



**Camellia Columns
JULY 2018**

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

A Message from our VCS President

Hello Camellia Friends,

I hope this edition of Camellia Columns finds you someplace cool and comfortable despite the summer heat and humidity. This is the time of year when I wish for cooler days and beautiful sasanqua blooms. However, I do love the longer days of summer, lightening bugs at night, and sweet summer pleasures like an ice cold slice of watermelon.

Your VCS Board held its regularly scheduled meeting on June 26th. We elected the following officers:

President – Malia Huddle

1st Vice President – Dale Shelley

2nd Vice President – Toni McKenna

Secretary – Sandra Godwin

Treasurer – Fred McKenna

I appreciate the honor of serving as your president for another year. I look forward to working with these dedicated officers and to serving you in the year ahead.

The VCS Board approved the VCS 2019 Calendar of Events. Some dates are pending scheduling with Norfolk Botanical Gardens. In addition to our usual events, we will be adding four work days at Camellia Cove and the Chesapeake Arboretum. You will be hearing more about this new partnership as the work days are scheduled. Our remaining 2018 events are noted in this newsletter.

The VCS Board would like your feedback as well as your suggestions for future social and educational events. If you have suggestions or ideas, please email me at malia.l.huddle@gmail.com or give me a call at 757-436-6457.

Wishing you great days in your garden,
Malia Huddle, VCS President

VCS Airlayer Project

We placed 305 airlayers that will be ready for harvesting and potting on Saturday, August 11th from 9 a.m. until noon. Don't you want to come play in the dirt with us? Bring your clippers and meet us at the NBG Picnic Pavillion. Participants may purchase two at \$8.00 each. How's that for a great incentive to come join the fun. VCS would like to thank Winston Gouldin for donating the moss and for providing pizza after our airlayer events.

ACS 2020 Convention Planning Committee Update

The ACS 2020 Convention Planning Committee, led by Peggy Troyer, will meet again on September 23rd at 2:30 p.m. at Greenbrier Public Library. This committee is working diligently to create an exciting, educational, and fun event that highlights our local area and history as well as showcasing our beautiful gardens and horticultural resources. The committee is seeking donations and sponsorships for different events. If you'd like to sponsor an event, donate something for swag bags, or advertise in our convention program please let us know.

Chesapeake Master Gardener 2018 "Lunch and Learn" Program

The "Lunch and Learn" program is a free, open to the public, informational offering about all aspects relating to plants presented by experts in their field. So, grab your lunch and come join us!

Where: The Master Gardener Teaching Garden at 212 Holt Drive across from the Chesapeake Community Center

When: 12:15 p.m. every first Thursday of every month from May through October

The topics by month are:

August 2nd - Everything you ever wanted to know about butterflies by Master Gardener Shirley Buchanan

September 6th - Gardens of Japan by Master Gardener Kim Mack

October 4th - Proper care of Camellias by Master Gardener Toni McKenna

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact Mike Andruczyk, Chesapeake Extension Office, at 757-382-6348/TDD* during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations 5 days prior to the event.

*TDD number is (800) 828-1120.

Tips For Planting Camellias

Site: Most camellias grow and produce better flowers in partial shade. Plants located in full sun often are less dormant during warm periods of the winter and may suffer damage if cold weather follows. Plants in a northern or western exposure of a building or fence or otherwise protected from intense morning sun will usually stand more cold weather than those in an eastern or southern exposure. Choose a planting site with well-drained soil. Do not plant where shade trees with shallow root systems will compete with camellias for nutrients and water. Plants in the sun may suffer scald on the leaves or leaves may appear yellow rather than deep green. Plants of *Camellia sasanqua* generally do better in the sun than those of *C. japonica*.

Soil preparation: Camellias will grow in most well-drained slightly acid soil. A soil pH (degree of acidity or alkalinity) of 6.0 - 6.5 is considered best for camellias. However, they will tolerate a lower pH. A soil test made before planting will tell you what is needed to bring the soil to the desired pH and fertility level. Practically all soils will benefit from the

addition of organic matter when planting. Two to four inches of peat moss, leaf mold, ground aged bark, sawdust or cow manure worked into the soil improves both the drainage and fertility of the soil.

Planting: Camellias are generally planted in the late fall through the early spring although they may be set out any month of the year if properly cared for. Adequate moisture is a necessity until the roots become well established in the soil. The newly developed roots will then provide enough moisture for the plant to start growth when spring arrives. Allow a minimum of five feet between plants and preferably more when planting unless planting a hedge when a distance of three feet between plants is recommended. The following steps should be followed when planting a camellia:

1. Dig a hole at least two feet wider than the root ball.
2. Leave soil in the center of the hole undisturbed to prevent settling, as illustrated.
3. Place ball on column of soil. The top of ball should be slightly above soil level. When planting a container-grown plant, wash away the soil from the root ball with a water hose and rough up the root ball if tight to allow better penetration into the soil.
4. Fill the hole around the root ball with a mixture of topsoil and organic matter.
5. Build a berm of soil around the plant three feet in diameter to prevent water from running off.

6. Mulch with straw or other organic matter around the plant.

7. Water well after planting and soak once a week during dry weather.

The State Extension Service no longer recommends the addition of organic matter to the backfill soil. Research has shown that this does not improve plant growth. They now recommend digging a wide hole and refilling with the removed soil.

Watering and mulching: Camellias prefer for the soil to remain moist, but not soggy, all the time. When watering, the soil should be wet to a depth of 14 to 18". Mulching the surface of the soil around the camellias can help keep the soil cooler and hold moisture. In addition, mulch can help eliminate weeds. Two to four inches of pine straw, bark, or other organic matter makes a good mulch. Do not use peat moss as a mulch as it dries out and can become quite hard to wet. Do not pile mulch too high as this can keep the soil too wet and provide good conditions for root rot.

Fertilizing: Camellias should be fertilized in the spring following flowering. Organic fertilizers such as cottonseed meal have been used successfully for years. Commercially prepared inorganic fertilizers (such as 10-10-10) will also do a great job. Sprinkle on top of the mulch and allow rain or irrigation to wash into the soil. A soil test will identify any problems or special needs that may exist. Leaving a column of soil when planting will prevent the plant from settling too deeply. Camellias prefer to be planted near the top of the soil.

Sunburn On Camellias

Many gardeners have had a case of bad sunburn at one time or another in their lives, but the condition can also affect camellias as well. Usually this condition occurs during the most extremely hot days of summer when the sun is high in the sky and the sun's rays are most intense.

Sometimes periods of rain followed by quick clearing and an immediate return to full intense, sun can cause sunburn on camellias. The wet foliage actually intensifies the damage of the sunburn.

We have seen camellias that are not acclimated to their environments burn even in the winter months. Avoid watering the foliage of your camellias in full sun or mostly sunny conditions during times when the sun is shining on the foliage. This will minimize sunburn problems. Even if you get severe sunburn on your camellias, do not be too concerned. The plants will likely drop most of the damaged leaves as new growth emerges to replace them. Sunburn happens, but minimizing it keeps your camellias looking good in the garden.

Courtesy of Camellia Shop

Monthly Care Reminders For Your Camellias

July

Now and through the summer, water if two weeks pass without rain.

If not already done so, mulch plants with pine straw 2-4".

Fertilize again with 16-4-8, or use Azalea-Camellia fertilizer 4-8-12 and water it in. It is now too late to prune; you will cutting off bloom buds for the coming season.

Check air-layers. If damages and moss is dry, spray with water and re-wrap.

August

Water during long dry periods. Ground should be moist, not wet. Tidbit: you can use your azalea as an indicator - if the azalea leaves begin to droop, the camellia, as well as the azalea need water.

September

Begin Gibbing* early in the month. Do not gib more than 4 or 5 bloom buds per plant at a time. Repeat every other week. Begin debudding, leaving 1 bud on the terminal end of a branch.

October

Continue Gibbing*. Remove air-layers if not already done so. Put them in pots with an appropriate growing medium and leave them in pots for 1 year.

Fertilize your landscape plants with 0-0-22.

Now is the best time to plant new Camellias. Camellias are generally planted in the late fall through the early spring, although they may be set out any month of the year if properly cared for

Materials used in this article courtesy of the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society and the American Camellia Society

Gibbing

*Gibberellins are growth-regulating chemicals produced by most plants in very small quantities. The gibberellin used by camellia enthusiasts is gibberellic acid. The process of applying the chemical to camellias is often called "gibbing".

The application of gibberellic acid will break dormancy of the flower bud and enlarge the bloom size.

Gibbing camellia flowers buds is easy. Select well developed flower bud, remove vegetative bud beside the flower bud and place one drop of acid in the cup left where the vegetative bud was removed. See illustration and further details in our website:

<http://www.genserva.com/vcs/gibbing.htm>

General condition of the plant, the size of the flower bud, and the weather are a few of the variables which affect the time element. Considerable variation occurs among varieties. Early flowering varieties may bloom within 30 days of treatment; varieties that normally bloom late often require 60 - 90 days to open.

The time when first to apply gib differs geographically. It is usually the end of August or the first of September before the flower buds are well-formed enough. It is best to gib weekly or at other intervals rather than in one session. This will ensure that you have flowers over a longer period of time. Camellias set flower buds only once a year, so an autumn gibbed bud will not be replaced for spring.

The larger the bush, the more buds you can treat. Most people like to leave about 80% untreated. Apply gib very sparingly to a young plant.

Gibberellic acid solution can be bought at our workshops. In addition, we teach gib application and advantages. Come out and join us at the workshops.

Airlayer and Plant Swap

Bring a snack to share, your favorite beverage and a lawn chair. Come and enjoy some social time trading plants with your fellow VCS members.

More details listed under events.

PHONE TREE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Great communication is key for every successful volunteer organization. Please call or email Malia if you would be willing to help call members as needed with event reminders. It would be fabulous to split the membership list up between three or four callers so we can keep our members in the know.

VCS WELCOMES OUR NEWEST MEMBERS April-June, 2018

Camille Fields
Norfolk, VA

Mike Kearns
Norfolk, VA

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2018 UPCOMING EVENTS

Watch for updates on our website vacamelliasociety.org or on our Facebook page.

VCS AIR LAYER HARVEST
Norfolk Botanical Garden
Hofheimer Camellia Garden
Saturday, August 11, 2018
9:00 A.M. - Noon

VIRGINIA BEACH MASTER GARDENERS' FALL FESTIVAL
Hampton Roads Agriculture Research & Education Center
1444 Diamond Springs Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23455
Saturday, September 15, 2018
10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.
Volunteers Needed.

VCS AIRLAYER AND PLANT SWAP
Home of Bob and Sandy Black
Smithfield, VA
Saturday, October 13, 2018
1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.

VCS FALL CAMELLIA SHOW AND PLANT SALE
Norfolk Botanical Garden
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2018
10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

VCS HOLIDAY PARTY
Fred Heutte Center, Norfolk
Friday, December 7, 2018
6:00 P.M.

VCS BOARD MEETINGS
6:00 P.M. NBG, Room: TBA
September 18, 2018

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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)