

Atlantic Coast Camellias

Journal of the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society

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Camellia Japonica 'Tiffany'

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From the Cover *‘Tiffany’*

Light Orchid Pink to Deeper Pink at edge. Large to Very Large, loose peony form to anemone form. Vigorous, upright growth. Blooms Midseason. Registered in 1962 by Dr. J. H. Urabec, La Canada, CA.

Tiffany photos taken by J. D. Thomerson

See Related Article on Page 33



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***ACCS Convention
September 16-18, 2021
Litchfield Beach & Golf Resort***

Details and Registration Information will be emailed to All
ACCS Members and Posted on the ACCS Website in the Coming Months

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Randolph Maphis

The camellia blooming season this year was fantastic. We had a very cold February, and that meant that the blooms were really large in March. Generally, in March the last blooms open on camellia plants that are already growing, and most of the energy of the plant is put into new growth. This year all the plants energy was in the flowers. The Tallahassee Camellia Society held a camellia garden tour, and the public was invited to view several local camellia gardens. Lots of visitors toured our gardens. We had several visitors join our Society as a result. One little visitor was especially impressed with Frank Houser Variegated. She just had to have a bloom to take home (see photo at right) Every year our members share blooms with nursing homes, doctor's offices, banks, and anywhere the public can enjoy camellia blooms. We count the number of blooms shared and recognize the member that shares the most blooms. The garden tour and the sharing of camellias let potential society members see large numbers of really pretty camellia blooms.



By the time you are reading this the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society will have held our annual spring planning meeting. The meeting this year was something new. It was a Zoom meeting of the Board of Directors. The board planned the late summer ACCS Convention. It will be held September 16-18, 2021. Everyone should have had their Covid shots by then, and the convention should be a real celebration. I am beginning to like this Zoom thing. I did not have to drive six hours, spend the night, just for an hour meeting, and then drive six hours home.



Randolph Maphis Grafting
in His Raised Beds

Many of our members have been buying and grafting new plants to add to their collections. J. D. Thomerson and I grafted over 300 plants this year. Most are new cultivars from Pat B. Johnson, Bill and Linda Nichols, and various others from Alabama, Georgia, and California. Just when I was out of root stocks and everything was beginning to grow, I received five new John Wang seedlings in the mail. Since I was out of root stock, I had to call Tommy Alden and beg for some

additional Kumugai to graft on. I will bet that these new seedlings will be something special.

The nursery business continues to be absolutely fantastic. They are selling all types of camellias and vegetable plants. Generally, as soon as camellia blooms are gone the sales of camellia plants stops -- not this year. Camellia nurseries are still selling what few plants they have left in their dwindling inventory. Mark Crawford and Tommy Alden report that this has been one of the most successful years ever.

Just like last year, it is hard to find vegetable seed and plants to go into the vegetable garden. Most places are out of stock on vegetable seeds. I am glad I bought my seed last October. The grand kids have planted their own rows of potatoes, and they are about six inches tall now. They are really proud of their garden. They have also planted tomatoes, eggplants, green beans, squash, and cucumbers. The strawberries they planted last fall are in full production now. As soon as they see a strawberry it is eaten. They are looking forward to picking ripe tomatoes, digging potatoes, picking beans, cucumbers, and squash. They will replant the spring vegetables as soon as they harvest the first crop.



Left: Gabriel Maphis shows off this years strawberry crop.

Above: Gabriel and sister Brooke Maphis enjoy the new Maphis golf cart.

Outdoor activities are still in vogue. People are still out walking and riding around in golf carts. There must be six new golf carts in our neighborhood. Marilyn really likes our new golf cart. The bicycle shops have finally gotten in new inventory, and the kids are everywhere riding bicycles. Fishing continues to be a real popular outdoor activity too. Boat sales are through the roof, and you have a line at every boat ramp to launch your boat.

This Covid thing has caused many changes in our outdoor behavior. People are getting outside, working in the yard, planting flowers and vegetables, taking walks, and breathing the fresh air. In fact, many believe that the pandemic has been one of the best things to happen to the camellia societies in years. Attendance at ACS Headquarters has been up since it reopened in October. Local societies have



Photos at top and bottom of this page were scenes from the Tallahassee Camellia Society's Spring Picnic held at the home and garden of Randolph and Marilyn Maphis. Due to threat of stormy weather everyone ate inside one of Randolph's greenhouses.

experienced growth in their membership, even though they have not been having regular monthly meetings. Not all people will stick with the gardening hobby, but many will. I think that camellia societies will benefit in the long run.

The Tallahassee Camellia Society held their annual camellia plant auction in March, and they sold more camellias than ever. The spring picnic-cookout was a real success. People were invited from neighboring camellia societies in Pensacola, Dothan, Valdosta, Quitman, and Byron. People really enjoyed socializing with friends they had not seen in months. The wine and steaks were really nice too. We decided to have a real celebration since we have not lost any members to covid. We are very glad that Dick Hooton and John Davy recovered from their bouts with the virus.

I hope you have been watching the ACS Zoom presentations. Zoom gives east coast members a chance to experience camellia programs from a speaker like Brad King on the west coast. It also, lets west coast members in California, Oregon, and Washington hear and see programs from speakers in Florida, Georgia, and other eastern states. The Zoom presentations are set up by Richard Buggeln and ACS. Richard does a great



job moderating the presentations. The Zoom presentations have had about a hundred participants every week. You can also go to the ACS website and see the full presentations that were recorded and are available for you to view there. Speakers like J. D. Thomerson, Mark Crawford, Randolph Maphis, Carol Selph, and others are there for you to enjoy at your leisure. Richard puts all these presentations on the ACS web site.

I am really looking forward to getting together in September at the ACCS Convention, and I know that you are too. Remember to register and pay your dues as soon as the dates are posted on the ACCS web site. You should also get an E-Mail reminding you to register.



Photo Above: Randolph's Vegetable Garden, Camellia Grafts, and Amaryllis Plants

Photo Below Left: Randolph Maphis Grilling Filet Mignon

Photo Below Right: (left to right) John Swanson, Tommy Alden, Jerry Selph, Nancy and Konrad Hooper, and Steve Lawrence



Retic Fever in South Georgia

“Reticulatas that Grow and Bloom Well Outdoors and Those that are More Challenging”

By J. D. Thomerson

I really enjoy reading all the past camellia articles published in old ACS and ACCS Journals. My wife Kay complains that I have old journals and yearbooks left in nearly every room of the house -- especially in our den and bathroom. In similar fashion to how I watch episodes of “The Any Griffith Show” over and over I read these camellia articles over and over as the years pass. This has especially been true this past year as the Covid-19 virus has kept us “homebound” and away from social gatherings and fun vacation trips. If I ever get bored and it is too cold or dark to be outside working in the yard, I often pick up an old camellia journal and this makes me very content and happy. When Hulyn Smith passed away his family gave me his entire collection of camellia books including every ACS Yearbook and numerous but not all copies of the ACS Journal and ACCS Journals. Those I do not have Richard Buggeln has placed on the ACS and ACCS Websites and I have read them all. Richard also has many other publications and old camellia nursery catalogs on the ACCS Website in addition to the best camellia photo gallery in existence. I have spent countless hours enjoying these resources.



Dr. Clifford Parks



Ray Gentry Var.

A couple of old ACS articles written by my dear friend Hulyn Smith always grabs my attention when I stumble upon them. Hulyn wrote an article in the 1976 ACS Yearbook titled “New Disease in South Georgia (Retic Fever)” A year later in the 1977 ACS Yearbook he had a follow-up article titled “Retic Fever Revisited.” Hulyn loved the reticulata camellias for several reasons. First, they were very large – Hulyn loved the big ones. Also, the reticulatas were rare back in the 70’s and 80’s when Hulyn began growing and

showing them and he prided himself on having the newest and greatest new camellias. Hulyn loved going to a camellia show with about 25 big huge retics in large Tupperware cake containers. Crowds of camellia growers would gather around and “Ooh and Ahh” when he took the lids off the cake containers and placed the incredible blooms in champagne glasses he brought to show them off. All the time I knew Hulyn he never entered a single bloom in the actual show – he preferred to set up a display table showing off mainly new fancy reticulatas. Believe me, his display tables would get as much or more attention than the winners on the head tables.



Frank Houser Var.

Even though Hulyn planted the retics outdoors in the 70’s and early 80’s with success several very cold winters in the mid-eighties (down to the mid-teens) did cause him to give way and build a 24 ft x 96 ft greenhouse in 1985. He quickly filled this house up and built another 24 ft x 96 ft greenhouse in 1987. Reticulatas comprised probably 70% of the plants in these greenhouses but he did grow many retics outdoors as well.

Hulyn passed away in 2010 and therefore there has not been a third article written about “Retic Fever in Valdosta, GA.” Mark Crawford grows and offers a few reticulata varieties for sale in his nursery and has several other retics growing in his private collection in his yard – but, as a camellia nurseryman he specializes in the japonicas. Randolph Maphis knows much more about reticulatas than I will ever know but he has them growing in greenhouses and he lives in Florida not South Georgia.. Even though I am not nearly qualified to follow in Hulyn’s footsteps I do live in Valdosta, GA which is as “South Georgia” as you can get and I do grow hundreds of reticulatas outdoors in

the ground. Even though I have killed more than I would care to admit, most of them are still alive. So, I am going to honor Hulyn Smith by doing my best to write article #3 on “Retic Fever in South Georgia.” However, my sub-title will be **“Reticulatas that Grow and Bloom Well Outdoors and Those that are More Challenging.”**

Well, all the above was a long (but, I hope interesting) introduction for the actual topic I want to discuss. The unfortunate fact is many reticulatas just do not want to grow well in the southeast –



Fannie Louise Maphis Var.



Hall's Pride Var.

dieback is their enemy and the hot/humid weather in the southeast makes conditions perfect for dieback. Show growers and flower lovers adore the huge ruffled blooms on reticulata plants but the difficulty growing them and keeping them healthy or even just alive can be a huge challenge. More than just a challenge, growing retics can be discouraging. Even great camellia growers like CM Gordy and Miss Lillian of Ocala, FL pretty much gave up on them even though they had many large struggling plants on their property. They did graft many reticulata's for Hulyn Smith when

Hulyn was getting older but the Gordy's specialized in Japonicas. Gordy often complained about how the retics foliage and growth habits looked so unhealthy, leggy, and yes, even ugly. Yes, they did produce some incredible blooms but many retic bushes looked so bad in the outdoor garden.

Nursery grower Jerry Conrad from Plymouth, FL outside of Orlando who owned and operated Erinon Nursery had little good to say about the retics and did not grow and sell them because few retics can be successfully rooted and grown out into two and three gallon pots for sale. Mark Crawford of Loch Laurel Nursery like Jerry Conrad typically only tries to root a select few reticulata varieties that have proven to root and grow well from cuttings.

Problems and Extra Work Associated with Growing Reticulatas

- Most retics need to be grafted to survive long term – most just either will not root at all or grow very poorly on their own roots and eventually die. Grafted plants are typically more expensive to purchase than own root plants.
- Dieback loves the retics. Most retics must be sprayed several times a year with a fungicide or they will get eat-up with dieback that can eventually lead to death.
- Retics naturally grow tall and lanky and have thick leathery leaves spaced further apart than



Dr. Dan Nathan Supreme

japonicas or sasanquas. They are just not as tidy and nice-looking foliated plants as japonicas and sasanquas. Healthy reticulata plants that have grown too tall can be pruned severely (years ago this was thought not to be the case). I have witnessed Randolph Maphis and Howard Rhodes prune retics back to bare large trunks with no leaves, and the plants flush back out — just do this hard pruning in early Spring.

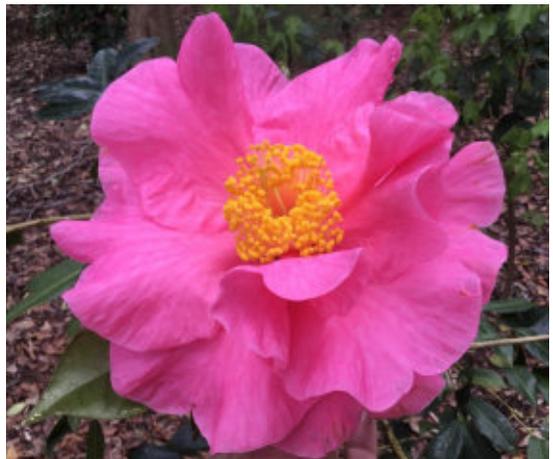


Royalty Var.

- Many reticulata varieties will survive cold temperatures down to 20 degrees and below but when the temps get to the low twenties the flower buds (even the ones not opened) on many retic bushes will gradually turn brown and fall off. The actual plant and leaves will be fine but if your locale typically gets winter lows in the teens then I recommend growing the reticulatas inside a greenhouse.
- Retic seeds typically sprout and grow great (actually faster than japonicas) for a year or two and then just suddenly die. Upon close inspection they die of either dieback cankers or by having just very few feeder roots even if the taproot was pinched to encourage feeder roots. Successful hybridizers like Frank Pursel, Walter Homeyer, Hulyn Smith and others learned to take a scion from the young reticulata seedling and graft it onto a vigorous roostock to speed up the time from seed to bloom, and also prevent the seedling from dying.
- Reticulata varieties need more sun than japonicas. I believe many of them would do fine in full sun if watered adequately. Reticulatas struggle in too much shade and get to be very leggy, ugly-looking bushes, and eventually die. Reticulatas growing in the shade also set very few bloom buds.

Benefits of Growing Reticulatas

- The number one benefit of growing reticulatas is their incredible bloom. The typical retic bloom is very large with fluted and wavy petals and are stunning.
- Another advantage of growing reticulatas is they bloom late in the season when most japonicas have



Linda Griffin

about finished blooming thus extending the camellia bloom season. And with their incredible size and beauty the camellia season ends with a big bang.

- The challenge of successfully growing these beauties are very rewarding and gratifying giving the grower a great sense of accomplishment.

Considering ones desire and the benefits of growing the reticulata varieties but also the problems and extra work required to grow them, retic varieties that grow well outside in the southeast is something quite special. With the help of Randolph Maphis, Mark Crawford, and other very knowledgeable camellia growers I have categorized reticulata varieties into three categories from easiest to grow to hardest to grow. Most of the varieties on the easiest to grow retic list are retic hybrids that have at least ½ japonica or sasanqua parentage. Please note: I am only listing reticulata varieties that I am currently growing or have experience growing outside in Valdosta, GA.

Level 1 — Easiest to Grow Reticulatas

Ok, I am finally getting to the real focus of this article. What are some good, tough, tried and true, retics that grow and bloom well outside. Those listed below in Level 1 are reticulatas I consider the easiest to grow.

First by a mile for great growing outdoor reticulata goes to **Frank Houser**. I have heard many camellia growers tell novices that the first reticulata variety they should purchase is Frank Houser and the second is Frank Houser Var. Frank Houser is a cross of the reticulata Budda and Steve Blount (a japonica.) It can be successfully rooted and grown on its own roots and has fairly nice foliage and is not as leggy growing as most reticulatas. It is not immune to dieback but is much more so than most all other retics. Other good growing reticulata varieties I consider the easiest to grow include:

Francie L.	Queen B	Holy Pure & Fine Pure
Valentine Day	Valley Knudsen	Pearl Terry
Harold L. Paige	Elizabeth B. Hunt	Pleasant Memories
Miss Tulare	Ali Hunt	Larry Piet
Ruta Hagmann	Massee Lane	Pete Galli
Hulyn's Meadowbrook	Dora Lee	Sara Oliver
Adrienne Boueres	Graem Yates	Mary Elizabeth Dowden
Hulyn Smith	Lasca Beauty	Beulah Hennly
Royalty	Terrell Weaver	Nita McRae
Dr. Clifford Parks	Fannie Louse Maphis	

Level 2 — Beautiful Retics that are a Bit More Challenging

Ok, the ones listed below I do not consider easy to grow but not nearly as hard as the Level 3 ones shown later. You definitely better spray them for dieback but they are gorgeous and I definitely would want to try and grow them. Watch for and prune out dieback several inches below dead stems and cankers. These varieties have all done well for me outside and for several other growers I know.

Lady Pamela	Roscoe Dean	Mary O'Donnell
Myra Price	TitleTown USA	Patricia Haskee
Elaine	Ray Gentry	Sir Robert Muldoon
Jim Smelley	Linda Griffin	Susie O'Neill
Brooke Maphis	Marilyn Maphis	Kay Thomerson
Arcadia	Tango	Big Apple
Jack Mandarich	Dobro	Big Dipper
Lady Ruth Ritter	Bill Goertz	Phyllis Hunt
Lee Roy Smith	Linda Carol	Curtain Call

Level 3 — Very Challenging

I consider the ones listed below the hardest reticulata varieties that I grow. Of course, if you can keep them alive and get a bloom they are some of the most amazing ones that you will ever see. My suggestion for these, spray fungicide at least four times a year and say prayers at least once a week. You also better plan on grafting a new one every two or three years because chances are good that many will die.

SP Dunn	Jean Pursel	Early Girly
Walter Homeyer	Mandy Smith	Hall's Pride
Pat Pinkerton	Renee Land	Dr. Dan Nathan Sup.
Raspberry Glow	Mackenzie Green	Grandandy
Emma Gaeta	Tony Pinheiro	Marion Edwards
Barbara Goff	John Newsome	Phillip Mandarich
Lilette Witman	Richard Mims	Phil Piet
Janet	Beth Dean	Jim Pinkerton
Miles Beach	John and Tony Hunt	Shanghai Lady
Gladys Walker	Pharoah	Crimson Robe

I still grow many retics outside that I would put in the Level 3 Very Challenging category. The amazing blooms are just so tempting and the challenge of showing off these prized beauties keeps many of us growing and grafting the harder to grow retics. Also, without trying we are not sure if some retic varieties will do well outside or not – there is just not as much history with many of them. But, for growers not able or willing to devote considerable work and those that hate to see weak, sick, or dead plants, the Level 1 list of easy to grow retics should be very valuable.

I once asked Hulyn to name some easy to grow reticulatas and he paused for a moment and said “There Aren't Any.” Later, I did hear him many times mention Frank Houser and several others I listed as “Level 1: Easiest to Grow Reticulatas.” In a few years and after we have had a really cold winter I will write an update assessment of my outdoor reticulatas but until then “Yes Hulyn, Retic Fever is still Alive in South Georgia!”

Please Enjoy the Reticulata Photo Gallery Shown on the Following Pages — The Photos were taken by Randolph Maphis

Reticulata Picture Gallery



Elaine



Pearl Terry



Terrell Weaver Var



Jim Smelley



Renee Land



Lady Ruth Ritter



Bill Goertz Var



Brooke Maphis



Lady Pamela



Walter Homeyer



Patricia Haskee



Raspberry Glow

SALLY SIMON – GRACEFUL PILLAR OF THE VIRGINIA CAMELLIA SOCIETY

by Fred McKenna

It has been mentioned in many gatherings of camellia lovers along the Atlantic Coast that Sally Simon was the engine that carried the Virginia Camellia Society for almost three decades. Throughout the region she was revered for her grace and hospitality. She was always willing to lend a hand and to give advice; not just on growing and showing camellias but also on how to manage a healthy camellia club. Her talents and dedication were just about irreplaceable and will be sorely missed.

Sally's association with camellias started in 1980, when she and her husband, Captain Douglas M. Simon, USN (Ret), moved into their house in Norfolk, Virginia. This house had a number of "strange and unusual plants blooming out back in the wintertime." As the story goes, it was snowing when they moved into the house and the flowers blooming out back sparked their curiosity. By the 1990's, Sally had already worked countless hours supporting the Virginia Camellia Society in her various roles as Secretary/Treasurer over a number of years. She was also famous for graciously offering the hospitality of her warm and inviting house numerous occasions hosting visiting show judges and frequent VCS board meetings.

Her charm and grace drew many of the current members into the Virginia Camellia Society. Sally always possessed a tremendous amount of energy; she was also Co-founder of the Fred Heutte Center just down the street from her house in downtown Norfolk. This organization was dedicated to the beautification of South Hampton Roads, and preservation of the environment. Prominent on the grounds around the Fred Heutte Center is a corner where numerous camellias are planted, and it was often here during fall and spring flower shows that Sally worked her magic introducing new members to camellias. For a number of years, Sally Simon served as the President and on the Board of Directors of this famous Norfolk landmark.

Sally Simon was at her best working behind the scenes ensuring the vital machinery and social fabric of the Virginia Camellia Society kept humming along. Of course, she was a



Sally Simon at a camellia show holding a "Miss Sally" bloom



Camellia Reticulata “Miss Sally” Registered in 2004 by Douglas M. Simon, Norfolk, VA.
Very Large, Red with Fluted Petals, Semidouble to Peony Form

great support to her husband Doug, as he was the VCS show chair for many, many years. She freely offered mentorship to all new members giving them a leg up on becoming successful growers. Sally remembered the coaching she and Doug received from Tubby Habel at their first national American Camellia Society show, and she endeavored to “pass it on” to numerous current camellia showers both in Virginia and North Carolina.

Sadly, Sally Simon passed away August 6, 2020, during the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many camellia fans have her to thank for their love and interest for camellias and she will be sorely missed by all who knew her. Sally’s memory will live on through the beautiful ‘Miss Sally’ bloom introduced in 2004 by her husband in her honor. This *C. reticulata* is a very large red flower with fluted petals gracing more and more gardens in the region. Thanks Sally Simon for all you have done for us.

CAMELLIAS: LESSONS LEARNED BY A BEGINNER

by Mary Burch

If I had to rank myself, I would say I am no longer an absolute beginner when it comes to camellias. I am probably at the Intermediate Beginner stage and if I had any camellia knowledge to impart to other beginners, it would fall into the category of 'what not to do.' A few stories and lessons learned from my own camellia journey follow.

1. Planting and Placement

In the beginning, I planted camellias where I wanted them to be, not where they wanted to be. We had two mature oak trees growing very close together and my initial thought was, "That 2-ft. space right between those two trees and their massive root systems that suck up

all the soil nutrients and water within a mile would be just a dandy place for a camellia. It would look really nice there." And so it was, that *Charlie Bettes*, a camellia named for

someone from Jacksonville, Florida (my old stomping grounds), was the sacrificial victim of this bad idea. *Charlie Bettes* tried to tell me every way he could that planting camellias close to oak trees was not exactly smart. The camellia didn't grow at all. As a matter of fact, it may have gotten smaller. In years, *Charlie Bettes* only produced two very small, but pretty, white miniature blooms. Imagine my surprise when I learned that the blooms of *Charlie Bettes* are officially in the large to extra-large category. This year, *Charlie* got a new home. The plant was moved to an ideal location. It is putting on new growth, growing, and there are some very large buds for the first time.



Camellia Japonica
Dr. Mary Burch



Beautiful camellias such as this '*Lilly Marie Nichols*' in the yard of Mary Burch are the result of proper care

Lesson learned: Plant camellias correctly—not too deep, don’t bury their heads but don’t leave their whole root systems exposed, and put them where they are the most likely to grow.



Reticulata: Dr. Jon Bailey lovingly watered and pruned by Jon Bailey

2. The Wonders of Water

Camellias can be like potato chips; just when you decide to only have a few, if you have the space, one day you are likely to look outside and notice that 200 varieties have appeared in your yard. Somehow, that happened to me. As we began to get more and more camellias, it was certainly harder to keep them watered with a hose by hand. [And by this I mean it was getting harder for my husband, Jon Bailey, to keep them watered by hand]. We’d been told that using sprinklers that rain on the tops of the camellias wasn’t the best idea. Apparently other beginners face this watering dilemma and their solution is simply not to water. In camellia shows, there are classes called Protected and Unprotected. I once said that for some beginning growers, classes need to be added to the shows that are called Watered and Unwatered.

Lesson learned: I can’t take any credit for this. Jon had the good sense to get a bid on a watering system. Surprisingly, the cost was about 1/10th of my original guess. We now have a drip system that is on a timer and maintaining and caring for a large number of camellias is substantially easier. And with adequate watering, the plants look much better.

3. The Power of Pruning

A few years after moving to our home, we called a nursery to come and provide us with a landscaping plan. At the time, I didn’t know a camellia from a turnip. The landscaping team came and planted all kinds of plants to give us “texture.” Near a fence in our backyard, they placed, fairly close together, three camellias. They were all *Mathotiana*. When the nursery owner came to inspect the job, he had a fit because the camellias his staff planted were all the same. He told us to come to the nursery and look at the variety in these wonderful plants. We went to see the camellias. They were in bloom, and I had a vision. I would plant camellia bushes the entire length of our driveway to serve as a blooming privacy screen. The bushes would be tall, and so thick you couldn’t see through them. They would reach out their branches from one to the other as though they were touching the fingertips of the plant next to them. And, of course, my impenetrable wall of bushes would go all the way to the ground.

The plan was working just fine until somehow, Randolph Maphis or Howard Rhodes (or both) got ahold of Jon, told him about the error of our ways and with missionary zeal, converted him to a pruner. One morning, I got up, walked outside, and started screaming like a banshee. My privacy hedge camellias were still there, but in a true “throw-a-cat-through-it” fashion, in the early morning hours, they had been given massive, radical haircuts. They looked like a line of Poodles getting ready to go into the ring at the Westminster Dog Show.

Lesson learned: I finally realized you have to pick your poison. You can have a great privacy hedge made of camellias, or you can have good show camellias. By pruning so the bottom branches are about 2-ft. from the ground, we don’t see diseases like white cottony scale as much. Air and light can get into the center of the plant, so the plant looks better. Spraying is easier when the plant isn’t as dense as a concrete wall. And, another clear benefit is larger, healthier blooms.

For those readers who are advanced growers and hybridizers, the lessons above are too simple and obvious to help you. However, if you are often asked to give advice, think about the kinds of very basic help some beginners might need in order to be successful once they’ve fallen in love with camellias.



Members of the Virginia Camellia Society Busy Potting Air Layers During an August Hands-On Workshop

Name That Camellia (answers on page 34)



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



5. _____



6. _____

THE BIRTH OF A CAMELLIA GARDEN

Article and Photographs by Sam M. Wellborn

In late 2018, Bruce Jones, my son in law and very talented real estate developer, invited me to create a new camellia garden at OLD TOWN, a fabulous real estate development in north Columbus. Bruce felt that a camellia garden would be an attractive addition to the many amenities at OLD TOWN for the several hundred residents to enjoy. I jumped at the opportunity because camellias are one of the biggest passions in my life. I was very grateful for the invitation and accepted the challenge with great enthusiasm.

One of the reasons I was so excited about this is the spot Bruce wanted to build the garden. This area of OLD TOWN is an incredibly large and beautiful hillside with great filtered light provided by huge trees, especially several species of oak as well as a few pine trees, among other trees. Camellias prosper best under filtered light as opposed to full sun, so the setting for the garden was spectacular.

With this great setting to work with, which includes waterfalls, fast moving streams, incredible rock work, and several attractive ponds, I set out to find our first camellias to use in the first phase of planting. Being a camellia “nut”, I am familiar with a couple of great sources for camellias in Georgia, like County Line Nursery in Byron and Loch Laurel Nursery in Valdosta. Both nurseries have excellent choices of the best camellias available in our state. I shopped these places, and a few more, and came up with about 200 cultivars which would constitute our first phase of planting.

As time went by, I began thinking about the Phase 2 installation. During 2019, I branched further away from Georgia for sources and found many new varieties in such places as Tallahassee, Baton Rouge, and a nursery in California. Before I knew it, I had accumulated another 250 varieties. These were planted in late 2019 and constituted



Beautiful Lanscapes of Old Town Real Estate Development in Columbus, GA



the Phase 2 installation which reached further down the hillside. The total plants now approached 450 camellias.

Throughout 2020, the accumulation process became sort of a treasure hunt for me because, even though I was still shopping at County Line and Loch Laurel, I had already found the most common varieties — now I had to really work to find varieties not easily obtainable.

One way I did this was to employ perhaps the most successful camellia grafter, Randolph Maphis, from Tallahassee, FL. I had purchased from Randolph before and already knew that he produced camellias, through his grafting methods, that no one else had. With

Randolph's help, and the help of Tommy Alden and Mark Crawford, we have assembled an extraordinary collection of camellias in three short years.

Since our garden by now was becoming well known, several people have donated plants to us. Such was the case of a camellia expert from Atlanta, Jim Pruckler. Jim gave us more than 100 of his plants for our garden. These 100, plus about 200 more that I had accumulated throughout 2020 constituted the Phase 3 installation which was completed in February, 2021. Our total number of camellias is now more than 700! The collection for the Phase 4 planting already exceeds 150 and the number is climbing. My goal is to reach 1,000 varieties by this time next year and I see no reason why we can't take that number much higher in the years to come.

I wanted to mention that most great camellia gardens contain great "companion" plants. In addition to the already existing native trees, we have been diligent in adding such plants as red buds, white dogwoods, pink dogwoods, native azaleas, regular azaleas and maples. Hundreds of daffodils have been planted and they have been beautiful this Spring. Mulched trails throughout the garden along with several benches make for a leisurely stroll, from top to bottom.

The camellia garden at OLD TOWN is but three years old. Many of our plants are small, but in just a few short years they will grow into an incredible spectacle for all to see and enjoy -- it is already beautiful. We have been added to the American Camellia Society's National Camellia Trail as well as the Georgia Camellia Trail. This garden adds greatly to the quality of life for OLD TOWN residents, the citizens of Columbus and anyone who sees it. It has been a wonderful joy for me to create this garden and I will forever be grateful to Bruce for asking me to do it.



Evening Glow Pearl

Fertilizer Choices for Camellias and Companion Plants

by Mark Crawford

When it comes to fertilizer for camellias there are several types to choose from. The various types can be grouped into organic and inorganic fertilizers that can be applied in dry granular form or as a liquid. **Inorganic Granular Fertilizers** are available as fast acting types like typical garden fertilizers such as 10-10-10. They are fast acting being activated by rainfall or irrigation and can be applied more than once a year. The numbers stand for in order the percent nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Less expensive versions usually do not contain any micronutrients which can be very beneficial to your camellias. It is important to check the labels so you get the best fertilizer for your needs. The other type of fertilizer in the inorganic group are the controlled release products that provide nutrients over an extended period of time. These products referred to as CRFs are designed to release nutrients from 3 to 12 months. There are actually two types of CRFs – those that are polymer coated products primarily used by nurseries that release nutrients by temperature not by water and turfgrass fertilizers that contain primarily controlled release nitrogen based on soil microbial activity. A good example are products with an analysis of 16-4-8 that release nitrogen from 3 to 4 months and are best used on young camellias in the first 3 to five years to support good growth throughout the growing season.

Organic Fertilizers are available in several types and are preferred by many gardeners because they feed the soil which in-turn feeds the plant. Improving soil health has become a major research topic for mainstream agriculture since past use of inorganic fertilizers and herbicides has degraded overall soil health. This concept of improving soil health can be achieved in gardens by using organic amendments like compost and mulch. Additional nutrients can be provided by the following products: cottonseed meal, processed sewage sludge, bone meal, blood meal, aged manure, alfalfa, and worm castings. Products like HollyTone® (4-6-4) contain mixtures of these products in a balanced ratio of nutrients.

Cottonseed Meal (7-3-2) has been used by camellia growers for decades with great success. Several years ago when I visited Nuccio's Nursery in California I was surprised that they only use cottonseed meal to fertilize their camellias. It is important to be sure the cottonseed meal you use is free of salt as most mills that process it add salt since it is primarily used as animal feed. If you have a place that produces cottonseed meal you usually can order it free of salt for your camellias.

Processed Sewage Sludge like Milorganite (6-4-0) is a good source of slow release nitrogen that is dependent on soil microbial activity to make the nitrogen available for uptake by the roots. When applied in the spring and late in the growing season it will green up your plants if they get yellow during the winter and summer.

Alfalfa (3-1-2) is actually a preferred fertilizer for serious rose growers. I have not seen any reference to it being used by camellia growers, however, if it is good for roses it should be equally good for camellias. Alfalfa meal fertilizers have multiple benefits in the garden. The NPK value is usually balanced, somewhere around 3-1-2. But it doesn't stop there. There's many trace elements in this meal which make plants thrive. Vitamins such as A, B, and E are present in the meal, as well as minerals like magnesium and iron. It contains sixteen amino acids which play roles in healthy plant growth. Best of all, it has naturally-occurring triacontanol. This naturally-occurring growth hormone stimulates healthy root and stem development in young plants. In essence, this wonderful meal acts like a multivitamin for your plants. It helps kickstart growth through the quick release of nutrients into the soil. Also, it decomposes fast, helping improve soil tilth and water retention. I have been using alfalfa pellets mixed with cotton seed meal with excellent results in spring green-up.

Blood Meal (12-0-0) has been used by camellia growers to increase soil acidity and intensify and darken flower color. It is a fast acting source of nitrogen so be careful not to burn your plants. It can also be beneficial to repel deer from your camellias.

Bone Meal (3-15-0) provides a readily available source of phosphorous essential for good flower development.

Worm Castings provide a concentrated source of nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, calcium and magnesium. Nutrients are immediately available for root uptake without risk of burn and retains moisture that improves plant survivability at transplant. Best of all it is odor free. For more information go to <https://www.tastefulgarden.com/Worm-Castings-d114.htm>

Liquid Fertilizers are generally used to correct nutrient deficiency problems quickly. Products like 'Miracle Gro' and Peters 20-20-20 are dissolved in water for quick results. Fish Emulsion products are an organic option for a liquid fertilizer. You can also make an organic fertilizer "tea" from worm castings that can be applied to foliage and the soil.

Specific Use Recommendations for Cottonseed Meal

When using cottonseed meal on camellias and other shrubs, work 1 cup cottonseed meal into the soil around small shrubs and 2 to 4 cups around larger specimens or, if transplanting, dig hole twice as wide as needed and backfill with a combination of soil and cottonseed meal. Water thoroughly and continue to use cottonseed meal fertilizer after shrubs are established. Cottonseed meal can also be used to mulch around the shrub in the amount of 1 pound per 100 square feet to conserve moisture, control weeds, hasten decomposition, and prevent nitrogen deficiency.

Read more at Gardening Know How — Cottonseed Meal Gardening: Is Cottonseed Healthy For Plants <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/soil-fertilizers/cottonseed-meal-fertilizer.htm>

Meet Camellia Grower David Elliot

By David Elliott

Edited by J. D. Thomerson

Editor's Note: Having followed David on Facebook and seeing photos of his amazing camellia collection I asked David to write his camellia story for ACCS.

I was born in Myrtle Beach, SC on June 19, 1967 on my father's 22nd birthday. When I was a child my father worked on a dredge and when the boat moved to a new location, we moved to a new location. I spent time as a child in Jacksonville, FL, Southport, NC (slightly outside Wilmington), as well as parts of Georgia and New Jersey. I don't know exactly how or what happened but one day the dredge sank, and my dad thought it was time to find a more secure job on dry land! So, we packed up and moved back to Myrtle Beach, SC where I attended 3rd grade through the first half of the freshman year of high school. During Christmas break of 1982 (I was 15 at the time) we moved to Murrells Inlet, S.C. on land my grandmother owned. This land was given to her by her parents (the Wesley's) who were the first family to live on Wesley Road in Murrells Inlet. Prior to moving to Murrells Inlet, my sister and I only visited my grandmother on the weekends. Soon after this move, with my parent's permission, I moved in with my Grandma June. After graduating high school, I lived on my own and entered the wonderful world of WORK!

On my 16th birthday, I got my first job working at a local amusement park. At age 17, I went to work for my neighbors who owned their own roofing company. It was then I bought my first brand new car -- a 1986 Mercury Cougar! I can still see that car in my mind and wish I was still the owner. If you've never experienced one of South Carolina's hot humid summers let me tell you, it's brutal. Roofing work when it's 99F with equally high humidity is not fun. My boss/neighbors were real big fishing people. If they got up one morning and decided they wanted to go fishing rather than work, well that's what they did. That meant I wasn't getting paid and I had a new car to pay for. It didn't take long to realize that I had to move on to something more stable, so I entered the restaurant business. Murrells Inlet being located on the waterfront is known as the seafood capital of South Carolina. So, during the summer of 1986 I began working as a cook at Oliver's Lodge and continued working there until the age of 22.



David Elliott in his Camellia Garden
(the plant is an 'Amorphophallus Konjac')

From there I ended up working seven years as a line cook at the "River Club" golfing club house. After 7 years there I needed a change and moved to a local golf course that had just opened called "Caledonia Gold and Fish Club." I started there as a kitchen manager and now almost 26 years later I am still there doing what I do, cooking for the members as well as our local community.

My Grandma June loved her houseplants – especially African violets. She grew some the size of dinner plates. There wasn't a room in her house that didn't have plants in it including the bathroom! Grandma June always encouraged all seven of her grandkids

to work with plants and animals. I can still recall her vegetable garden at least a half-acre in size planted with anything and everything one can imagine. Let me tell you, I do not miss sitting on that back porch with that bushel of snap peas working until your fingers were raw! Like grandma those days are now gone, and I do miss her and her plants, but I still remember the things she taught me about growing plants.

Over the years I have grown many types of plants. From the mid 80's until 1992 I was really into daylilies! So much so that I had nearly 1500 plants at one point. During the summer of 1995 my daylily garden was on the Region 15 tour. At one time I had a massive brugmansia (aka Angels trumpets) collection consisting of over 100 varieties. Although they were beautiful flowers, after a couple of years of growing them they just

no longer held my interest. Then one day I saw a cactus plant at a local big box store that had some amazing flowers. That got me interested in growing cacti. I bought that plant and from there I ended up having several hundred before it was all said and done. Though the cacti didn't need a greenhouse it was at the time that I decided I wanted one so I started looking online for a unit that I liked and could afford! I ended up getting a commercial grade unit (18W x 10H x 68L) and that's when the plant monster in me really emerged! Someone had turned me on to growing hoyo plants. Many of you might be familiar with one of the most common one's called a hindu rope. I was so into growing hoyas that I got an import permit to have



David's Grandma June



"Buddy" — David's Garden Helper



Mathotiana Supreme Var (left) and Royal Velvet Var (Right) Editor's Note: David Elliott has a large collection of the best variegated camellias you will see anywhere.

them shipped in from various locations such as Australia, Thailand, Sweden, Philippines and a few other exotic locations. A single hindu rope created an obsession for me that grew into a collection of almost 1000 varieties of hoyas! They were my passion for almost 15 years. By the end of that 15th year I found that I was slowly but surely starting to lose interest in them and in the back of my mind I was entertaining the thought of just selling the collection off and moving on to something new. Well the winter of that year which was exceptionally cold for a place that basically has no winter helped me finally make that decision. We had almost 3 months of temps in the teens and twenties when a normal winter for us was 30's and 40's. The gas company that I was using to get propane to heat my greenhouse hiked the price from \$3.15 per gallon to \$5.25 with no warning. Well, that sealed the deal for me. The hoyas were sold off during 2009 and 2010 to various other collectors.

After selling off the hoyas I really didn't have any specific type of plant interest for a few years. As the greenhouse sat empty, I focused on maintaining the yard and the few shrubs I had planted in it which at the time consisted of dogwood, hydrangeas, Japanese magnolias, azaleas, Japanese Snowball, and a few Daphne shrubs. Oh, and there were also 3 camellias: Bob Hope, Betty Sheffield Supreme, and Nuccio's Pearl. It wasn't until January, 2013 that I took a real interest in camellias. One Sunday morning while at work we suddenly had an issue with the plumbing and had to close around 10:30 in the morning. I lost a day's pay but what happened on the way home has made me rich in so many other ways. I passed a venue that was hosting a camellia flower show. I knew that there had been a camellia show for several years in this area, but I had never been to one. I continued to drive for about a half mile and something in my brain said, "David, you have nothing else to do for the rest of the day so turn around and go back to that camellia show." Big mistake! Once I entered that room and saw all those beautiful camellias on display, I could feel the monster being born! I knew there were lots of varieties of camellias, but I had no idea just how many. When I saw flowers like "Frank Houser", "Grand Marshal Var", "Elaine's Betty", and

"Bev Piets Smile" I knew immediately I had to find out how and where to get them! That's where my camellia mentor Mack McKinnon comes into the picture. I asked someone "who do I need to speak to about joining this club and getting some of these plants." Mack was the man people recommended I see. I didn't know then that Mack and I live only a mile from one another.

In March, 2012 I lost my mother and my grandmother just 11 days apart. My mother was only 62 years old and grandma was 91. So, while at this camellia show, the thought of having lost the two leading ladies in my life was still fresh in my mind. That's when I decided I needed to find something to do to keep my mind off their loss and try and help keep my sanity. It was that moment I decided I wanted to make a camellia garden in their memory under the pines and live oaks in the back corner of my property. While talking with Mack, he begins telling me about how he grafts his own camellias. One week later I am at his house getting a hands-on demo on how to graft. Mack helped me with my first three grafts and from that point on I was hooked.

While at that camellia show I also had the chance to meet some other camellia folks who had been growing them and in the show circuit for many, many years. Bonnie & Geary Serpas, Buck & Tyler Mizzell, Fred and Sandra Jones, and Annabelle Fetterman. All these individuals were willing to freely share their knowledge and growing experiences with me.

So, here I am not quite two weeks into my newly found interest in growing camellias and I have a yard full of under stock and bags of scions for grafting! Not only did I meet many nice folks at that show that were willing to teach me what they know but they also like to share scions for grafting! I think during my first two years of being involved with the Grand Strand Camellia Society in which I am an active member, I grafted almost 300 camellias. Grafting is my preferred method of camellia propagation though I have also rooted them from cuttings as well as doing air layers. Cuttings, in my opinion, take entirely too long to see the plant bloom and I am not getting any younger! With a graft I can typically get flowers in as little as a year. Air layering would be my second preferred method of propagation. It would be my first if I had access to every camellia that I wanted to air layer. I don't, so I have chosen to graft instead. I have found that many growers like to share scions for grafting but aren't so open to you coming into their garden and



David with His Mother — Barbara

traumatizing their plants with the size air layers that I like to do! I don't do sticks, I like branches!

The area that is now my camellia garden was once just woods. After deciding to create the garden in memory of my mother and Grandmother I began laying out how I wanted it to look. This meant some trees had to come out, irrigation had to go in and plants had to be purchased to go along with the ones that I was already grafting. I got a shovel and an axe and my father and I went to work clearing the area and laying out beds around trees. We made decisions about what types of plants in addition to camellias would be used. It was a long labor-intensive process to get it all completed but what I have out there today has made every bit of that hard work worth it. I just wish that my mother and grandmother could physically be here to see the garden. In my heart, I know that they have both visited and been by my side in my garden! Aside from camellias there are many other types of plants in the garden. There are hydrangeas planted at the base of all the overhead sprinklers to keep me from walking into them! There's a number of evergreen and deciduous azaleas along with Japanese magnolias, dogwoods, calycanthus (aka sweet shrub), amaryllis (my favorite bulb flower), hardy cyclamen, and an assortment of other plants.



Reticulata Hybrid: Frank Houser Var.

My first three years of work with camellias was focused on getting my garden established and getting plants large enough to begin entering blooms in the camellia shows. I love going to the shows and seeing thousands of amazing flowers on display. I admit that I am not an overly competitive person but getting one of your own camellia flowers onto the head table at a show does give you a sense of accomplishment. I enter anywhere from 6-10 shows a year and though I can't attend all of them in person, I pick and prep my blooms and Mack will bring them to a show for me. I also enjoy taking photos of the blooms at these shows to share with my friends on Facebook. The shows also get me into a bit of trouble because I always find new and interesting varieties that I want to graft and plant in my own garden. It still amazes me almost eight years later that you can take an under stock and graft a cutting onto it and have a new camellia in your garden that you might never have had access to from a local nursery.

My garden is still a work in progress as new varieties are added every year. In the past all my grafting has been done on potted understock. The past three years I am focusing on using established plants to graft on that are already in the garden. When I first started collecting back in 2013 I bought anything that was a camellia to get the garden started. I found over the past few years that a number of those are mislabeled or for one reason or another just no longer desirable to me – so, they have become



To conserve space David high grafts more than one variety on his camellias.

grafting stock. Though I have three acres of land to play with I am trying not to spread the garden out so far and wide that it becomes like work for me. From experience, I have found that if you have too many of a particular plant, like the 1000 hoyas I had, it can very quickly become a second job taking care of them. So, my focus now is instead of grafting new plants in pots and then planting them and widening the garden, I am grafting multiple varieties onto a single under stock, which takes no additional room. I have several plants onto which have two, three, and even four varieties grafted.

I have had many people visit my garden and ask which variety is my favorite. I currently grow over 500 of them so it's not

an easy question to answer. I honestly can't say that I have an absolute favorite because I like them all. But, if I had to choose a top ten in no particular order, these would be my favorites: Frank Houser Var, Grand Marshall Var, Dr. Cy. Echols, Elaine's Betty, Irrational Exuberance, Dawns Early Light, Ville De Nantes, Melissa Anne, Bev Piets Smile, and Mona Jury Var. Keep in mind this list is subject to change at any time. Really, it's hard to pick because they're all so beautiful!

I do not consider camellias hard to grow. They require little maintenance once established. They're understory plants so they like to be planted in a semi shaded area like under trees. You don't want them planted in too deep of a shaded area or you risk not getting any blooms. Once my garden turned one year old the plants required little aftercare. The garden has in ground irrigation and other than the occasional fertilization they are not demanding. I fertilize my plants with 4-8-12 azalea/camellia fertilizer twice a year -- once in March, then again in July. A third application of fertilizer is made in September using 0-0-22. Pruning is a



Grand Marshall Var

matter of personal preference and does not have to be done. I like for my plants to look a certain way so yes, I do prune. I keep my plants trimmed from the ground up to about two feet of bare stem. This helps reduce the risk of any insect infestations. I

also like to thin my plants out through the middle by removing any branches that are crossing over one another. This gives the plant good air flow. My mentor Mack says that you should open your plant up enough to be able to throw a cat through it without hitting any branches! I'm a cat lover so there won't be any throwing of them in my garden! In fact, one of my main garden helpers is a cat! He follows me every step I take and just hangs around while I'm working. I am an active member of the Grand Strand Camellia Society and a former member of the Tidewater Camellia Club in Wilmington, NC. One of the fun parts about being a member of these clubs is that not only do they put on these amazing camellia shows which you get to be a part of but many of them also have plant sales where you can purchase some not easily obtainable camellia varieties. A lot of people think that the shows are just someone putting flowers into a cup and sitting them on a table. Become a club member and take part in organizing and setting one of these shows up and you'll see that it's much more involved. In addition to monthly educational meetings and the annual camellia shows, camellia club activities include events such as: pot-luck dinners, garden tours, air layering events in private gardens, and much more. There's just a lot to learn and do being a member of a camellia club. Meeting and making many new friends have been my favorite part.

It was the loss of two dear loved ones that began my camellia passion. I so wish they could walk through the camellia garden with me in person but as I mentioned earlier, I know they are both with me in spirit in the garden. For anyone who has visited my garden you know that I have a large statue of an Angel in the garden. At the base of that angel statue are the two bronze markers bearing the names of my mother and grandmother with a granite plaque that I had engraved with this saying: ***"Those we love don't go away...they walk beside us every day, unseen, unheard, but always near . . . still loved, still missed and very dear.***



Please Note the Angel Statue in Top Right of Photo

Providing my health allows, my camellia garden will be forever changing and growing. I sincerely thank all the wonderful people that I've met along the way who've helped me by sharing their knowledge and expertise on growing camellias.



Nuccio's Bella Rosa Var



Nuccio's Jewel

“My Tiffany Story”

By J. D. Thomerson

A couple of years ago I was asked to give a presentation at the Tallahassee Camellia Society. Knowing what great camellia growers lived in Tallahassee I decided to bring about 30 nice camellia blooms I had at the time to show them that us Valdosta folks can hang with the big boys.

Most of blooms were from varieties that were fairly new and common but I had a couple blooms that I had air layered from some old camellia gardens around Valdosta. One

of the blooms on one of these old air layered plants in particular was outstanding and drew the most attention. I did not know what it was and most of the others folks attending did not either. It was a very large pink peony to anemone form and was just perfect. Randolph Maphis studied the bloom and declared “oh, that is Tiffany” and after looking it up in the nomenclature book and looking at photos online I agreed.

Now, Tiffany, having been registered in 1962 is not really that old – especially considering it is almost the same age as me but it definitely does not get the attention it once received. Back in the 60’s and 70’s and 80’s it was consistently one of the top award winners. I have seen many award winners at recent camellia shows that were not as nice as that old Tiffany bloom (too bad there was not a show that day.)



Tiffany

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Answers to Guess That Camellia:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| (1) Dawns Early Light | (2) Buttons 'n' Bows |
| (3) Henry E. Huntington | (4) Black Magic |
| (5) Maroon and Gold | (6) Tama Beauty |

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**Unnamed Japonica Seedling
Grown & Photographed by J. D. Thomerson**