

Camellias: New Scents and Seasons

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New camellia species and cultivars collected from China, Japan, and Korea offer a range of scents and flowering seasons unknown in *Camellia* before. ‘Cinnamon Cindy’, ‘High Fragrance’, ‘Sweet Emily Kate’, ‘Fragrant Pink’, ‘Scentuous’, and ‘Scented Son’ are scented hybrid cultivars that grow well in central Florida and north. There are several new early-season flowering *Camellia japonicas*, ‘Early Autumn’, ‘Autumn Twilight’, and ‘Mark Chason’, which do not bullnose, a common problem with early japonicas, and bloom as early as September. A new species, *C. cuspidata*, has small sasanqua-type leaves and blooms, but blooms in February in full sun and is often called spring-blooming sasanqua.

Erinon Nursery, which specializes in camellias, was started in 1980 and flattened in 2004 by hurricanes. The large oaks that originally shaded the growing areas were replaced with Chromatnet shade net in gray with good success. Of the more than 700 varieties of camellias that Erinon grows, the best new cultivars and extended season cultivars are discussed below. They all are chosen to look good even when they are not flowering, which happens at least 9 months of the year. Some have even grown well in southern Florida.

Scented Cultivars

Scented varieties came from two species, *Camellia lutchuensis* and *C. fraterna*, which are highly fragrant but have small flowers. Some of the breeding work was done by Dr. Ackerman at USDA in Beltsville, MD, and some by hobbyists in California. ‘High Fragrance’ (Fig. 1) is the most highly scented of this group. It has a rapid growth rate, light pink flowers about 3–4 inches wide and blooms from late December through early spring, and is easily propagated. ‘Scented Sun’ (Fig. 2) has a larger leaf than the other scented varieties, and the flower looks more like a japonica. ‘Sweet Emily Kate’ has a lower spreading growing habit and blooms early with a strong June rose fragrance. ‘Cinnamon Cindy’, (Fig. 3) from Dr. Ackerman, is the tallest plant of the group. It will easily grow to 20–30 ft in 10–15 years. The flower is white, shading to light lavender pink. The fragrance is reminiscent of a carnation.

Improved Early Flowering Japonicas

These selections perform better in Florida and do not “bullnose,” a problem thought to be caused by heat in which the blooms never open properly. These cultivars provide flowering in Florida from early fall through to early March. ‘Sweetie Pie’ is a seedling of ‘Moonlight Bay’. It flowers from October to February, with a very large flower that is white to blush pink with a red stripe. It is a good upright, rapidly growing plant. ‘Mark Chason’ (Fig. 4) is from northwestern Florida and blooms as early as August or



Fig. 1. ‘High Fragrance’ is the most highly scented of the scented cultivars.



Fig. 2. ‘Scented Sun’ is a scented cultivar that looks more like a *Camellia japonica*.

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Fig. 3. 'Cinnamon Cindy' makes a tall plant with cinnamon-scented flowers.



Fig. 5. 'Early Autumn' is an early flowering compact upright plant.



Fig. 4. 'Mark Chason' blooms as early as August or September in mid-Florida.



Fig. 6. 'Capricci' has flowers on one plant that vary from red to white with stripes.

September. It has a large flower on a very rapidly growing plant. It easily reaches 6 ft in 3 to 4 years from a cutting, but the growth is not as dense as many. 'Early Autumn' (Fig. 5) originated in Ocala and should be called 'Late Summer'. It has a formal double rose-colored flower on a compact upright plant. It is very bushy and dense and not as tall as the others. It propagates and grows well. 'Capricci' (Fig. 6) was also developed in Ocala. The name means capricious because of the variation of flower color on one plant, ranging from white with red stripes, to red with white stripes, or almost solid red. It has a larger, dark green leaf. When pruned heavily, it responds with vegetative growth and should not be pruned to increase flowering.

Extended Late Season Cultivars

'Royal Velvet' (Fig. 7) has a dark black-red flower with gold stamens in the center. It grows rapidly and upright, blooms profusely, and can take a great deal of sun. 'Tudor Baby' and 'Tudor Baby Variegated' (Fig. 8) from Valdosta, GA, are the latest blooming in Florida and can take a lot of sun. They bloom from late January through March. They form compact upright



Fig. 7. 'Royal Velvet' is a late blooming cultivar that can take a lot of sun.



Fig. 8. 'Tudor Baby Variegated' is one of the latest blooming cultivars.



Fig. 10. 'Spring Festival' is a *Camellia cuspidata* that can take a lot of heat and sun.



Fig. 9. 'Kumagai Nagoya' is a Japanese selection with very fast growth.

bushes with small dark red (or variegated) 2-inch-diameter formal double flowers produced in profusion on the dark green plant. 'Kumagai Nagoya' (Fig. 9) is from Japan with a very different looking flower with a white center, large yellow stamens, and dark red guard petals. It is the fastest growing camellia found in Florida and will easily put on 2 to 3 ft of growth in a year as a younger plant. It is big, broad, and dense and not for small areas. 'Pope John XXIII' has a medium-sized, formal double-white flower, upright rapid growing habit, and dark green leaves that look nice in the landscape even when there are no flowers. 'Spring Festival' (Fig. 10) from Australia is a *Camellia cuspidata* that looks like a *C. sasanqua*, but blooms in February. It has small pink blossoms (1½ inches) up and down the stems and takes a lot of sun and heat. It was used at the Olympic Stadium in Australia. It can take 6–7 h of sun a day or more.

All camellias can take 4–5 h of sun and do not require deep shade, although they can grow in shade. They can even grow in southern Florida. A client in Homestead has 60+ varieties that are doing well. However, do not put camellias on calcareous limestone soils. Put them in sandy soils and not near the coast where heat and salt can cause problems. They do well west of the intercoastal waterway, north of the palm beaches, and in the Miami Homestead area. A recent camellia symposium in Vietnam promises some new heat-tolerant varieties will be coming in the future.