Jan Van Bergen, now retired, is often found walking in the Vergelegen gardens checking up on his fantastic collection. He is a wealth of information and his guidance in looking after the camellias is greatly appreciated by myself and the gardening team.

The best advice Jan has ever given us is to walk and observe the plants regularly:

“They talk to us through the leaf colour and form. They tell you what they need but you must understand their language”.

**Camellias at Marwood Hill Gardens, North Devon, UK**

Malcolm Pharoah

The spring of 2013 was a cold dull period that made for a late start to the flowering season for the camellias. With the wet year of 2012 the amount of flower bud set was not great which resulted in a lot less flowers than usual, however once we got into April it was very apparent that the flowers were of very good quality and size.

The flowering season went on for a long time and we even had cultivars in bloom in June.

We have been planting a new Camellia Walk at the top of the garden for the past few years now and the plants have been growing and maturing well. By the middle of April they were covered in bloom.

In the large greenhouse, flowering was of course as good as ever with some lovely large blooms produced. We exhibited at the RHS Early Camellia Show and entered camellia classes at the RHS Rhododendron Show, both at RHS Rosemoor in North Devon. We also put on a display of camellias at both shows to publicise the garden at Marwood Hill and also the International Camellia Society and the Gardens of Excellence scheme.

The late spring and summer of 2013 has thankfully been very good weather wise with excellent growth of the plants and a tremendous amount of bud set on the plants which bodes well for 2014 and the flowering season of the camellias. With a reasonable winter we should look forward to blooms from late February through to the middle of May.