

THE SAWADAS AND THEIR CAMELLIAS

K. SAWADA, Overlook Nurseries, Mobile, Alabama

CAMELLIAS were first propagated at Overlook Nurseries about 1915. As the demand for camellias was small, propagation was begun on a very small scale. Cuttings were obtained from a number of large plants grown in the Mobile area, plants which were planted in the nineteenth century. Most of these plants were distributed by Langdon Nurseries located about 30 miles from Mobile. This nursery was established in 1853, growing fruit trees, ornamental shrubbery and some camellias. Since the proprietor's death the business was discontinued, but there remained a number of large camellia plants of named varieties. Cuttings were obtained from several large camellias grown in the gardens in Mobile of Augusta Evans Wilson, famous author of *St. Elmo*. The Coe's camellia collection of Oyster Bay, Long Island was obtained for the nursery's early stock plants.

As the popularity of the camellia grew the nursery sent a collector in other areas in Alabama and the neighboring states of Mississippi, Florida and Georgia to purchase cuttings of many fine varieties. The Louisiana camellia varieties were secured through Mrs. Dan de Baillon of Lafayette, Louisiana, who was considered one of the first camellia experts. She had collected all of the varieties found in Louisiana and found in her beautiful garden were included McIlhenny's importations. The South Carolina varieties of Magnolia Gardens, Middleton Garden and Tea Garden were secured through the kindness of Mr. M. C. Prevatt and Higdon Nurseries. The West coast varieties were obtained through Domoto Nurseries, Carter's Camellia Gardens and Mr. Frank Williams.

In 1940 a semi-greenhouse of the storage type measuring 150' by 35' was built and in it was planted some 150 varieties of camellia *japonicas*. Thousands each year visited the nursery to see these camellias in bloom and it is believed that this camellia display house had much to do in boosting interest in camellias in this area.

During the period of 1945 to 1950 the popularity of the *camellia japonica* was tremendous and the nursery was unable to fill all the orders for camellias. Three to four hundred varieties were

listed in the nursery catalog and a total of up to 1000 varieties were grown in the nursery. However, there was little public demand for all of them and in recent years the nursery has been growing fewer varieties that the public wants.

Varieties Developed at Overlook Nurseries

In 1916 when Mrs. Sawada came from Japan she brought with her some 500 camellia seeds. These were planted in the Spring of 1917 and was the first planting of seed by Overlook Nurseries. Since then camellia seeds have been planted more or less every year. The first outstanding varieties came from the seeds planted in 1925 and which brought their first blooms from 1929-36. The Nursery selected a number of them, named them and introduced them as new varieties in their 1939-40-41 catalogs. These varieties are as follows:

MRS. K. SAWADA (U. S. Patent No. 481). The flower is complete double, gardenia type, imbricated 3-3½" in diameter. Color is delicate pink shade on white. The flower resembles the flower of **LADY HUME'S BLUSH**, but is slightly larger in size. Heavy bloomer in late season. The lasting quality for cut flower exceptionally good. The leaves are small of finer texture; upright grower, compact with long, slender branches.

K. SAWADA (U. S. Patent No. 431). Full double, imbricated flower 4-4½" in size. It consists of 50-70 petals with edges which roll inward and symmetrically overlap each other. When the flower is fully open, it sometimes show a few small petaloids or yellow stamens. Color is pure white; blooms November to March. A vigorous, semi-upright, compact grower. This variety is much hardier against cold than **ALBA PLENA**.

IMURA. Semi-double 5-6" across, consisting of 15 large, narrow petals which are snowy white. Middle season bloomer.

FRIZZLE WHITE. Semi-double, usually 5-6" and sometimes reaches 7" across. Color is white. It won a special prize at the Northern California Camellia Show years ago.

LURIE'S FAVORITE. Semi-double 4-5" in diameter. Has 16 to 18 petals which are crinkled, resembles crepe paper in texture. The color is unusual, soft lavender pink with darker veins.

QUEEN BESSIE. Semi-double, 4-4½". Large petals and bright yellow stamens. The color is white with faint blush pink around the center. Blooms late. Very vigorous grower and is quite hardy.



Fig. 5. K. Sawada

RISING SUN. Single flower 4". Opens flat showing six larger petals and numerous stamens. Color of flower is bright crimson red of velvety softness. It has pink filaments.

SARA-SA. Semi-double flower, 4-5", has 12 large petals. Flesh color dotted and striped with darker pink. Early to middle season bloomer. It sometimes blooms solid pink flowers. This has been separated and is called **PINK SARA-SA**.

TRICOLOR SUPERBA. This flower is much larger than the regular **TRICOLOR**. The color varies from nearly white to solid red, but the majority of flowers are white with red stripes.

WHITE PINE CONE. Semi-double flower 3½-4", 16 narrow, pointed, incurved petals. It somewhat resembles the shape of a pine cone before flower is fully opened. Color is white. This is one of the very hardy, vigorous growers recommended for understock for grafting.

PINK HERME and **HERMESPORT**. These were originated from **HERME**. Flower of **HERMESPORT** is very large, 4-5", semi-double peony type, much heavier than **HERME**. Color, dark crimson with white spots.

Our seedlings of 1931 also brought a number of good blooms from 1937-40 and the following varieties which were selected, named and introduced as new varieties in our catalogs from 1942 to 1946 are:

BLUSH HIBISCUS. Semidouble 4-5" resembles a giant Mallow Hibiscus. White with blush pink in center. Blooms middle season.

LIBERTY BELL. Flower loose peony form 4-5", white in color. Prolific bloomer middle to late season.

RED HIBISCUS. Deep pink to red flower, usually semi-double, but occasionally some stamens change to small petaloids forming a peony type flower. Blooms from early October to November.

ROBERT NORTON. A large semi-double or loose peony flower 4-5" in diameter and 2½-3" in height. White with one or two narrow pink stripes. Often sports a solid salmon pink colored flower which is called **JEAN NORTON**. Early bloomer, November to January.

ROSE MALLOW. Large, semi-double flower of mallow type, often 6" in diameter. Color is soft pink with darker veins. Late bloomer.

ROYAL WHITE. Incomplete, imbricated double, 4", pure white. Blooms very late February to April. Low and compact in growth.

SHIRO-BOTAN. Means white peony. Large semi-double, loose peony, but unique with its cup and saucer form before full open. This variety is very vigorous in growth and quite hardy. One of the best varieties for understock for grafting.

SMILING BEAUTY. Semi-double 3½-4". Most pleasing delicate pink. Blooms early to middle season.

VICTORY MAID. Full double, imbricated 3-3½" in size. Pure white, late season bloomer. Excellent for corsage work.

VICTORY WHITE. Large, loose peony type flower 4-5". Pure white. Heavy bloomer middle season. Vigorous grower and very hardy not only against cold, but practically immune to die back disease.

WHITE EMPRESS. One of Overlook's best seedlings. Semi-double 5-6". Color is pure white, but the massing of stamens sometimes give a yellowish glow in the center. Leaves are large and smooth, thick texture, glossy green. Very hardy against cold and immune from die back disease. Very early bloomer from November to January.

WHITE GIANT. Large semi-double white flower 5-6", middle season. Leaves are large, coarse-looking, dark green in color. Middle season bloomer.

WHITE HIBISCUS. Large semi-double, white flower. Blooms November to January. Greatly resembles IMURA flower. Upright grower.

WHITE KING. Semi-double flower, imbricated, 3½-4". Color is white. Early season bloomer.

WHITE QUEEN. Very late bloomer, usually February to April. Semi-double or loose peony, large flower 5-6". This flower has won many prizes at the late season flower shows.

SAWADA'S DREAM. This is the first flower selected from cross pollinated seedlings and was introduced in the 1959 catalog. Flower is complete double, imbricated, 4" and consists of 80-90 petals with pointed tips which are incurved individually at the edges and overlapping which forms a waterlily shape. Flower is white, shaded with very delicate flesh pink. Blooms from December to February, and especially during the holiday season. Besides its distinctive form and color, this flower is outstanding for its superior holding quality. It is believed that this flower is best of all camellias for florists' use.

Overlook Nurseries and C. Sasanquas

DAWN. In 1909 the Alvin Japanese Nurseries imported a big quantity of citrus from Japan and also imported a few *Camellia japonica* and *sasanquas*. At the time there was little interest in camellias and as there were no sales for them, the majority of the plants died. When K. Sawada moved to Alabama in 1912 he brought a few of them with him among which was one labeled **AKEBONO**. It was not vigorous in growth, but compact with glossy green foliage. The flower semi-double or loose peony type, ivory white with some flowers having flesh pink on its outer petals. The outstanding feature of this variety is its hardiness against the cold. Overlook Nurseries propagated and introduced this variety in the 1933 catalog under the English translated name of **DAWN**.

Dr. H. H. Hume says that **DAWN** is not a *sansanqua* because of its greater hardiness, later blooming period, its sweet scent and because its stamens resembles *japonica* more than *sasanqua*. The described Japanese **AKEBONO** is quite different from the **DAWN** variety and apparently the original import from Japan was mis-labeled.

CLEOPATRA and **BRILLIANCY.** About 1932 Overlook Nurseries sent to Japan for 100 **SHISHI-GASHIRA** *sasanqua*. The shipment was re-

ceived in very poor condition as only three of the 100 plants survived. Years later one of them bloomed a semi-double pink flower and the other two bore single flowers of the same color. It was convincing that these were not SHISHI-GASHIRA, further, they were not cutting grown plants, but seedlings sent us in error. The semi-double flowered one was named CLEOPATRA and the single one named BRILLIANCY and both were introduced in the 1936 nursery catalog.

Overlook Nurseries Seedlings

In 1941 Overlook Nurseries introduced some of their seedlings. They were first introduced under the names herewith enclosed in parentheses. For several reasons the names were changed and they appeared in the 1948-49 catalog as follows:

AUTUMN BEAUTY (Jeff's Watermelon Pink). Large flower 3½-4" watermelon pink, early bloomer. Slow grower, somewhat dwarf type.

FLORIBUNDA (Floribunda). Single 6-7 petals, white edged lavender pink. Blooms very early—September. Vigorous, upright grower.

GULF GLORY (Grandiflora Alba). Single, large flower 3½-4", pure white. Middle season to late. Upright grower.

LAVENDER QUEEN (Lavender Queen). Single, 7 petals, 3-3½", lavender pink.

PAPAVER (Rosea Papaver). Single, 8 petals. Bell shaped flower resembles poppy until fully open. Blooms early—September-October. Upright and compact grower.

ROSY MIST (Rosea Magnifica). Large single flower, 6-8 petals, delicate soft pink flowers October to November. Leaves are very large, thick and very coarse texture, deeply crenulated. Spreading grower.

SLENDERLEE (Mutt's Watermelon Pink). Very fast upright grower with slender branches. Flowers are single, medium size, rose pink. Best use for tall hedge.

SNOWFLAKE. This variety was not listed in our catalog, but is an Overlook seedling and has been distributed. The flower is single, white in color. Resembles GULF GLORY.

SPLENDOR (Rosea Grandiflora). One of the most profuse bloomers. Flower very large 3½-4" with 10 petals. The color is delicate soft pink, lighter toward the center. Blooms October to November. Spreading grower.



I. 'MARK ALAN VARIEGATED'

A chance seedling originated by Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Ashby, Charleston, S. C. The wine red flowers average 5 inches in diameter by 2 inches deep. The long slender petals and petaloids are unique. This highly variegated specimen was grown by Dr. Walter F. Homeyer, Jr., Macon, Georgia. A.C.S. Reg. 339. 1958.

VELVETY (Crimson Velvetti). Single, 6-7 petals 3-3½", crimson red with velvety tone. Blooms October to November.

VERSICOLOR (Tricolor Magnifica). Medium sized single flower with 6 petals. Color is an arrangement of pink, lavender and white that is very showy. Upright, compact grower.

WILLOWLEAF (Willow Leaf). The leaves of this variety are unusual. It is very long and narrow, resembles the leaves of the willow. Flower is single, medium size, white with faint pink margin. Compact, broad, upright grower.

In later years the Overlook Nurseries has introduced two more *C. Sasanquas*. In the 1956-57 catalog were introduced:

FRANK PERSONS. Semi-double or loose peony form, 3" across, color white. The flower resembles MINE-NO-YUKI, but grows slender and upright.

GULF BREEZE. Flower is single, very large 4-4½" with 7-8 petals of thick texture. The color is light salmon pink. Leaves are large. Upright grower.

Overlook Nurseries has a number of good seedlings and some of the superior ones will be selected and introduced in the future.

Besides their development of Camellias, Overlook Nurseries has originated a number of hybrids or clones of azaleas. They have also imported new Kurume and Macrantha azaleas from Japan. They have tested for many years the new Glenn Dale Hybrid azaleas and have those which will thrive in the South.

Overlook Nurseries has introduced a thornless Pyracantha, P. LOW DENSE, U. S. Plant Patent No. 884. Other rare plants which are grown and promoted are Magnolia Denudata (Conspicua) and the Japanese flowering cherries.

Overlook Nurseries has made a number of worthwhile contributions to the Southern garden.