



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article November 12, 2018

Camellias Woo in Winter

By Lydia Holley

When chilly temperatures arrive, many summer-blooming plants wave goodbye. Now is when the camellias begin to bloom. All summer long, they have waited patiently, their beautiful dark background unnoticed behind colorful summer flowers. Finally, they can step forward, offering their gift of unsurpassed elegance to the gardener.



I fell in love with camellias many years ago. Although I only had one at the time, it charmed me with blooms on Christmas day, and I succumbed to its wooing. No more winter woes for me. Since then, I have acquired several, and anxiously anticipate each plant's turn to bloom. The bees also appreciate having blooms to nestle into during a time when flowers are scarce. I have planted camellias under trees, on the north side of my house, and just about anywhere I can find a spot to put them. The only thing that has kept me from adding more is the lack of shade in my garden. Camellias remind me of the 1980's Lay's potato chip ad: You can't have just one!

With some planning, you can enjoy camellia blooms all winter, from November through March. In order to achieve this long period of bloom, choose both sasanqua and japonica camellias. Sasanquas usually bloom earlier; japonicas usually bloom later in the season. They both come in a variety of flower color and form.

There are several ways in which to use camellias. Many use them as a bright accent. Some flank their doorways with matching camellias. Others choose to mix them throughout the landscape. Some place them in pots.

They are also lovely planted as a hedge. If you have a hedge of camellias, add a variety of bulbs in front. The camellias will add visual weight to the bulbs with their evergreen background, and the bulbs will retreat in time for the camellias to be the star when they do finally bloom. You will want to look at the mature size carefully when you purchase your camellias. Some stay small while many grow to the size of a small tree.

Although sasanqua and japonica camellias are most commonly used in landscapes, *Camellia sinensis* can also be found in nurseries. This particular camellia has smaller, less showy blooms. Its popularity is due to the fact that black, green, white and oolong teas are made from its leaves (each tea is processed in a different way). Japonica, sasanqua and sinensis camellias all come from Asia, although one variety, *Camellia sinensis* var. *assamica* comes from the Assam region of India.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com, or visit txmg.org/hendersonmg.