

CAMELLIAS IN THE LANDSCAPE

By Barry JOHNSON ©

Before entering the realm of landscaping with camellias, let us address some of the misconceptions and myths concerning camellia growing.

Myth #1 - '*Camellias only grow in fairly shaded situations*'. A semi-shaded position may be the preferred site for many camellias particularly, the lighter coloured; more delicate flower formed cultivars. It is also a good tip to grow these varieties in a site that is protected from the onslaught of



wet, frosty and windy weather as, many of the lighter coloured blooms can be easily rain spoilt ie. (browning-off of flowers). However, Sasanaquas, Reticulatatas, many of the Hybrids and the stronger coloured Japonicas can withstand a considerable amount of sun, especially if they are adequately



mulched and their root zones are kept moist. It is generally advisable to site your camellias away from the ravages of hot north winds and mid-afternoon summer sun. This would be particularly so for camellias grown in hotter inland districts. Over-arching, canopy foliage protection of suitable specimen trees can also assist in this regard. Some toughies include J. Empress of Russia, J. Great Eastern, J. Wildfire, H. Waterlily, H. Debbie, S. Hiryu, S. Star Above Star, S. Plantation Pink, S. Yuletide, H. Fairy Wand, J. Federation, J. Bob Hope, J. Dixie Knight, J. Firedance, J. Drama Girl, J. Grand Slam, J. Grand Prix, J. Laurie Bray, J. Moshio, J. Pink Bounty, J. Royal Velvet and H. Wynne Rayner.

Heavily shaded areas can also be a difficult to landscape but, thanks to some camellia cultivars, these locations can be enhanced. Try the Elegans family eg. J. Elegans, J. Elegans Champagne, J. Elegans Splendor, J. Elegans Supreme and Jury Group eg. H. Mona Jury and H. Elsie Jury. Others include J. Magnoliaeflora, J. Easter Morn, J. Margaret Davis, H. Illumination, J. Mrs. D.W. Davis, J. Lovelight, J. Silver Waves, J. Mrs. D.W. Davis Descanso, J. Brushfield's Yellow, S. Snow, S. Marge Miller, H. Cinnamon Cindy and the Higo (Japonica) family.



J. Elegans Splendor



H. Mona Jury



*J. Mrs D. W. Davis
Descanso*

Myth #2 - '*Camellias only flower for a short time during winter*'. Not so! By selecting your landscaping specimens from across the classes, ranging from Species, Sasanquas, Hybrids, Reticulatas to Japonicas you can enjoy a camellia flowering season that extends from April to December. Compare this to the general dearth of winter flowering plants and it is easy to see why camellias play an important role in creating seasonal interest in the winter garden.

With these exploded myths in mind, let's go landscaping. Firstly, there is no substitute for obtaining informed advice before parting with your 'hard-earned'.

Apart from extending the flowering season, by including cultivars from each of the classes, you will also, by default, be introduced to the diversity of the camellia's flower and foliage forms and growth habits. As with any intended plant purchase the first consideration should be, what size plant and growth habit do you want at maturity?

If you are constrained in the amount of room available it is not much point planting a large and/or spreading cultivar and then being faced with the task of hacking the poor plant to within an inch of its life and intended potential. In saying this, it is also important to note that camellias are one of the most prunable (at the end of their flowering cycle) plants but, don't let this fact act as an excuse for a poor choice of cultivar in the first instance.

Specimen Trees

If allowed to develop to their maximum potential many camellias can reach medium to large tree-sized proportions. Many unchecked camellias in the wild can reach quite massive sizes. However, in well-managed home garden situations most of these varieties can be kept to acceptable proportions by occasional pruning. Species such as *Rosaeflora*, *Transnokoensis* and *Tsaii* are good choices. Other recommendations across the classes would be *R. Al Gunn*, *J. Bob Hope*, *R. Crimson Robe*, *H. Donation*, *R. Dr. Clifford Parks*, *J. Empress of Russia*, *J. Great Eastern*, *J. Guilio Nuccio*, *R. Lasca Beauty*, *J. Lady Loch*, *H. Mary Pheobe Taylor*, *R. Nuccio's Ruby*, *R. Purple Gown*, *J. Silver Chalice*. The *reticulatas* in particular will generally develop into large open habited trees if left unpruned. However, occasional pruning will help rejuvenate their appearance and enhance the size and quality of their flowers. The *Higos* also make interesting specimens with their simple flower forms and huge central bosses of stamens. *Higos* such as *Fuji*, *Goshozakura*, *Hagoromo*, *Happy Higo*, *Kumagai Nagoya*, *Kakehashi* and *Yomato-Nishiki* are well worth seeking out.



R. Dr. Clifford Parks



Sp. Camellia Japonica
tree



(L-R) *Great Eastern-The Czar*
& *Lady Loch*



H. Donation



J. Guilio Nuccio Var.



Higo-Kumagai Nagoya

Specimen Shrubs and/or Container Plants

As a general rule reticulata cultivars do not make good long-term container plants. Most of the other classes and cultivars are just as comfortable in containers as they are in the ground. Container grown plants require more attention to detail than those in the garden situation such as the use of a premium potting medium, frequent watering and feeding and repotting every two to three years. Recommended varieties to try out are H. Baby Bear, H. Betty Ridley, H. Black Opal, H. Buttons 'n Bows, J. Botan-uki, H. Cinnamon Cindy, J. Confetti Blush, J. Desire, J. Alba Plena, J. Fimbriata, Sp. Forrestii, J. Gwenneth Moray, H. High Fragrance, J. Itty Bit, J. Katherine Funari, J. Lovelight, J. Little Slam, Sp. Lutchuensis, S. Mandy, J. Mansize, J. Minimint; H. Nicky Crisp, H. Night Rider, H. Pink Dahlia, Sp. Pittardi, J. Royal Velvet, H. Spring Festival, H. Snippet, H. Fairy Bouquet, H. Sweet Emily Kate, H. Sweet Jane, J. Takinini, Sp. Tricochlada, J. Twilight, J. Un-ryu, Waterlily, J. Pinktastic, J. Wildfire, J. Yours Truly and S. Yuletide.



H. Buttons n Bows



J. Confetti Blush



J. Botan Yuki



H. Nicky Crisp



J. Lovelight



H. Pink Dahlia

Screening & Hedging

In recent times, landscapers and gardeners have discovered the virtues of using camellias for ornamental hedges and screens. While it is true that camellias do not grow at the same rate as Natives, Pittosporums, Viburnums, Photinias etc., they can provide an extremely decorative and dense evergreen hedge or screen. Sasanquas in particular have achieved considerable popularity as a screening or hedging shrubs due to their hardiness, floriferousness, clipability (sic) and often fragrance. Around April-May, they are generally the first camellias to come into bloom when the rest of the garden is slipping into decline. Sasanqua varieties such as Bonanza, Early Pearly, Chansonette, Dazzler, Egao, Fuji-No-Mine, Hiryu, Marge Miller, Paradise Blush, Paradise Belinda, Paradise Petite, Paradise Sayaka, Plantation Pink, Mignonne, Setugekka, Sparkling Burgundy, Star Above Star and Yuletide are highly recommended.

Some hybrids are also suitable for hedging and screening as well as stand-alone specimens. For narrow garden beds (say 1x metre wide), try H. Cinnamon Cindy, H. Sweet Jane, S. Slim N Trim, H. Will's Wonder and H. Spring Festival.

A popular screening and/or decorative effect is the espaliering of camellias. Again, sasanqua camellias come to the fore in this role with many cultivars having the lax whip-like growth habits necessary to train out laterally. This technique is extremely useful for fence or wall coverage when garden beds are narrow and access is restricted, such as driveways and sideways. Sasanqua cultivars such as Beatrice Emily, Bert Jones, Dazzler, Fukuzutsumi, Jennifer Susan, Mine-No-Yuki, Plantation Pink, Setsegekka and Sparkling Burgundy are ideal. Hybrids such as Alpen Glo, Cornish Snow, Dave's Weeper, Donation, Our Melissa and Pink Cascade also make great espaliers.

When planting camellias against buildings or fences heat retention or radiation should also be taken into account. In this case, use the tougher cultivars.



S. Bonanza



S. Paradise Petite



S. Paradise Belinda



S. Star Above Star



S. Paradise Sayaka



S. Shibori Egao



H. Alpen Glo



S. Yuletide



H. Our Melissa

Standards

Camellias can also be trained or grafted into standards, which can be used as garden features either in pots, or in the ground. The following cultivars will create interesting upright standards, H. Anticipation, H. Betty Ridley, J. Grace Albritton, S. Snow, H. Mary Pheobe Taylor, H. Snippet, H. Spring Festival, H. Waterlily, J. Wildfire, H. Yoi-Machi. For weeping standards try, S. Baby Willow, S. Dave's Weeper, S. Early Pearly (or any other lax-growing sasanquas), J. Kujaku-Tsubaki (Peacock camellia), Sp. Lutchuensis, H. Mandy, H. Our Melissa, H. Rosaeflora Casacade, S. Marge Miller, S. Snow, H. Wirlinga Bride, H. Wirlinga Princess. A cautionary warning re S. Marge Miller & S. Snow is that they don't like exposure to hot summer sun so, a morning or protective dappled shade aspect would be better.



J. Grace Albritton



J. Kujaku Tsubaki (Peacock Camellia)



S. Early Pearly

Groundcovers

Some cultivars can be used as groundcovers which, can be utilised to stunning effect as embankment, rockery or walling cascades and weeping tub specimens. H. Baby Willow, H. Dave's Weeper, H. Fairy Wand, J. Kujaku-Tsubaki (Peacock Camellia), S. Marge Miller, S. Snow, H. Roseaflora Cascade, H. Sweet Emily Kate are highly recommended.



S. Marg Miller



S. Red Willow



H. Sweet Emily Kate

Hanging Baskets

Some cultivars can even be planted out in larger hanging baskets so long as they are planted in a high quality potting medium and receive regular watering. The recent introduction of sphagnum moss basket liners and water retaining crystals are ideal for growing camellias in this manner. Varieties such as H. Baby Willow, H. Cornish Snow, H. Dave's Weeper, S. Marge Miller, S. Snow, S. Classique, S. Snow, H. Wirlinga Belle and H. Wirlinga Gem can make spectacular hanging specimens.



S. Classique



H. Rosaeflora



S. Marg Miller

Fragrance

For those for which fragrance is also an important consideration, camellias can also satisfy their sensory wants. Sniff your way through the following cultivars: Sp. Lutchuensis, Sp. Forrestii, Sp. Kissi, Sp. Fraternal, Sp. Yunnanensis, Sp. Grijsii Zhenzhucha, H. High Fragrance, H. Fragrant Joy, H. Fragrant Fairies, H. Fragrant Jewel, H. Fragrant Pink, H. Spring Mist, J. Spring Sonnet, H. Sweet Emily Kate, H. Cinnamon Cindy, H. Scentuous, H. Koto-no-Kaori, H. Minato-no-Akebono, H. Cinnamon Sensation, J. Kramer's Supreme,

So there you have it, with camellias it's grouse to be grand, cool to be a ground cover, jazzy to be in a jug or a swinging hanging basket. So next time you're thinking about that special spot in the garden or filling that fancy pot, think camellias and they will reward you boundlessly.