



**CAMELLIA COLUMNS**  
**March 2021**

A publication of  
the Virginia Camellia Society  
P.O.Box 15574  
Chesapeake, Virginia 23328

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My fellow Camellia members,

The last 12 months have been difficult for many of us, and for the Virginia Camellia Society. Productivity had been greatly reduced, with workshops cancelled or with capacity restrictions. But Spring is in the air and the camellias are in various stages of bloom.

Maria S.  
1st Vice President  
Newsletter Editor

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**A Message from President**

Hello Camellia Friends,

I have revised this letter numerous times these past few weeks. Each time, with each revision, I end up deleting what I've written and I start all over again. In a nut shell, with a year like 2020, where would one even begin? To be sure, this past year has been very difficult for

many of us. Our Camellia Society and its productivity has been greatly reduced throughout 2020. Our two workshops scheduled this year, the Air-Layer Workshop and the Harvest Workshop, were both restricted to a maximum of 10 people in capacity. We were able, however, to place about 175 air-layers despite these restrictions and these activities took almost two full days to complete. Our Harvesting Workshop was equally restricted to 10 or less capacity. Regardless, we completed the harvesting of the air-layers in one day, even though it rained almost the entire day. Many of us were soaked from this workshop - head to toe! Our workshops are enjoyable and informative but we now have an abundance of plants for any future sales. We might consider canceling future harvesting and air layer workshops in 2021 since we've little need for additional plants.

I keep imagining what a normal year might look like for us, and when normalcy might return. It seems the goalposts for normalcy are forever moving and changing! Perhaps June 2021 might be a target date for our return to normalcy and productivity. In the meantime, Camellia Cove is progressing and looking great. We have planted over 75 plants this year in three new sections. We have held a number of workshops and these workshops have included planting, pruning, air-layering, and harvesting. These activities have been conducted in cooperation and co-jointly with the Chesapeake Master Gardeners. Currently we are working on a landscape map, trying to identify all plants with lost tags. I have also noticed that a large number of plants are currently mislabeled and we'll need to rectify this as well. We have started the

area that I call the Homestead Area, where the house and parking lot area located. There are about 40 Camellias plants with most name tags missing.

We are still in need for VCS members who are willing to serve as a Board Member of the VCS. We have four year terms or if you do not want to serve that long we have some positions that Board members have resigned.

I hope everyone has a blessed and prosperous 2021!!

Don't forget a few dates: we have a Workshop scheduled at NBG April 3, 2021 from 9 a.m. till noon. An air-layer application and the ACS Picnic is scheduled for May 15, 2121 from 3 - 6 p.m. at the Chesapeake Arboretum.

Dale Shelley

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### **Let Talk Camellias!**

In an effort to reach out to more folks who love flowers, several society members have been looking for ways to casually talk with the public about camellias. In February at the Chesapeake Arboretum we had a couple of tables set up with information and offered tours of Camellia Cove. At Norfolk Botanical Gardens we met several people at the spring show and answered many, many questions! Next month, on Friday April 9<sup>th</sup> we will have a table set up in the Hoffheimer Camellia Garden at Norfolk Botanical Gardens to talk with guests about the camellias. It's fun and you meet people who love seeing all the different blooms. Interested in joining us? Let Marietta (757-343-5965) or Toni know. Share your ideas!!

### **2021 Membership Renewal Information**

Renewal notices will be sent via email beginning April 1, 2021. Please print the form, update all information, and mail with payment to the address noted on the form. Please make sure your inbox will receive email from malia.l.huddle@gmail.com.

We want to make sure that everyone gets their notice as we have had quite a few returned emails.

Thank you to those members who have already renewed. Your updated membership card will be in the mail shortly.

Malia Huddle  
Membership Chair  
2nd Vice President

### **Welcome New Members**

Michelle Armstrong, Smithfield  
Joey Baltz, Suffolk  
Denise Cordeiro-Bennett, Chesapeake  
Bridget Crouch, Chesapeake  
Ken Earll, Williamsburg  
Arvella Garcia, Chesapeake  
Linda George, Virginia Beach  
Dave Keel, Gloucester  
Catherine Knowles, Chesapeake  
Beverly Naud, Chesapeake  
Ngoan Nguyen, Norfolk  
Phil Peek, Chesapeake  
Priscilla Scanlon, Chesapeake  
Rebecca Snead, Chesapeake  
Carol Snow, Norfolk  
Susan Sulzbach, Chesapeake  
Margaret Welch, Virginia Beach

## MEMORIAM

Sally Graham Simon, 88, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, August 6, 2020.

She was one of a kind. When Sally and Capt. Doug Simon moved to Norfolk, Virginia in 1980, she took the blooms found in her yard to the Norfolk Botanical Garden for identification, they won their first show and were hooked ever since. She was The Virginia Camellia Society; wearing many hats for many years. She will be greatly missed. But we have our memories and the MISS SALLY, a *reticulata*, with its very large red flowers, registered by Capt. Doug Simon in 2004.

The Sally Simon Dedication will be held at the 2021 Fall Show.

In addition, we have lost another great lady. Eleanor Jane Leach Gouldin, wife of Dr. Winston Gouldin. El passed away on March 19, 2021 at age 91. Her kindness was an inspiration. She will be missed.

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### TIPS FOR WINTER PROTECTION FOR CAMELLIAS

With mature plants in a garden border roots are relatively safe, especially if covered by a good depth of fresh mulch. Leaves may however become discolored, but will usually recover in spring, and flower buds may be frozen and fall off. The much smaller growth buds are more likely to survive, especially those in the middle of bushes where they are more protected.

Several layers of horticultural fleece draped over bushes and secured to prevent being blown away is often successful in giving some protection. Especially useful for early blooming camellias.

Covering a camellia plant provides frost protection, but does little good in a severe freeze. If plants are covered with cloth/plastic to protect the buds, prop up the cover so that it does not touch the buds. Put the cover after the sun goes down and remove it before mid-morning the next day.

Camellias in containers are more vulnerable to winter damage as their roots lack the insulation of surrounding soil. They are especially vulnerable if compost becomes water-logged. If plants are small enough to do so, it's a good idea to carry them into an unheated greenhouse, shed or garage during periods when below-freezing conditions are expected. (The warm dry atmosphere of modern centrally heated homes is not suitable and usually causes leaves to fall and eventual plant death).

If kept outside, bring plants into sheltered positions near buildings if at all possible. Wrap the pot with several layers of plastic 'bubble wrap' to reach the ground and just above the rims of posts. Tie securely. Cover compost with fresh dry leaves or any other material which provides good air pockets and therefore good insulation.

You may also place the potted plant in another pot and/or place the pots together in a grouping on a porch.

*Excerpt from Horttube with Jim Putnam and from Winter protection for camellias in temperate climates by Jennifer Trehane (The International Camellia Society)*

## **PHOTOGRAPHING CAMELLIAS**

By Ashley Higginbotham

Consider me a cheerleader. I am dedicated to spreading my enthusiasm for photography as a vital part of camellia culture. The first photography classes in the American Camellia Society at Longwood Garden opened a different and exciting way for gardeners to display their beautiful blooms, and it was a well appreciated addition for the public.

A partnership between cameras and camellias is not a new concept. Years ago my father catalogued his collection of plants with notebooks accompanied by 35 millimeter color slides. It gave him a size manageable visual record of the plants he purchased, the area of the garden in which they were planted, how well they thrived, and even unusual weather events, like the rare snows or ice storms in Louisiana. Better yet, as a photographer it was a task that extended his pleasure in camellia culture. His influence has made me a devotee of this art.

### The Art Of Photographing Camellias

All gardeners are artists, in their choices of plant combinations and in creating a pleasing landscape design. Taking a camera into the garden immediately changes and heightens the grower's perception. Walking through a riot of blooms in February, the eye sees a tapestry of brilliant color. Looking at a camellia flower through a lens narrows vision, making the photographer examine the separate elements that combine to create a beautiful whole. A limited focus concentrates the contrast of color, emphasizing the vivid red blossom set against its complementary

deep green foliage or the faint yellow dusting of pollen onto white petals from fat stamens. It pinpoints the juxtaposition of textures like the subtle veining in a flower petal against the serrated edge of a leaf. The lens can eliminate clutter, exposing etching-like tracery of dark limbs punctuated with flashes of color. Isolating these elements of design gives the photographer a real boost in perceiving and creating a pleasing composition.

Another aspect of photography is the ability to capture a moment and preserve it far beyond the brief time a flower lives. The camera can freeze the ephemeral beauty of a fragile camellia and allow it to be enjoyed miles from the grower's back yard. Framed in an artistic composition, the bloom is presented to the viewer at its peak of perfection. The camellia show is an excellent venue to display this extension of the gardener's pleasure in his plants, and competing in shows can hone the photographer's skill plus expose him to new techniques.

Camellia photography encourages a larger number of entrants in shows throughout the country. Often it is difficult for an exhibitor to transport blooms long distances, especially with the reticence of airlines to allow unusual and live materials aboard. Packing a delicate blossom for travel is a real challenge, and in areas plagued with petal blight the disease appears shortly after the bloom is cut. With photography, the flower can be pictured at perfection in accordance with the class schedule, matted, and mailed to the show well before the opening date. The photos can be staged before setting up the tables of cut specimens or arrangements, all of which are subject to

the damage of aging. It is an excellent way to open competition to all parts of the country instead of just the community in which the show is held.

### Getting Started—Photographing Camellias 101

While future articles may deal more in depth with some of the technical aspects of camellia photography, the following are some hints and tricks to produce successful and prize-winning pictures. Probably the best advice is to take lots and lots of photographs. The more choices one has, the better the chances of picking a near perfect entry. The slightest difference in light, in the angle of the sun, or in point of view can have a big effect on the clarity of the image and its impact on the viewer.

Film versus digital? It is a matter of the photographer's preference; or better yet, why not use both? I admit to being a camera junkie! I still love my old Nikon F3, but the many new features of today's cameras, such as on-board metering and auto-focus, are beguiling and make taking a picture incredibly easy. Digital cameras are improving every day, becoming more user friendly and less expensive. I prefer the SLR with a zoom lens with macro capability to really close in on the subject, but any format can be manipulated to suit the photographer's skill. The biggest advantage to digital cameras is instant gratification. The photographer can immediately see results and decide if he needs to revisit the subject.

Another simple rule is to have a camera available at all times. One never knows when the perfect picture will appear. It might be magical slant of light, or a busy

insect may visit a bloom for a load of pollen. The weight and bulk of an SLR is not always conducive to spur-of-the-moment shots, so owning one of the versatile minis is a good choice. Many have features rivaling the bigger, more costly cameras, and their size and weight mean they can fit in a pocket or purse. They are also great for travel.

Additional equipment should include a good tripod or monopod to insure a steady shot. This is most important in lower light and for extreme close-ups. A waterproof gadget bag provides protection for expensive cameras from rain showers, heavy dew or sprinklers. Throw a couple of clothespins in that bag; they are perfect for pulling distracting foliage or branches out of the way of that perfect bloom. Sharp Felco clippers can also eliminate unnecessary twigs, but use them at home or ask permission to prune another gardener's plant! A simple mister is the tool to put faux dew drops on the subject, and a soft brush can eliminate a patch of dust or pollen without bruising the flower.

Always experiment! The typical best light for a successful garden shot is a light, cloudy day or even high shade, but rules are truly made to be broken. High contrast of bright sunlight might create a dramatic shot, especially in a monochromatic composition. Try backlighting for a special effect; the aura of light around a camellia bloom can be magical. Taking pictures in early morning or late afternoon brings another quality to the photograph with the often golden tint and slanted angle of light. Frame flowers against the clear blue sky that appears in autumn when humidity is low, or look for interesting streaks of clouds to enhance a scene. Be careful

with the flash; even turn it off. It can often wash out detail, leading to a flat looking photograph.

When framing a flower, crop out as much of the distracting background as possible; zoom in as close as the camera will allow. Try using an unusual angle to enhance the form of the bloom. Photographing a flower from the side can emphasize the height of the center and highlight the layers of petals. Though further manipulation of the image can take place in the darkroom or Photoshop, nothing can substitute for good composition and an artistic eye.

For the true camellia enthusiast, photography is a natural partner with which to broaden pleasure in gardening. I encourage each club that is planning an upcoming show to include this artistic form of expression in your schedule. It not only provides another challenge for the grower, but it also is a favorite of the public. Get creative with classes so that entrants will have interesting choices. Most of all, camellia growers should grab that camera and get outdoors to immortalize the blooms they have worked so hard to produce. How lucky is it that our beloved camellias bloom best in the cooler months of the year?

*Courtesy of The American Camellia Society*

## **Monthly Care Reminders For Your Camellias**

### March

A prime time for Grafting and Air-Layering and pruning plants that have stopped blooming. Also a good time to capture your blooms with a photo!

### April

Prune plants that have now stopped blooming. Fertilize with 16-4-8. For a large plant (6ft or higher) sprinkle 1 cup of fertilizer at the drip line. Water in the fertilizer after applying. If scale or insect problems are observed spray plants with dormant oil

### May

Now, and through the summer, water if two weeks pass without rain. Mulch plants with pine straw 2-4 inches. If you want to root cuttings, May through August is the best time to do it.

### June

Follow May instructions if you have not already done those things.

### July

Fertilize again with 16-4-8, or use Azalea-Camellia fertilizer 4-8-12 and water it in. It's now to late to prune. You will be cutting off bloom buds for the coming season. Check Air-Layers. If damaged and moss is dry, spray with water and re-wrap.

*Excerpts used in this article courtesy of the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society*

## **PRUNING WORKSHOP**

Watch the Face Book page for notice of a pruning workshop at NBG.

## **VIRGINIA CAMELLIA SOCIETY CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR 2021**

Watch for future updates, cancellations, etc. on our Virginia Camellia Society FACEBOOK page and website.

**AIR LAYER APPLICATION WORKSHOP**  
**Saturday, April 3, 2021**  
**Norfolk Botanical Garden**  
**Hofheimer Camellia Garden**  
**9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

**NBG PLANT SALE**  
**May/TBD**  
**Via Remote Access**  
**[www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org)**  
**10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**VCS PICNIC**  
**Saturday, May 15, 2021**  
**Chesapeake Arboretum**  
**4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.**

**AIR LAYER HARVEST WORKSHOP**  
**Saturday, August 21, 2021**  
**Norfolk Botanical Garden**  
**Hofheimer Camellia Garden**  
**9:00 a.m. - Noon**

**VIRGINIA BEACH MASTER**  
**GARDENERS' FALL FESTIVAL**  
**September/TBD**  
**HRARC, 1444 Diamond Springs Rd.,**  
**Virginia Beach, VA 23455**  
**10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

**AIR LAYER & PLANT SWAP**  
**Saturday, October 16, 2021**  
**Location TBD**  
**2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

**FALL CAMELLIA SHOW AND SALE**  
**Set up on Friday, Nov. 5, 2021**  
**NBG - 9:00 a.m. - Noon**  
**Show/Sale on Saturday, Nov. 6 2021**  
**NBG - 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**VSC CHRISTMAS PARTY**  
**Thursday, December 3, 2021**  
**Fred Heutte Center**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**VCS Board Meetings**  
Thursday, June 24, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.  
Chesapeake Public Library  
2320 Old Greenbrier Road  
Chesapeake, VA, VA 23325

You may appear in person or via Zoom.  
Check your email or Face Book page for  
the Meeting ID and Passcode.

All VCS members are invited to attend.

## **VCS BOARD**

We currently have three vacancies on  
the VCS Board. Please contact our  
President, Dale, via email:  
[dstfshelley@earthlink.net](mailto:dstfshelley@earthlink.net), if you would  
be willing to serve. The Board meets  
quarterly.

## **VCS OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, & COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN**

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**2023 - Vacant**

**2023 - Vacant**

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**The VCS MISSION STATEMENT**

**The Purpose/Mission of the Virginia Camellia Society is to learn and to promote the growth and propagation of the beautiful camellia through meetings, workshops, and through the presentation and sponsorships of annual camellia shows. (VCS 2004)**

