camellia cheer

In the bleak mid-winter, a certain camellia provides a pop of color inside and out.

BY TROY RHONE
PHOTO BY JAMES GAITHER

IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A PERFECT PLANT for the holiday season and beyond, the 'Yuletide' camellia (*Camellia sasanqua* 'Yuletide') might just be the one for you. Its bright red petals and yellow stamens make a wonderful contrast. The glossy evergreen foliage, reminiscent of the leaves of those two Southern staples—magnolias and gardenias—lends a stylish sheen to arrangements.

This camellia is similar to other sasanquas in the sense that it tolerates cooler temperatures and a wider range of moisture levels, as well as a wider range of acidic soils than its parent plant, the *Camellia japonica*. 'Yuletide,' like all sasanquas, starts blooming in October and will bloom through Christmastime.

When decorating with this camellia, just about anything goes. For starters, you can float the flowers in water. Get out a beautiful crystal bowl and fill three-fourths full with water and then add as many blooms as you like. Or you can use cuttings in a mixed arrangement. Be sure to only cut stems that you would otherwise want to prune. This camellia is known to be a particularly slow grower. However you use them, these flowers are sure to add a punch of color to any festive décor.

At my house, I use this plant in a container outside my doorway. I place the 'Yuletide' as the centerpiece in my pots so my guests can see their bright color during a wintertime visit. I plant Lenten roses around the base of the 'Yuletide'; their green foliage adds a wonderful contrast to the small leaf of this camellia. Lastly, I create swags of English ivy around the pot.

While its color obviously lends itself to the holiday season, the bright red of the 'Yuletide' camellia adds cheer all year round.

RESOURCES FOR CAMELLIAS:

- **PETALS FROM THE PAST**
  Jemison, Alabama
- **PIKES NURSERY**
  Atlanta, Georgia
- **HEWITT'S NURSERY AND GARDEN CENTER**
  Nashville, Tennessee

Quick Facts:

Common Name: 'Yuletide' Camellia

Botanical Name: *Camellia sasanqua* 'Yuletide'

Hardiness Zones: 7-10

Size: 2 to 5 feet tall and wide

Sun requirements: Full sun to part shade