

November, 2012

# VALDOSTA CAMELLIA AND GARDEN CLUB

## A Message From Our President

We are less than a **week** away from our big event of the year - the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Camellia Show. Our show is very popular with camellia exhibitors based on the great response from our invitation to judges and exhibitors. We have four new exhibitors that have previously not participated in our show. Main Street is also excited we are having our show during Winterfest. We are included on all their posters promoting Winterfest. This year there will not be street vendors, only open house by the Main Street merchants. Santa will be at the courthouse and the parade begins at 5 PM.

Your help is needed at the show so we can open it to the public at 1 PM. This is not an easy task but it can be done if you show up Saturday morning to help. We will discuss the various jobs at our meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 27th. We need to show all our out of town guests how we put on a show in Valdosta since we have one of the best shows around compared to other shows in the region.

Remember, we have a party for the judges Friday night at 6:30 that Gene and Sandra Seago are hosting like last year in their home on Oak St. All club members are invited so plan to attend and bring party food.

Thanks to the members who have responded to my email to help Kay Thomerson with the judges lunch. Having a soup and sandwich buffet will be better than a box lunch and is very cost effective.

Camellia tasks this month are: to water your plants and be on the lookout for mites. This fall continues to be dry which has delayed bloom opening. If you want good flowers for the show, irrigate the week leading up to the show to make the gibbed flowers open in time for the show.

Our next club meeting will be held at the Crescent and remember to bring food to the meeting. Those of you that missed the Oct. meeting missed a great meal. Jerry and Carol Selph will present our program.

See you Tuesday, Nov. 27th at the Crescent.

Mark

## November Club Meeting

Tuesday,  
November 27

6:30 PM

Crescent  
Valdosta, GA

**BRING A  
COVERED DISH  
AND A FRIEND**



Photo of Katie Northcut by Randolph Maphis — For hundreds of great photos like this one go to [www.camelliaweb.com](http://www.camelliaweb.com) and click on the Photo Gallery links.

## Upcoming Camellia Shows

(visit the ACS Website for further information about these shows and others not listed)

- December 1  
1st United  
Methodist Church  
Valdosta, GA
- January 12  
The Doyle Conner  
Admin Building  
Tallahassee, FL
- January 26 & 27  
Pioneer Garden  
Center  
Ocala, FL
- January 5 & 6  
Kanapaha Botanical  
Gardens  
Ocala, FL
- January 19 & 20  
Bel Air Mall  
Mobile, AL
- February 2 & 3  
Microsoft Building  
Quitman, GA

# Sasanquas: The Red-Headed Stepchild - I Think Not

by J. D. Thomerson

Our adopted stray cat recently had kittens – Katie my 12 year old daughter and my wife Kay were just totally delighted. Notice that one male member of the family was not mentioned above.

Kay and Katie quickly had a name for all three kittens. There was a solid black one they named “Blackie” (isn’t that original), a white one named “Whitie,” (I know, my child is just brilliant) and a pitiful little tabby one (the runt of the litter) named “Peanut Butter.”

We often commented about Peanut Butter, “oh, isn’t he just pitiful.” He was not much to look at compared to the others and he would fall over a lot and bump into things. He often could not find his food dish and when he did he usually stepped in it and spilled out all the food.

Peanut Butter is somewhat like Wilbur the piglet in

Charlotte’s Web or the story about the Ugly Duckling. At first glance he doesn’t seem to be worth much – but, once you get to know him he is the sweetest little thing you could ever meet. I started to write that Peanut Butter is like a “red-headed stepchild” but after really learning what that means it is just too awful for words.

Sasanqua camellias are in many ways much like Peanut Butter, Wilbur the piglet, and the Ugly Duckling. Many folks just don’t give them the time of day or think they are worth having. Sasanquas would agree with Rodney Dangerfield in saying, “I just don’t get any respect.”

I know many readers who will not agree with me but I really like Sasanqua camellias. Yes, I know their blooms shatter like crazy and are no good for cutting and enjoying inside or taking to a show. They can’t hold a candle to their big brothers or cousins, the japonicas or reticulatas



Leslie Ann

Leslie Ann is perhaps the most popular of all the sasanquas. It is white tipped Reddish Lavender. Small, semi-double with irregular petals to peony form.



A large specimen of Showa-No-Sakae showing the wonderful mass blooming effect of sasanquas. This variety is actually a hiemalis species (thought to have both japonica and sasanqua parentage) but looks and acts like a sasanqua and is generally lumped into the sasanqua category as are the vernalis varieties.

that everyone ooh’s and aah’s about at camellia shows.

However, they have many wonderful characteristics all their own that their prize winning brothers and sisters often lack. Let me tell you why I really like sasanquas.

Let’s begin with the fact that sasanquas bloom in early fall all on their own without needing to be gibbed. If you are like me after a long hot spring and summer of watering, spraying, fertilizing, pruning and mulching by early fall I am ready to see some type of camellia bloom. It does not have to be a huge Frank Houser to get me excited – I am just excited to see something.

A huge bonus of this early blooming trait of sasanquas is that they have already put on their amazing color show well before the freezes come along and turn all other camellia blooms and buds brown.

How often have I waited an entire year to see a certain

japonica or reticulata bloom for the first time only to have a bad freeze come and destroy all my hard-work. This will seldom ever happen in the lower south with sasanquas.

Now, don’t get me wrong. I love the japonicas, reticulatas, and hybrids – I have way more of them than I do the sasanquas. But, sometimes the weather is so cold, wet, and nasty when they are blooming that I don’t want to stay outside long enjoying them. Not a problem with most sasanquas – they bloom in the fall when the weather is usually just wonderful.

As hard as it is for us diehard camellia show folks to admit, many people are not interested in showing camellias or trying to win a blue ribbon at a show. Most gardeners just want a good colorful landscape plant – especially one that blooms when nothing else much is blooming. They don’t want

to spray several times a year and spend lots of money on



expensive fertilizer. They want the plant to look great twelve months out of the year – not just a few months when in bloom.

Even though I grow several hundred *reticulata*, *japonica*, and hybrid *camellias* I completely understand the feelings of the average gardener I mention above. I have seen several *reticulata* blooms that are just unbelievable – but, when I see the plant it bloomed on I tell myself “I don’t care how great that bloom looks I am not going to have that ugly bush in my yard.”

Now, before I get chastised by multitudes – yes, there are some *reticulata* plants that have good bush and leaf habits especially if you give it some careful

pruning; however, this is probably more the exception.

Sasanquas typically have very nice growth habits that need little if any pruning. They have a small shiny leaf that looks very nice. In fact, I have been told that florist can use sasanqua branches with only leaves as the greenery portion of flower arrangements.

Still not convinced about the merits of sasanquas? Let me continue to list their winning qualities. Sasanquas will grow in full sun as well as shade. They are also more drought tolerant than their more celebrated *camellia* cousins. In general, they are just much easier to grow. I have killed many a *japonica camellia* and I don’t even want to discuss my success with *reticulatas* but I honestly



The Yuletide sasanqua shown above blooms a bit later than other varieties — usually right around Christmas.

do not think I have ever lost a single sasanqua *camellia*.

One reason sasanquas are easier to grow than their cousins is that they do not get that terrible root-rot disease. I have read the long scientific

name for this root-rot but that means little to me – all I know is that the roots on sasanquas do not get this disease and are much more robust and healthy than *reticulata*, *japonicas*, and hybrids.

Again, yes, I know about some of the incredibly robust roots on some varieties such as *Kumagai Nagoya* and *Honglushen* but these varieties are not typical of most. The reason sasanquas have been used for years for rootstocks when grafting is that their roots are so good and they do not root-rot when the tops of the plant are chopped off during grafting.

I enjoy growing *camellias* from seed. The main goal is not to register new varieties. The truth be known, I just think it is very fun. I enjoy collecting the seed pods, planting the seeds in plastic zip-lock baggies with sphagnum moss, watching the roots grow, potting them up in small quart pots and as years go by into larger pots, and then eventually watching them bloom.

My daughter Katie from a very young age has helped me with these tasks and she is gaining a love for *camellias* that just bring joy to my heart.

Anyway, I deviate from my topic, but I mention the above to say that sasanquas are extremely easy to grow from seed and grow fast.

## GREAT SASANQUA OR RELATED CHOICES FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES

- ◆ **Setsugeeka** — Tall growing white with waved and fluted petals.
- ◆ **Leslie Ann** — Many consider this to be the prettiest sasanqua. White with purple shade on edges.
- ◆ **Yuletide** — Small bright red bloom with with gold stamens that is low growing. Yes, it blooms at Christmas time.
- ◆ **Star Above Star**—A *vernalis* species that blooms larger than most, doesn’t shatter as easily as others. It is a white shading to lavender pink semi-double. Wins many awards and is a must have.
- ◆ **Cotton Candy** — A wide spreading clear pink with ruffled petals.
- ◆ **Sparkling Burgundy**—A very robust ruby red peony form.
- ◆ **Bonanza** — Deep red informal double form that is low growing — also good for espalier.
- ◆ **Shishi-Gashira** — Has become very popular with landscapers as a groundcover *camellia*. Bright rose semi-double.
- ◆ **Kanjiro** — A long time favorite for roostock but a very nice bright pink to deep rosy red single bloom that is a great choice for a tall hedge.
- ◆ **Rainbow** — White with each petal bordered red. A medium single bloom that is very popular. There is also a variety called Double Rainbow with similar characteristics but it is a semidouble.
- ◆ **Egao** — Species *vernalis*, Large SEMI-DOUBLE. Deep pink. Pendulous growth, suitable for specimen or espalier. Flowers do not shatter easily.

That is evidenced by looking under many large sasanquas and finding many seedlings popping up all on their own. Other varieties are not nearly as easy. Many other seed varieties grow for a while but later die often of root-rot disease or some other unknown issue. This is not to discourage anyone from planting all types of camellia seeds. I mention this just to add to this list of excellent attributes of sasanquas.

It is probably true that only one out of hundreds of camellia seedlings are going to be pretty enough and dif-

ferent enough to register. However, with sasanquas, this is not really an issue in my thinking. Sasanquas are typically grown for their mass flowering habits instead of the beauty of the individual bloom.

I have bloomed at least 30 sasanquas from seed and I honestly could not tell you much difference between the ones I have grown from seed and others that are named.

There are some exceptions such as the incredible Star Above Star and Leslie Ann varieties but many of my sasanqua seedlings bloom in colors and shapes of red, pink, white, and white with hints of pink on the edges that are just as nice in my opinion to most named sasanquas.

Did I mention much earlier that sasanquas bloom so early that they are not bothered by the awful petal blight fungus? I take medication for excessive

worry and anxiety and with a full time job I get plenty of things to worry about – I enjoy not having to worry about my sasanquas. They reliably bloom each fall with basically no attention whatsoever from me. Considering my limited time the work to reward ratio is very high with sasanquas.

In addition, most sasanquas are fragrant and some are very fragrant. Also, they are available in varieties that are easily used as a low groundcover, an espalier, a potted specimen, bonsai, or as a hedge. A neighbor of mine has a tall sasanqua privacy hedge that is at least 50 feet long -- it looks great even when not in full bloom.

Perhaps my favorite sasanqua attribute is that their mass of blooms can be seen and appreciated from a distance. I live on the corner of two moderately busy residential streets. I get comments often from people driving by and noticing my sasanquas in full bloom.

They do not typically see any of the blooms of the oth-



Star Above Star probably wins the most awards as shows in the Sasanqua category.



Navajo is similar to Rainbow and Double Rainbow with the red edge shading to the white center.

er camellia varieties in my yard. My number one objective for my landscape is to have a pretty yard with blooming plants twelve months out of the year. Sasanquas are a very valuable part of trying to accomplish that goal.

I encourage everyone to consider the sasanqua camellia in light of all the good attributes it offers. Camellia Sasanqua – the Ugly Duckling, red-headed stepchild, Wilbur the pig, or even Peanut Butter the kitty of the camellia world – I think not.

## Minutes of the October, 2012 Meeting of the Valdosta Camellia and Garden Club

The second meeting for the year 2012 was held at the Crescent in Valdosta on Oct. 23. Attendance was very good at around 25 people. As always, the food and fellowship was wonderful. Club members voted to send a \$50 memorial gift to ACS in honor of Ms. Adrine Wheeler who was a long time member of our club. There was discussion about needed work days at the Hulyn Smith Garden located at the Christ Episcopal Church. Everyone decided that we needed to wait until cooler weather which will be coming soon. J. D. reported that approximately 35 judges have accepted our invitation to bring blooms and judge at our upcoming show. Mark discussed other details and needs for the show and shared that he had arranged a very good price for our out of town guests to stay at the new Holiday Inn on Hwy. 84. Kay Thomerson agreed to look into the best options for the judges luncheon. Sandra and Gene Seago once again agreed to host the Friday evening judges party at their house.

Mark gave an excellent presentation on planting and pruning camellias especially those plants which have to be planted in locations with lots of root competition from others trees and bushes. At the end of the meeting, Jerry and Carol Selph showed everyone several outstanding camellia blooms of varieties that they had cut from their garden.

Congratulations to Fred and Sandra Jones for winning the Best Large Reticulata award for a Miss Tulare at the Middle Georgia Camellia Society. Also, at this same show, Jerry and Carol Selph won many awards. They won the Best Mini award for Fircone Var, the Best Species for Egao, an honor court award for Helen Bower Var, and won the Silver Sweepstakes award for having the second most Blue Ribbon awards in the entire show.

# PREPARING CAMELLIAS FOR EXHIBITION

By: Hulyn Smith

## Early Morning

It is really very interesting to go to a camellia show early in the morning and watch friends preparing their blossoms for display. Many of them are serious competing exhibitors while a few are preparing their blooms for display only, as I am doing now. The preparation of blooms for both types of exhibitors is similar. We strive to put the very best flowers on display—perhaps to win a trophy, sell a plant, or interest other people in our hobby.

But what about the less serious grower who just walked in with his flowers that look like ten miles of muddy roads. These poor blossoms were probably good flowers early in the morning, but somewhere between cutting and displaying, he managed to destroy his blooms. We must attempt to teach him better.

I am very serious about the flowers I display and I would like to share with you some of the things I do that I believe are important and critical for exhibitors.

## Cutting Blossoms

I start cutting blooms on Sunday morning in preparation for the following Saturday show. I select only blooms that are at their peak or very near their peak. I never cut a flower that is even slightly beyond its peak. My flowers are cut with a 3 to 4 inch stem and the stem is immediately placed in a glass of water. Practically all of the candidates for display had their leaves pinned back with clothes pins one to two weeks early to prevent damage in opening.

## Grooming the Blossoms

Now is the time to fine tune the flowers for the show. I remove all moisture from the bloom. If there is a lot of moisture, I use an 8 inch pair of industrial tweezers with cotton balls. If there is only a small amount of moisture I use a Q-tip. I am careful to also remove all pollen or any debris that is on the petals. The blossom is now ready to be sprayed with Clear Set. This product locks in moisture and makes the blossom, which is over 95% water, last longer. I spray the blossom lightly, fanning the spray can from side to side as I walk around the flower and then fan across the top. I never point the spray can directly at the blossom to start the spray action. This can cause a blob of chemical to hit and ruin the flower. I also spray the back of the bloom after I have removed the leaves, being certain to spray the calyx well. After spraying the blossom and it has thoroughly dried, I then carefully check the blossom for balance—petals that are too close to each other, large peony petals that have flopped or any situation where a cotton ball could be placed to improve the shape of the flower. Keep in mind this blossom is going to a flower show and must look its absolute best.

## Spring Blossoms

I put all my flowers in 10-cup Tupperware containers for refrigeration storage until show day (38-40 degrees F.) Each container is lined with about a one inch “birdnest” layer of polyfil or pillow fiber. In this “birdnest” I put a bottle cap. A roll-on deodorant cap is perfect. The cap is filled with either Chrysal or Floralife, mixed according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Both of these products seem to produce about the same results. Now I take the bloom and cut the stem to only one inch. I then carefully place the flower in the bottle cap in the Tupperware container lined with polyfil. The blossom is now ready for show day except for the leaf. I select the best leaf of this variety I can find and cut off 1/4 of the stem end. After carefully cleaning this leaf I staple a 1” x 2” piece of index card to the stem end of the leaf and punch a hole in the end of the card. The leaf is now put into the container and the flower and leaf are secured so it cannot move with polyfil. The container is now sealed, put in the refrigerator and not opened again until it is time to display at the show.

## Transporting Flowers

Whether I leave on Friday afternoon or Saturday morning for the show, my procedure is the same. I pack my containers in boxes with frozen blue ice sufficient to keep camellias cool enough to get to the show bench. Needless to say, I drive carefully to avoid having to slam on brakes.

## Staging and the Show Bench

Once you get to the show, the balance of the work is easy. Open your container, carefully remove the flower and leaf. The leaf is now affixed to the stem with only one inch of the leaf showing and is turned on the stem to its best position. The flower is placed in the show and now ready for display.

Everything I have told you in this article is completely legal according to ACS rules. You can probably get by with less work in preparation. However, many do much more work. Keep in mind there is as much in showing as there is in growing.



# Nine Great Solid Colored Camellias For the Landscape

Last month I listed nine wonderful variegated camellia varieties that are easy to grow outside in the yard, have outstanding blooms, and have nice foliage and bush structure. Since nine was too small a number to include all the great variegated varieties I promised to give a future Part 2 for the variegated group. This Variegated Part 2 list will have to wait until next month's newsletter because it would just not be fair to overlook the solid group for another month. So, below is my list of nine great solid camellia varieties that should grow well and look great outside in our area. In making the list, I tried to include a mixture of white, pink, red as well as mini through very large sizes. I highly recommend these nine be in everyone's collection—they will not disappoint.



**Maroon & Gold**

The name of this one tells it all. A very dark large loose peony that blooms a bit later than most.



**Man Size**

If you like mini's and you like white then look no more. This one wins many awards.



**Royal Velvet**

My wife (Kay) has seen many camellia blooms but this is her favorite. She is not alone.



**Taylor's Perfection**

A very unique color on this large to very large hybrid from New Zealand.



**Camille**

Another one registered by Hulyn. If you like large, pink, rose form to formal double it's hard to beat.



**TitleTown USA**

Hulyn registered this one. A reticulate that grows and looks good outside. Listed as a medium but often larger.



**Georgia Fire**

Very dark red of medium size that is very pretty but the bush is even better. Another from Hulyn.



**Brooke**

Perhaps my favorite landscape camellia. It blooms very early and often on a very nice bush.



**Seafoam**

A medium to large white formal double that sets lots of buds and gibs up nice. Introduced in 1959.

October, 2012

# VALDOSTA CAMELLIA AND GARDEN CLUB

## A Message From Our President

It has started to feel like fall now that it is much cooler at night. If you gibbed any camellias early last month, camellias are now opening and looking great. The low humidity causes the flowers to flop in the afternoon but they usually look good in the morning. It has turned rather dry after our wet September so it is a good practice to water your camellias -- that will help the flowers to open fully.

It is only 6 weeks to our show on December 1<sup>st</sup> and we anticipate that it will be very large because most of the exhibitors that were invited are planning to attend. You should be gibbing now so you will have flowers for the show. Gibb will be available at the meeting if you did not get any at our last meeting.

We had a very informative meeting last month about the plans to restore the former Sarah Oliver garden as the Huly and Janet Smith Memorial garden. More on that at this meeting.

Mark Crawford

## October Club Meeting

October 23

6:30 PM

Crescent  
Valdosta, GA

**BRING A  
COVERED DISH  
AND A FRIEND**

### Minutes of the September, 2012 Meeting of the Valdosta Camellia and Garden Club

The first meeting for the year 2012 was held at the Ocean Pond Clubhouse. Attendance was very good at around 25 to 30 people. Jerry and Carol Selph brought several varieties of camellias to adorn the tables and they all looked great. As always, the food and fellowship was wonderful.

Mark Crawford began the meeting by encouraging all club members to join the American Camellia Society (ACS). If you are a member of a local camellia club and join ACS before Jan. 1 it will only cost \$15. This is for people who are not currently members of ACS and is a marketing tool that our own Mark Crawford got accepted by the ACS board. The membership will be valid for the entire 2013 calendar year. Mark discussed all the many perks of ACS membership such as free admission to Masee Lane Gardens and dozens of other gardens across the U. S. You also receive four ACS Journals and the ACS Yearbook. If you are not an ACS member you really should take advantage of this deal — application forms will be available at our next Club meeting and from the ACS main website.

Mark gave out free bottles of Gib with instructions and encouraged members to Gib early for early shows. He also reported that ten of our club members went to the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society meeting in Litchfield, SC and that everyone had a great time. Our Club auctioned off a grafted TitleTown USA camellia at this meeting that resulted in a \$100 donation to ACCS.

Our guest speaker was Clint Beeland representing Christ Episcopal Church in Valdosta. He informed the club about plans for the Huly and Janet Smith Camellia Garden that will be located at Christ Episcopal Church. After the presentation, Club members voted unanimously to donate \$2,000 from Club funds to assist in this project. Also, approximately 30 plus camellias registered by Huly Smith and propagated by Valdosta Club members will be donated and planted. This will be an ongoing project for our Club.

Kay Thomerson shared that the Valdosta 4-H Club will hold a plant sale as a fund raiser during early Spring 2013. All Club members are encouraged to let Kay (kaythomerson@yahoo.com) or J. D. know of any extra plants that they have or can obtain and area 4-H club members will come and pick up the plants.



# Forever Grateful

It's All About the Friendships - by J. D. Thomerson

I have been trying to write an article honoring Hulyn Smith for the ACS Journal or Yearbook for over a year now. I just can't seem to put all my thoughts together and get the article to say what I feel. So far, this is my best effort — J. D.

**M**uch effort and time has been devoted by many ACS members about how to increase memberships in local camellia clubs and the ACS as a whole. I applaud all of these efforts and the people dedicated to putting the different plans to work. This article is not to undermine any of these plans but it is to emphasize one crucial factor which I feel will either lead to success or failure of any recruitment effort.

The factor of which I speak is the development of close friendships that bond a group of people together and the unselfish act of welcoming others to this close knit group — others of all kinds, shapes, and sizes.

I have often heard that our camellia clubs are for folks that love camellias, and this is true, but I have discovered first hand over the years that more importantly it is the love of people. I would bet that most active ACS members would wholeheartedly agree with this and could give testimony of that special person or persons that took them under their wing and mentored and taught them all about camellias.

As camellia folks have shared such stories with me over the years the discussion often begins with the skills and techniques learned about growing camellias but quickly changes to the deep and lasting friendships that were developed. In this article I will share my story.

It was the fall of 2002 and my wife Kay and two year old daughter Katie had finally finished restoring an old 1920's bungalow style house in the old historic neighborhood in the heart of Valdosta, GA. Having acquired a love of all plants and pride in maintaining a nice yard from my father I began to focus my attention on the yard.

Our new home had been owned by the same family for over 75 years and one could tell that at one time it was very well landscaped. However, it was currently overgrown with huge Formosa azaleas, trash trees, and vines, and weeds of all kinds. After weeks of taking a chain saw, heavy pruners, pick-ax, shovels, and gallons of weed killer I began to take back control of the yard and start planting a new landscape.

Being ten years younger and in better shape I eagerly planned and planted a very diverse group of all kinds of bushes, trees, and plants. The property did contain five very large camellias: a professor sargeant, mathoniana rubra, debutante, pink perfection, and a setsugekka sasanqua) that I did have the good sense to keep and prune back to rejuvenate.

Having lived in Valdosta for over 20 years and loving plants of all kinds I knew that camellias grew well in the area and I liked the idea of planting several more to add to the existing ones -- I desired to have a southern style landscape that would complement our old home.

Over the course of a couple of years I planted about 12 new camellias. I gave these camellias much attention as I did all my plants but they did not seem to grow at all. Some started getting a pale yellow leaf, some looked OK but did not grow at all, and some just plain out died.

Now, this was upsetting to me because in general I never killed a plant. None of the other plants in my yard were

having any trouble whatsoever. I remember thinking to myself, "the heck with these camellias — I will just plant other things."

Even though I had given up on camellias, Kay, Katie and I always enjoyed going to the Valdosta Camellia Show and looking at all the nice blooms. Kay would say, "why don't you plant some of these?" — and I would just grunt and say they die too easy. We did enjoy those five huge old camellias that were already planted in the yard when we bought the property.

One day I read a very short note in the "What's Happening This Week" section of the newspaper. It said the Valdosta Camellia Society will hold its' monthly meeting this Tuesday at a local buffet and that everyone is welcome to attend. I was not the least bit interested in joining a club — my only purpose was to learn how to fertilize, prune, and maintain the few camellias I had in my yard.



Hulyn proudly showing a "Ray Gentry" camellia bloom. This was probably the camellia introduction for which he was the most proud. "Ray Gentry" was awarded the 2009 Charlotte C. Knox Reticulata award by the ACS.

The meeting was OK but not terribly interesting — they were planning the upcoming Valdosta Camellia Show and asking for volunteers to do various tasks. I thought to



Hulyn with his dear friend Clarence Gordy — although he would prefer you just call him "Gordy." Hulyn loved visiting both he and his wife Lillian at their amazing camellia garden in Ocala, FL.



myself that I was way too busy at work and my church to ever want to do any of these type jobs.

While the meeting was going on I decided that I would just research on the internet how to fertilize and prune my existing camellias. The people at the meeting all seemed nice but most were much older than me and there were only about ten people present.

I am a very shy person and had hoped to just sneak in the back of the room and not be noticed. I planned to make a quick exit after the meeting because I did not plan to come back.

Well, all of the above is the introduction, as Paul Harvey used to say, "Here's the rest of the story." Before I could even think of making a quick exit at the end of this my first camellia meeting an older gentleman stopped me, shook my hand, thanked me for coming, and said he sure hoped I enjoyed the meeting.

He also asked if I would please come to the upcoming Valdosta Camellia Show that would be held in just a couple of weeks. I promised him I would – and he said that he would be on the lookout for me. I remember him telling me his name but being terrible at remembering names I forgot by the time I got to my car.

After a few weeks I did go to the Camellia Show and upon entering this same gentlemen left a crowd of

people and approached me with a huge smile saying "J. D., I have been waiting for you." I made sure to look at the name tag he was wearing and it said Hulyn Smith. He then took me on a personal tour of all the blooms on the head table and others around the room.

I couldn't help notice that everywhere this man went he drew attention from all the other folks. People were trying to ask him questions and get his opinion on this flower or that flower. He was cordial to them but for at least 30 minutes he gave his full attention to me.

After the personal tour I went around the room again by myself looking at the blooms. I kept hearing people say "Hulyn this. . ." and "Hulyn that. . ." Others would say something like this is Hulyn's new Retic or Hulyn say's this one will be a great one.

After looking over everything a second time I decided to go home and since Hulyn seemed busy talking to others I just gave him a wave to say I was leaving. He quickly left the others and came to me wanting to know how I liked the show. I told him that is was just amazing and that I had some camellias in my yard but not like the ones I saw at the show. He said you need to come see my greenhouses if you want to see something amazing.

I was quickly learning that Hulyn was a very nice



Hulyn and close friend Randolph Maphis at the 2010 Valdosta Camellia Show

man but he did not mind bragging about his camellias. We arranged a day and time that I could meet him at his house and look at his camellias.

When I came to his house that day I knocked on the door and his wife Janet answered and said "Oh, Yes, he is expecting you – he is out in Greenhouse #1, go on out there." I didn't know which greenhouse was #1 or #2 but went in the closest one and found Hulyn.

I remember seeing his big smile again and his warm greeting. We spent at least one hour looking at all the blooms in both greenhouses with many stories about where this one or that one came from or who this one was named for, etc.

He was so funny – saying things like this one is a "dog" and is destined for the creek or that one is beautiful but "a bitch (sorry but if you knew Hulyn you know it's true) to grow." However, he more often told me that I needed this one or that one for my yard – that they were wonderful plants.

Out of hundreds of different blooms he seemed to encourage me to pick out my top five or so. I did and he said that it would soon be grafting season and that I needed to come back and he would teach me how to graft and I could get a plant of each of the ones I picked out. After the complete tour we

went in his house and Janet had cookies and sweet tea for us.

Around the time for the next camellia club meeting I still was not sure if I wanted to attend the meeting but I knew Hulyn would be there and be disappointed if I did not show up. I was thinking I could just say I could not get off work or something but then I got a call from Hulyn reminding me of the meeting and saying if I needed a ride that he would come get me.

I did go to this next meeting and I enjoyed it much better than the first. The club president Mark Crawford had brought about five camellia plants and he and Hulyn taught everyone how to graft camellias.

After their demo they asked for a volunteer to graft one while they still taught and explained things. Hulyn said "Come on J. D. try one." I did and with their assistance they said I did a good job.

Anyone volunteering to graft a camellia got to take the plant home. I did and I later watched my "Frank Houser Var" graft begin to grow a couple of months later. I still have it in my yard today and it is huge and has beautiful blooms.

After this second meeting Hulyn and I arranged a second visit to his house to graft those five camellias that I had picked out at his house. We met and had a good time with the grafting. Hulyn was very



Hulyn having a great time at the 2011 Quitman Camellia Show.



Huly and close friends with the Gordy's in Ocala, FL

precise in how he did things and it was easy to learn from him. He sent me home with my five new camellia grafts all in two gallon pots.

I actually looked forward to attending the last camellia club meeting that season. It was a special one held at Ocean Pond Clubhouse – a nice old home that served dinner in front of a scenic lake setting. I was beginning to get to know some other club members and was even somewhat disappointed to hear that the club did not meet over the summer.

Later, around the middle of April, I was surprised to get a phone call from Huly asking about how my grafts were doing. Well, I told him they did not look dead but I didn't really know. He said "how 'bout I come over and look at them."

Since he only lived about one mile from my house he was there in about five minutes. He looked at them and they were all living – yes, all living. I was beginning to get the camellia bug.

He said he needed to go out to Mark Crawford's place to get fertilizer or something and did I want to go along. I did and Huly, Mark, and I rode around in a golf cart looking at all of Mark's camellias in his yard. Then, we looked at all of Mark's camellias in pots for sale and his recent rooted cuttings. We spent at least two hours or more out there and I just had a wonderful time.

From this point on Huly, Mark, and I would seldom go more than a week without getting together to do something. I learned that there was pruning to do, fertilizing, spraying, air-layering, camellia shows to plan and others to attend, cuttings to gather, and grafts to perform.

I remember one gathering when it was time to put up the plastic covering over Huly's greenhouses.

Huly introduced me to Randolph Maphis from Tallahassee, FL – he was and is the most energetic man I think I have ever met. Randolph wastes no time doing anything but does everything first class. I remember Huly telling Randolph that "I was a good guy and for him to help me with anything that I ever needed." Randolph has more than lived up to this promise.

Huly and Randolph invited me to go on my first ever out of town camellia show trip. We all went to the Douglas, GA show. I helped Huly set up his camellia display table. Huly had quit entering blooms in the actual show – he had won plenty of awards in the past and now just had a display table advertising his scion business. But, oh what a display table it was – his display table often would get as much attention as the head table.

Huly introduced me to Clayton Mathis, the chairman of the Douglas show. Clayton invited me to join the judges luncheon where I began to get to know so many other fine camellia growers but even finer people.

I continued to go on trips with Huly and Mark to various shows and other places and continued to meet so many wonderful people. Probably the most enjoyable trips are the ones we have taken to the Gordy's place in Ocala, FL.

Gordy and Lillian have the nicest camellia garden I have ever seen but that is not what makes the trip so enjoyable. They are just the nicest folks you could ever meet. They are so eager to give and share their plants and are so glad to see everyone and always serves everyone a nice lunch and I could go on and on. When

camellia folks gather at the Gordy's it seems somewhat like a family reunion – only better.

Well, this story needs a conclusion even though I could continue on for many more pages. The title of my story is "Forever Grateful – It's All About the Friendships." Huly passed away soon after the grafting season of 2011. At the funeral service I looked around at all the other camellia folks in attendance that Huly's friendship had impacted and that because of him I had gotten to know.

I thought about that first camellia meeting I attended when I decided that a camellia club is not for me. I thought how different my life would now be if Huly Smith had not taken time to get to know me and become my close friend.

Huly Smith is no longer with us here on earth and nobody can ever take his place. However, we all should try our best to follow in his footsteps of reaching out to folks, getting to know them personally, freely sharing our plants and knowledge with others, and inviting folks to join our camellia clubs.

If every camellia club had a few "Huly Smith's" as members we would see local club and ACS memberships rise dramatically. Thank you Huly – your friend – J. D.

## HULYNISM'S

(Huly Smith had his own unique vocabulary that everyone enjoyed)

- ◆ If you can't run with the big dogs you need to stay on the porch.
- ◆ There are two types of people who enter blooms in a camellia show – the cheaters and the losers.
- ◆ This isn't my first rodeo.
- ◆ Dig it up and throw it away – were not running a plant hospital.
- ◆ Let's hurry up – were judging them not growing them.
- ◆ That (bloom) looks like a "dogs butt."



# Nine Great Variegated Camellias For the Landscape

My plan was to list my favorite ten camellia varieties that are easy to grow outside in the yard, have outstanding blooms, and have nice foliage and bush structure. My list quickly added up to more than ten so I decided to break the list up into variegated and solid varieties. The solid list will have to wait for a future newsletter. Also, only nine would fit on the page so Terry Gilley Var., Dixie Knight Sup., Magic City, Vulcan Var., & others which all deserve to be on this page had to be left off — therefore, I guess there will need to be a Part 2 in the next newsletter for the variegated camellias. I would recommend these nine be in everyone's collection—they will not disappoint. At our upcoming meeting we can compare my list with everyone else's list.



**Tudor Baby Var**

Hulyn originated this one. It is slow growing but well worth the wait.



**Frank Houser Var**

A Reticulata that grows great outside and the bush looks nice. There is a reason it wins the most awards.



**Kiku-Toji**

Probably the most misspelled camellia. It is a fantastic small early bloomer. It wins lots of awards.



**Oscar B. Elmer Var**

Not as common as others but OH MY! It is huge and has incredible variegation.



**Lauren Tudor**

Hulyn originated this one. A bit harder to get growing than others but it is beautiful and gibs-up very well.



**Ville de Nantz**

An old variety that is harder to grow than others and is not as nice a bush but is still a must have.



**Wendy**

Odd that the variegated one is just called Wendy and not Wendy Var. There is a solid one called Wendy Red.



**Tama Glitters**

Everyone needs at least one Tama. There are many to choose from. The white edge tells you it's a Tama.



**Margaret Davis**

Very unique. Looks somewhat like a Betty Sheffield but much easier to grow and the bush looks better too.

September, 2012

# VALDOSTA CAMELLIA AND GARDEN CLUB

## A Message From our President - Mark Crawford

The late summer rains have been good for our camellias and almost assures a great season when the weather turns cooler. Flower buds are big compared to the previous 2 years. Water makes the flowers open well and gives them size. It is time to start gibbing those big buds so you have early flowers for the fall season. To have flowers for our show you need to gib during the first 2 weeks of October. I will have gib available at our meeting.

Our kick-off meeting is at Ocean Pond on September 25<sup>th</sup>. This year our show will be on December 1<sup>st</sup>, slightly earlier than last year and will again be at the First Methodist Church downtown on the square.

I am pleased that we will have 8 members attending the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society annual meeting in Litchfield Beach, SC. This is a regional meeting that includes all the states bordering the Atlantic Ocean. They meet once a year usually at a beach resort in South Carolina in September and have a great time talking about camellias. For more information check out the ACCS website <http://www.atlanticcoastcamelliasociety.org/>

You need to call or email Emily Newbern, 229-245-8086 [enewbern@vol.com](mailto:enewbern@vol.com) for your dinner reservation at Ocean Pond by September 20<sup>th</sup>. The cost is \$14.00. Remember if you have a reservation and do not show up, you are still responsible for the cost.

Our speaker for our September meeting is Clinton Beeland, owner of CJB Industries. He will talk about the Hulyn and Janet Smith memorial garden planned at Christ Episcopal Church. We will also discuss some new ACS promotional programs for club members.

Look forward to seeing everyone after our 5-month recess.

Mark

### Upcoming Fall Camellia Shows

- October 13 - 14  
Georgia National  
Fair - Perry, GA
- November 10 - 11  
Byron Municipal  
Complex  
Byron, GA
- December 1  
1st United  
Methodist Church  
Valdosta, GA

### Next Club Meeting

September 25th

6:30 PM

Ocean Pond  
Clubhouse

INVITE A  
FRIEND!!



# Have Fun Growing Seeds - by J. D. Thomerson

September and October is the typical time of the year that camellia seeds ripen in Valdosta. The seeds grow inside a fleshy pod about the size of a golf ball. Once the pod begins to crack open the seeds are ready to be harvested.

Camellia seeds are very easy to grow and different folks have different methods that all probably work equally well. Huyln Smith taught me the following method and like all of his advice it has served me well over the years.

I gather the seed pods and peel off the outer fleshy part to get to the seed. Sometimes the pods must be allowed to dry out a few days before they can be opened up to get to the seed.

After getting the seed out of the pod I immediately soak them in a bowl of warm water for 24 hours. Any "floaters" that do not sink are thrown

away because they seldom are any good.

I like to crack the hard shell just a bit to try and speed up germination. I either use a sharp knife to knick a small part of the shell (be careful, I have cut my finger several times doing this) or use a small hammer to crack the outer shell just a little (be careful not to smash the entire seed - I have done this many times too.)

I place the seeds inside a quart size ziplock baggie that contains damp spaghnum moss (soak the moss for an hour or so and squeeze out all the water your hands can possibly squeeze out.) I place the baggie with the moss and seeds on top of my hot water heater inside my house. The seeds do not need any light to begin growing.

Most seeds begin to grow roots within three months but some take longer. The root starts growing first and after it is about two inches long I



One of J. D.'s Chance Seedlings  
Unofficially named: Peppermint Surprise

snip off the bottom of the root to encourage it to develop side shoots.

I put the seed back in the same ziplock baggie for another month or so. If the spaghnum moss ever begins to get dry I wet it until it is again slightly moist.

Once I notice that the seeds are growing stems in addition to the roots I plant the seeds in small 4 inch pots with the seed barely planted below the soil mix - I try and have a tiny bit of leaf stem poking out from the dirt.

I use a very loose potting mix of mainly pine bark mulch, sand, potting soil — basically, the same type mix that most folks use for growing camellias in pots.

The plants grow in the 4 inch pots for a year and then I step them up to one gallon pots. I occasional use some liquid fertilizer like Peters to help them grow faster.

It typically takes seedlings anywhere from three years to about five years to bloom although some can take even longer.

Camellia seeds do not grow up to be the same as either parent. That is part of the fun. Waiting to see what that new bloom will look like.

Unfortunately, most of the seedlings will not be as nice as an already named variety but I have found nearly all of them to be pretty. They are like real children — they might not win the Miss America Pageant, but they are ours and we love them and they are beautiful to us.

Then, every so often, you get a seedling that is really special. Oh boy, you get to watch it for several years and if it continues to grow well you can name it and register it for others to grow and enjoy.



Photo of "Georgia Fire" a chance seedling  
originated by Huyln Smith

## RECENT CAMELLIA INTRODUCTIONS

The Valdosta Camellia and Garden Club has been "In the News" a great deal lately in the American Camellia Society and we plan to continue this trend. If you visit the American Camellia Society website and click on the Care & Culture link you will see Instructional Videos created by Mark Crawford and J. D. Thomerson on the topics of "Bark Grafting" and "Disbudding & Gibbing." Also, there are a series of eight video interviews that J. D. recorded with Hulyn just months before Hulyn's death. If you have not watched these videos you should.

Recently, Randolph Maphis and Mark Crawford registered five new camellias developed by Hulyn Smith. Be on the lookout for new varieties named: June Curry, Bryant White, Grandandy (no, I did not misspell this one - it is what all of Hulyn's grandchildren called him), Mary Rhodes, and Dr. Frank Wilson. Each of these new introductions will be appearing in upcoming ACS Journals - Hulyn's contributions are still continuing.

Last year (2011), Jerry and Carol Selph had the pleasure of registering three camellia varieties in honor of Carol's mother and family. The names are Christine Collins, Phillip Taylor, and Phillip Taylor Peppermint. During the 2010 registration season Hulyn registered two camellias named Sherrida Crawford and Kay Thomerson in honor of these two fine ladies. Also that year, the Gordy's registered a camellia named Marie Crawford in memory of Mark's mother.

Visit the ACS Website and look and read the information about new introductions during the past several years and you will see many more camellias that were introduced by folks in our area and folks like the Gordy's that are dear to us all.

## SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER CAMELLIA CHORES

You should start gibbing (using giberellic acid) now for earlier and larger blooms. Mark will bring some "gib" to our September meeting at Ocean Pond. Disbudding also promotes larger blooms. Never leave two flower buds side by side or neither will be excellent blooms. Do not fertilize until after your plants have finished blooming.

October can often be a very dry month. Make sure your plants get a good deep watering as needed - especially newly planted ones. Water during this time of year is critical for good bud expansion for fall and winter blooms. Blooms are made up almost entirely of water so dry plants at this time of year will not produce nice blooms.

Check camellia plant's leaves for spider mites and scale insects. Scale can be seen on the lower surface of leaves as white specs with the naked eye. Mites cannot be seen by the naked eye but the damage they cause can. If you begin to notice that your leaves are turning a dull bronze color you can be sure you have mites. They can be on either side of the leaf surface. When the weather is hot and dry mites can multiply like crazy. Apply UltraFine horticultural oil to kill these pests and perhaps a miticide if you have serious mite problems - make sure you completely cover both sides of all leaves. Often, a second application about 14 days later will be necessary to kill all stages of eggs and adults.

What a wonderful time of year. The weather is beginning to cool slightly and the sasanqua varieties are beginning to bloom. Let's all have a great camellia season this year!