camellia varieties from being lost.

Annual Show and Plant Sale

Preliminary planning for the annual Camellia Show and Plant Sale was discussed. The Board emphasized the importance of maintaining the educational component of the show while continuing to improve the visitor experience and plant sale. Areas for future discussion include volunteer recruitment, plant inventory, educational displays, signage, publicity, bloom preparation and entry, judging support, refreshments, and coordination with Kanapaha Botanical Gardens. The Board also discussed using the Show Committee to create a clearer timeline and division of responsibilities so that preparation does not fall on a small number of members immediately before the event.

Plant Inventory and Purchasing

In connection with the nursery discussion, the Board reviewed the Society's anticipated plant needs for the coming sale season. The goal will be to offer a good selection of healthy plants while balancing the cost of purchasing inventory against expected plant-sale revenue. Greater emphasis may be placed on variety, plant quality, and cultivars that perform well in North Central Florida. The Board will continue evaluating outside nursery purchases as well as GCS-propagated plants.

Philanthropic Giving

The Board discussed continuing the Society's tradition of supporting horticultural education and organizations that promote camellias and public gardening. Potential areas of support include student scholarships, Kanapaha Botanical Gardens and its camellia collection, the American Camellia Society, local horticultural organizations, educational projects, and other community programs consistent with the Society's mission. Specific recommendations and dollar amounts will be developed after the Board has a clearer picture of anticipated expenses and plant-purchasing commitments for the upcoming season.

Membership and Outreach

The Board discussed ways to attract new members and encourage greater participation from existing members. Increasing awareness of the Society beyond the annual January show was identified as a priority. Ideas included educational programs, demonstrations, partnerships with other gardening organizations, increased social media activity, participation in local horticultural events, and better communication of upcoming meetings and speakers. Particular emphasis was placed on making the Society welcoming and accessible to people who are interested in camellias but may have little or no experience growing them.

Programs and Speakers

Potential programs and guest speakers for the upcoming season were briefly discussed. Members were encouraged to suggest speakers who could present on camellia culture, propagation, grafting, pruning, pest and disease management, landscape use, cultivar history, and other topics of interest. Partnerships with UF/IFAS, area botanical gardens, growers, and experienced camellia enthusiasts were discussed as possible sources for educational programs.

Financial Planning

The Board discussed the need to balance anticipated show expenses, plant purchases, operating expenses, and philanthropic giving. Because the potential nursery acquisition could represent an unusual opportunity as well as a significant expenditure, the Board agreed that the financial implications should be carefully reviewed before a commitment is made. Funds necessary to conduct the annual Show and Plant Sale and meet normal operating expenses should be protected before determining the amount available for discretionary or philanthropic expenditures.

Upcoming Season

The Board discussed preparations for resuming regular Society activities in the fall. Items to be presented or discussed with the membership at the beginning of the season may include:

- Formation of the Outreach, Show, and Philanthropy Committees
- Volunteer opportunities and committee chairs
- Update on the Central Florida nursery acquisition
- Plant inventory and purchasing plans
- Annual Show and Plant Sale preparations

- Philanthropic recommendations
- Upcoming programs and speakers
- Membership recruitment and community outreach

The Board agreed that creating more opportunities for members to participate in specific projects and committees should help distribute responsibilities while bringing new ideas and energy into the Society.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

<i>Date and place of meeting</i>		<i>Refreshments</i>	
		<i>Food</i>	<i>Drinks</i>
9/20/26	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	Anna Langford	Anna Langford
10/18/26	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	Volunteers needed	Volunteers needed
11/15/26	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	“ “	“ “
12/20/26	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	Christmas pot luck party	“ “
1/17/27	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	Volunteers needed	“ “
2/21/27	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	“ “	“ “
3/14/27	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	“ “	“ “
4/11/27	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	“ “	“ “
5/16/27	Kanapaha Botanical Gardens	End of Year pot luck party	“ “

<i>Dues</i>
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

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 acsgville@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 acsgville@gmail.com or 321.615.2229 to get yours ordered.



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 Reed
Charlie Rye
Ron Stevens
Irma Velez

Monthly Meeting of the Gainesville Camellia Society

Date: Sunday, September 20, 2026
Place: Kanapaha Botanical Gardens
Program: "The 10 Best Ways to Kill a Camellia" by J.D. Thomerson

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.