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International
Camellia Congress
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400 AÑOS DE RELACIONES

THE CAMELLIA JOURNEY

From the East to the Rías Baixas

Design and illustrations

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Text

CARMEN SALINERO

FLOWER OF PARADISE

When winter tints with grey and ochre the landscape of the Rías Baixas, when the trees are shedding and the rain leads us to melancholia, the camellia flower appears as an explosion of colour, life and greenness.

A strong voice coming from the earth to remind us that here paradise has no expiry date. When the sun does not warm our coasts, our mountains, our picturesque villages, our fertile lands… then other attractions appear, such as our winter gastronomy, our museums, the hiking trails, the amazing old quarters of our cities and towns, and of course, our most emblematic flower, the camellia.

Although it is native to the Far East, the camellia came to settle down and now adorns our pazos and gardens. A cromatism and vitality that have caught the attention of Galician artists -such as Alez Vázquez- who know that in the little things and details lives the essence of beauty.

The Rías Baixas have become the home of the camellia in the West. Here, we have learnt how to grow and take care of this plant, thus becoming not only an essential part of our gardens, but also honouring it for decades in a show initiated by the Diputación and through a route where we can admire the enigmatic beauty of this flower and enjoy the historic gardens in our province.

So, it is a great privilege to host in this province the International Camellia Congress, a unique opportunity to make known our botany, and cultural, historic, ethnographic and tourist heritage to all delegates that come to Pontevedra hand in hand with the flower of the Rías Baixas. I am sure that they will find in this catalogue by Alex Vázquez a perfect combination between the beauty of the flower and the magic of a Galician artist that leaves in every piece of art the distinctive and indelible mark of his sensitivity.

Rafael Louzán Abal
President of the Diputación de Pontevedra

As a fruit of the evolution and after being filtered by natural selection, tens of millions of living beings inhabit the Earth. These are a small part, perhaps only 1% of those who lived here in the past. Amid such diversity, there are about 300,000 flowering plants that constitute the landscape of our planet; a multitude of forms, structures, colours, and functions enhancing our imagination. Who could imagine so many different flowers, created with only a few components? Where would our minds go if we could design the forms of what we call a flower? Surely we would not have more than a few hundred types and most of them would be useless monsters, unable to fulfill their function, sterile, because nature is in harmony among its members, and it would also be necessary to design their pollinators, their means of dispersal and their adaptation to the habitats. They would also lack the grace, harmony and beauty that accompany the smallest flower that grows in the meadows, hidden in a rock crevice, struggling to survive under the harshest conditions of a dune or sheltered under the shade of a forest.

The fairest among the fair, the *Camellia* is a prodigy of floral perfection. There are forms smaller than a thimble that do not fit in the palm of the hand, and others that are still awaiting hidden in nature to the specialist able to identify them. Also those that are the creation of the gardener's wisdom, all of them stand out for their pastel colour, which is gentle in some flowers and intense in others, for the mathematical arrangement of their petals, and by the intense colour of the yellow stamens in their heart.

Everything is aesthetic; all is covered by the mantle of beauty, from a theory in the field of physics or mathematics to all forms of artistic expression. In this regard, much has been said about the harmony and the beauty of the theory of relativity of Albert Einstein or the Astronomy proposals of Isaac Newton or Johannes Kepler. Maybe this is because all of them are an inanimate reflection of nature. Botany is equally imbued with the beauty of plants, with the arrangement of their structures; this coupling can be appreciated when these structures get together in the different types of plants. Aesthetics is further identified with art, as the essence and perception of beauty; the artist tends to express beauty in a sublime way, following his own feelings and his ability to translate it.

The posters presented at this International Congress simply combine both the scientific and artistic Camellia fields, with the aim to involve those have the opportunity to admire them to the botanical knowledge and artistic emotion. The first ones describe the different forms of the camellia flower, ranging from the single forms to those obtained in the gardening world, including the most striking forms, in which the stamens turn into petals. The last two posters illustrate the use of the oil of the camellia seeds and provide a brief history of the introduction of this plant in Galicia and its rapid spread in the private and public gardens in the region that since then provided care and affection to this plant.

The most important species are described in the remaining posters. The botanical classification is, in itself, a list of the plant diversity, an attempt to dominate nature and submit it to the laws of reason, far from its purely aesthetic value. However, its influence cannot be avoided, and eventually participates in the beauty of all the order. The process of classification provides a name to each defined unit; these names are loaded with nostalgia for their Latin condition, evoking classical worlds which are reflected in numerous languages ??born from the speech used in the Lazio region, more than two thousand years ago.

Each plate features illustrations by Alex Vázquez, a renowned Galician artist with a long career in the field of visual arts, attracted in recent years by the small details, a balcony, a flower, the corner of a garden or a fountain with water reflections. His work covers other forms of nature; many of his paintings feature a path bordered by trees, as an expression of the forest depth, or they reflect open spaces, landscapes of distant places that seem to have a life of their own, thanks to the technique and the use of acrylic paint.

The illustrations include motifs of artistic nature and small details (leaves, flower buds, flowers, fruits) that accompany the descriptions. The camellia flowers of Alex Vázquez are informal, and are created by an accurate and expressive drawing, that rules all the space. With the attention focused on the flower, independent from any printed material, watercolors seem to float in nothingness, with the sole purpose of highlighting their beauty; the flowers seem to be a spring of colour, arising from the white sheet of paper, as an explosion of fireworks.

Science and art go hand in hand in these posters as a full expression of the camellia, to satisfy the knowledge and feeling of beauty, which are the aim of this International Congress.

Jesús Izco

In spite of being of exotic origin, the camellia has been growing in the Galician gardens for centuries, where they are widespread. The beautiful winter blooms and the everlasting green tones of this plant provide colour to our landscape, at the time muted tones are the predominant ones and when other plant species are naked. The camellia has found among us the perfect place to grow and develop. In our gardens, they become singular trees.

The camellia is the protagonist of private and public gardens, streets and squares, and therefore it was designated the flower of Galicia. Within its framework, the Route of the Camellia was created, with visits to the most emblematic places in our region. This plant has adapted so well to our environment that now is largely produced by many Galician nurseries. Apart from the ornamental value of this plant, it has other uses, such as the production of oil from its seeds or the manufacturing of tea from its leaves and shoots.

For all these reasons, the International Camellia Congress will be held in Pontevedra in this year 2014. This event will be organized together by the Provincial Government of Pontevedra and the International Camellia Society. It will be the first edition of this congress in Spain and a special occasion to promote the camellia and the gardens of the Route internationally; and so as the professionals and enthusiasts of the camellia may know the importance that this plant has in a country far from its place of origin. The activities of this congress will comprise sessions that cover several fields related to this genus, such as the camellia culture, the uses of the camellia plant or the different lines of camellia research. In addition, the visits scheduled during the congress will help to promote an alternative tourism in Galicia.

The exhibition of the Galician artist Alex Vázquez Palacios, included in the activities of this congress, will take us to the camellia world, not only by contemplating his paintings but also a series of studies with some explanatory texts providing information on the characteristics of the oldest and the most recent cultivated species, as well as on the history of the camellia in Galicia.

We would like to thank the Embassy of Japan in Spain for having included this International Congress and especially this exhibition "The Journey of the camellia, from the East to the Rías Baixas", as part of the activities scheduled in the Spain-Japan Dual Year, commemorating 400 years of relations between this two countries.

Carmen Salinero

THE CAMELLIA JOURNEY
From the East to the Rías Baixas

The camellia in the Rías Baixas
Form of the flowers
Camellia japonica
Camellia sasanqua
Camellia reticulata
Camellia nitidissima
Camellia amplexicaulis
Camellia changii
Camellia sinensis
Camellia oil

The camellia in the Rías Baixas

The origin of the first camellias introduced in Galicia is still unknown due to the lack of written documents about their origin and date of plantation. They were probably introduced before the 18th century; however, it was not documented until the middle of the 19th century, in the documents of the owners of the Galician pazos, in which camellias being more than 7 metres tall are mentioned.

The **Agricultural School of A Caeira** was founded in 1872 by the Pontevedra Provincial Government. This was the first Galician institution that contributed to the camellia dissemination. According to the information listed in its nursery catalog, they had 139 varieties of this genus on sale, being only a few originated in Galicia.

In the second half of the 20th century the camellia became popular and was present in every garden and estate in Galicia, mainly in the Rías Baixas. Undoubtedly, an event that contributed to the camellia culture dissemination was the **International Camellia Show**, whose first edition took place in the halls of the Pontevedra Provincial Government building in 1965.

In 1993 the book *International Camellia Register* by Savige was published. It lists 285 camellia cultivars obtained in Galicia. At present, only some of these cultivars are still cultivated in Galicia and many of them are thought to be extinct. Presently, the number of registered camellia cultivars is increasing and many of them are known worldwide.

The **Spanish Camellia Society** was created in 2003 with the aim to promote the flower and the camellia tree through any event or media. This society has been involved in research and development activities so as to improve camellia culture and dissemination, so as to bring together all the enthusiasts, collectors, nurserymen, artists, public institutions and others developing any activity related to this shrub.

In 2006 the camellia was designated as the **Flower of Galicia**, and the Spanish Camellia Society registered the marks and logos: "Camellia, Flower of Galicia", "Flower of Camellia", "Camellia of Galicia" and "Camellia Galicia". This name recognizes the **camellia** as the flower representative of this region.

Form of the flowers

Single: from 5 to 7 petals arranged in a single row

Semi-double: more than 8 petals arranged in two or more rows

Anemone: one or more rows of petals surrounding a central bunch of petaloids and stamens

Peony: petals, petaloids and stamens mingled forming a hemisphere

Rose form double: many imbricated petals with some stamens visible when the flower is fully open

Imbricated formal double: many imbricated petals, without stamens

Hexagonal formal double: several petals arranged in six layers

Camellia japonica

This genus is native to Eastern Asia, where it was introduced in Europe by sailors and Catholic missionaries. It is a species with a large number of cultivated varieties of an important ornamental value.

The **plant** is a shrub or almost a tree that can be up to 10 m tall, evergreen and branched, with grey branches and yellowish green twigs. Plant habit varies among specimens; in general they present a compact and straight growth, although sometimes they may have a spread appearance.

ovate, with a dark green upper side and a paler underside, thick and with denticulate margins. Some cultivars show long and narrow **leaves**, in others they are pointed, round and some leaves may even be variegated.

Flowers are terminal, and may appear solitary or in pairs, with a size ranging from 3 to 10 cm in diameter. Wild specimens may have from 5 to 7 petals connected at the base and with a notched margin, and cultivated varieties may have more than 100 petals. Colour ranges from the purest white to the brightest red, with all the pink and red shades, and dots or stripes may also be present.

The **fruit** is a spherical capsule, popularly known as "camellia apple". It has a dry appearance, with two or three lobules inside and one or two seeds per cavity.

This species grows in mild and humid climates, with abundant rainfall, in the shade and sheltered by taller trees that protect it from from too much sun exposure and wind. Cold weather intensifies the colour and quality of the flower, whereas high temperatures and low humidity cause a loss of colour and may damage the plant. For a proper development, this plant needs acid soils, with a pH ranging from 5.5 to 7, rich in organic matter and well drained.

C. japonica does not need annual pruning, although responds well to it. However, this practice is necessary if we want to obtain a compact appearance or for topiary or hedge formation.

Camellia sasanqua

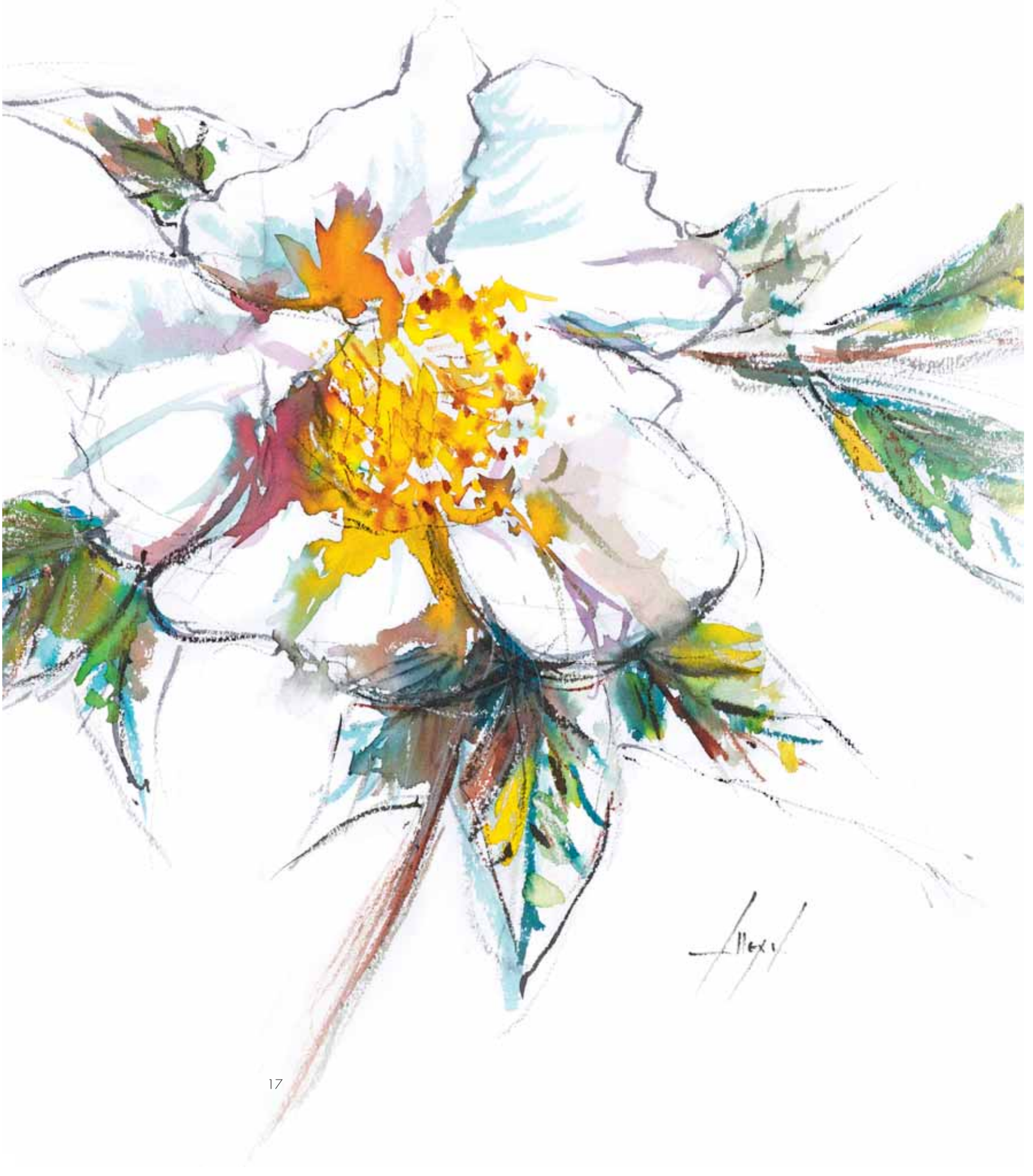
This is one of the three native species in Japan, where it mainly grows in the gardens of Shikoku, Kyushu and the southernmost islands. For many years it has been the most popular and cultivated camellia species in this country. Although the native plant has white and small flowers, the cultivated varieties present a large variety of colours and shapes. This species was introduced in Europe after *Camellia japonica*. During the 19th century, nurserymen and gardeners did not appreciated this species since they thought it was less hardy and that had flowers of a lower quality than those of *C. japonica*.

This **plant** is an evergreen shrub with dense foliage that can reach up to 10 m tall, highly branched, with a smooth and grey bark and reddish-grey twigs, and a rapid and open growth. It has dark green **leaves** with a short petiole, from 3 to 6 cm long and 1 to 3 cm wide, elliptic to lanceolate, a denticulate margin, an acuminate to cuspidate apex and an acute base.

Flowers, from 5 to 7 cm long are fragrant, abundant and in general terminal but sometimes axillary. The flowers of the wild species are white, although cultivars may show different shades of pink and red. The most common shape is from single to semi-double. Petals are free, wavy, and may be round to elliptic with a notched margin at one point; its number varies in the cultivated species and has from 6 to 8 petals in the wild specimens. It has around 100 stamens. It blooms in autumn and it is the earliest blooming species, being the first flowers open at the end of September.

The **fruit** is a tomentose and globe-shaped capsule, with three compartments, each with one seed. Seeds are black and rich in oil.

This species grows in mild and humid climates with abundant rainfall, in the shade and sheltered by taller trees that protect it from too much sun excess and wind. Due to the small size of their leaves and since it responds well to pruning, it is highly appreciated for hedge and topiary formation.

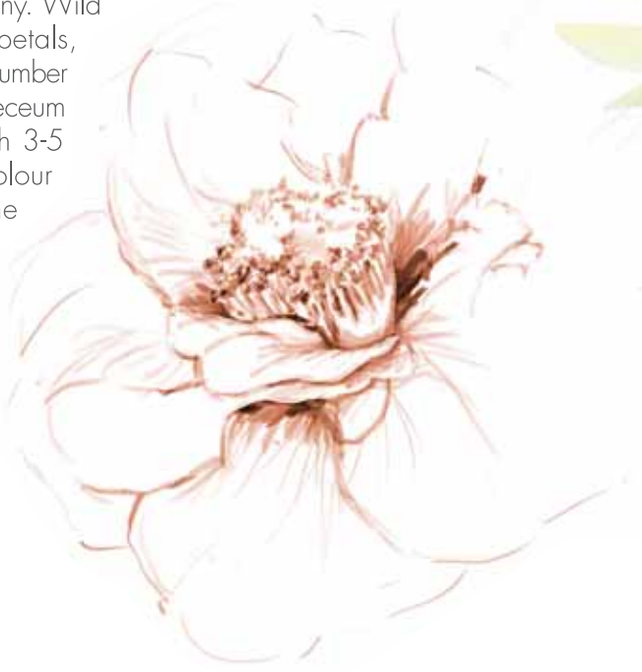


Camellia reticulata

It is native to China, in the Yunnan province, in Southwestern China, where it has been growing in the wild for centuries. These plants are showy and are highly appreciated as ornamentals, given the large size and colour of its flowers. It was designated with this name, given the marked venation of its leaves. This species, together with *C. japonica* and *C. sasanqua*, is one of the most cultivated species of the genus *Camellia*. For centuries, it has been used in hybridizing with *C. pitardii* to obtain new cultivars.

This **plant** is a shrub that may be up to 15 m tall, with a rapid and open growth and dark-grey branches. **Leaves** are thick and leathery, with a hairless petiole and highly marked nerves. They are dark dull green in the upper side and paler in the underside, from 6 to 11 cm long and 2.5 to 6 cm wide. It is elliptic to lanceolate, with a serrate margin, acuminate apex and acute base.

Flowers are solitary, terminal or axillary, and large, some may even be more than 17 cm in diameter. They have a bright pink colour varying among cultivars, and are from semi-double to peony. Wild specimens present from 6 to 9 petals, whereas cultivated species show a varying number of petals. It has more than 100 stamens; its gyneceum presents a hairy ovary and hairless style with 3-5 divisions. Its blooms are showy, given the colour and the size of the flowers. In Galicia, the blooming period starts in February and ends in April.



The **fruit** is a large globe-shaped capsule with a rough surface; it has three locules, each with one seed.

Camellia nitidissima

This species is native to China (Guangxi) and to the north of Vietnam, where it grows at 250-950 m.a.s.l.

This plant, that was identified and described for the first time in 1970, it was the first yellow camellia described worldwide, so it was looked upon with excitement. Some of the specimens of this species have a yellow pigmentation, however, differences have been observed among plants in colour intensity. The first plants introduced from China were designated as *Camellia chrysantha*, which caused some contradictions and mistakes in the classification of this species.

It is a shrub or small tree of up to 5 m tall with purplish young shoots, older branches are smooth and brownish grey in colour. **Leaves** are elliptic or oblong, with an acuminated or caudate tip, a cuneate base from 9 to 20 cm long and 2.5 to 6 cm wide, and a slightly serrate margin. The upper side has the central vein and the radial veins impressed and the underside presents the central nerve and the radial veins elevated.

Flowers are golden yellow, large, from 4 to 6 cm in diameter, and with 8 to 12 fleshy petals, round in the border and slightly connected to the stamen column at the base. Fruits are triangular and ovate capsules, being 4-6 cm in diameter, with 3 locules and the seeds present a brownish yellow colour and are hairy.

It blooms from winter to early spring. In the last years it was used as a garden plant, and became very popular in regions with a mild climate and in cold areas it is cultivated under greenhouse conditions. It has been extensively used in breeding programs to create yellow varieties, producing a large number of interesting hybrids, but this is a difficult task since it is not compatible with many camellia species.

Camellia amplexicaulis

This species is native to the border between Vietnam and China (Yunnan) and has been cultivated as an ornamental in Vietnam for years. It is one of the most wanted and interesting species for camellia collectors, who have discovered in this species an excellent parent for the creation of new hybrids, given its unique characteristics.

This **plant** is a shrub up to 3 m tall, with young and strong purple or bright green shoots. Leaves have an elliptic or oblong-elliptic shape and the base presents some lobules surrounding the stalk, large, from 15 to 25 cm long and from 6 to 11 cm wide, strongly serrate; the upper side with a slightly impressed venation and the underside with a raised venation. Petioles are from 3 to 5 mm long.

Flower colour ranges from the purplish pink to the purplish red. It has from 8 to 13 petals and is from 4 to 7 cm in diameter. Flowers can be found alone or forming groups, in the leaf axilles and in the shoot tips. Fruits are globe-shaped and have 3 locules.

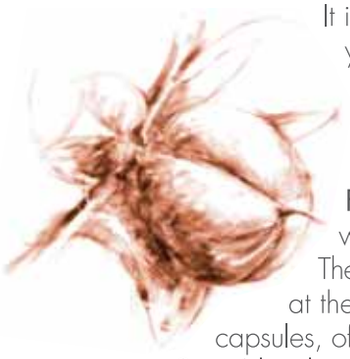
This species is not very cold hardy and does not tolerate well sun exposure. It prefers shade to sun, so it may be possible to cultivate these plants indoors.

C. amplexicaulis mainly blooms in summer and autumn, but under controlled conditions it may show flowers all year long. It may be an interesting breeding parent to obtain new cultivars that bloom throughout all seasons.

Camellia changii

Camellia changii, 1985 (*C. azalea Wei*, 1986)

It is a species growing in the mountains of the Guangdong province in China. It is different to other camellias and it is not usual, given its similarity to rhododendrons. It is a species that has been recently introduced in the ornamental world, since it was first described as *C. changii* in 1985 and as *C. azalea* in 1986. This species has the peculiarity of blooming all year long, although it presents more flowers from summer to autumn. This characteristic is highly appreciated by hybridizers and it has been widely used in their breeding programs to create hybrids of extended blooming periods.



It is a shrub or small tree of up to 5 m tall with hairless or hairy young shoots. Oldest branches are smooth and grey. Leaves are long, obovate, or lanceolated, with a round apex and a cuneate base, from 5 to 12 cm long, completely glabrous and with an entire margin.

Flowers are bright scarlet red, from 6 to 10 cm in diameter with a clear central column of stamens connected at the base. They can grow solitary or forming groups at the tip of the shoots. Fruits are ovate capsules, of 2 cm in diameter, glabrous, with 2 to 4 locules.

This species needs humid and warm conditions to develop properly, but it has survived to -5ºC, so it is highly appreciated as a shrub for all types of gardens.

Camellia sinensis

Sinoniyms: *Thea Kaempfer*, 1754. *Thea sinensis* L., 1753

There are two principal varieties of *C. sinensis* highly differentiated, the variety sinensis (initially Thea sinensis), naturally distributed in the south of the River Yangtse in China, Japan, Korea and other countries in Southeastern Asia, and the variety *assamica*, with larger, widest and leathery leaves, naturally distributed in the provinces of the south and southeastern China and widely cultivated in India and Sri Lanka.

Cultivated **plants** have a shrub appearance, whereas wild specimens can grow as trees, and may be from 6 to 8 m tall. Young branches are strong and glabrous and become grey. **Leaves** are elliptic, from 4 to 12 metres long and 1.5 to 5 cm wide, with a serrate margin, acute apex and acute base, being more or less leathery depending on the cultivar.

Flowers are white, pendulous, with glabrous and long petioles, from 2 to 3.5 cm in diameter and with 5 persistent sepals and from 5 to 8 round petals in the tip, slightly joined to the base with a column of abundant stamens. It blooms throughout autumn until the beginning of winter. Fruits are globe-shaped, from 2 to 3 cm in diameter and with 2 to 3 locules.

Tea is obtained from the leaves of this plant. It is a simple process; all young shoots having from 2 to 4 leaves are collected, dried and fermented for varying amount of time, depending on the type of tea that we want to obtain (green, red, or black, among others).

Tea has been known and cultivated in China for more than a thousand years, for medicinal uses. Presently, it is the most popular beverage in this country, and is also the major tea producer worldwide, with more than a million hectares of tea plantations of different cultivars. The tea plant was first introduced in Japan during the Tang Dynasty, and was turned into the most popular beverage in Japan, as it happened in other countries in Asia and in many countries in Europe and Africa. Nowadays, *C. sinensis* is one of the most popular and cultivated species in the world.

Camellia oil

The camellia oil is a millenary product that has been recently discovered in the West. It has been used in China since 600 BC for culinary (both for frying or seasoning) and medical purposes, for cosmetic production (creams, soaps, shampoo, etc.) and for several industrial uses.

to different species of the genus camellia (basically *Camellia oleifera*, *C. yuhsienensis*, *C. sasanqua* and *C. japonica*), harvested at the end of the summer. Once cleaned, seeds are cold-pressed and the extracted oil is filtered and impurities removed. Average oil concentration in the seed is 20% and its density is 0.92 g/l.

of camellia oil, states that this oil has a flavour and aroma similar to tea, and a hint of walnut. Its colour is pale yellow with a green shade.

concentration of saturated fatty acids and its high concentration in unsaturated fatty acids. Particularly, it contains oleic, linoleic and arachidonic acid of the omega-6 fatty acids, which are crucial in the formation of the cell membrane and help to prevent heart diseases and cholesterol. It is rich in vitamins A, B, D and E and in minerals such as phosphorous, zinc, calcium, manganese and magnesium. As a special feature, it is the edible oil with the highest smoking point, which is the temperature at which oil begins to produce smoke, lose its properties and release free radicals.

This oil is also widely used in cosmetics. In Japan it has been traditionally used for skin and hair care, since it restores hair elasticity, balance and softness. It moistures, calms and smoothes the skin and is ideal for oily and acne-prone skins, since it controls sebaceous secretions, unclogs pores and prevents pimples. Therefore, major cosmetic companies use camellia oil to produce cream, shampoo, deodorant and nail polish removers.

Many plants came to Galicia from foreign lands. But one of them adapted and thrived in this region. We are talking about the camellia, coming from distant horizons to show its colours in the Galician landscape. She became so Galician that now is the Flower of the Rías Baixas and the whole Galicia. In Pazos, orchards, along the coast and inland, the camellia displays a variety of light and colour in the gardens of our grey winters. As somebody said, during the winter days when the flowers fade away, the camellia appears dressed in light. A visitor from the distant East that took roots in this land and became the chromatic flower of our native plant world.

Francisco Fernández del Riego
Introducción de la exposición de Alex Vázquez
"A camelia nos xardíns das Rías Baixas"
Museo Municipal de Vigo "Quiñones de León",
February 2007