After all the excitement of our 50th anniversary year, and before all the preparations for the Congress in Spain and Portugal in 2014, I expected the year 2013 to be rather “flat” – not necessarily uninteresting, but maybe not too exciting. How wrong I was!

Over the course of the last year, we have seen hybridizing efforts that promise interesting new developments. For example, in this Journal you will read about the work being done by Matthew Denton-Giles on species that show resistance to camellia petal blight. New hybrids are being commercialized by Dan Charvet in northern California, using species that show resistance to the blight. We saw some examples of his blooms at the American Camellia Society convention in California’s Napa Valley in January, and very impressive they were.

We have continued to receive news of new cultivars being grown by Professor Gao Jiyin in China, based on his work with summer-blooming *C. changii*, which offer potentially extended blooming periods for camellias. And we have seen some of the cultivars being created by Professor Clifford Parks, in the U.S., who is working with species other than the traditional japonica, reticulata, and sasanqua, with the aim of enriching the camellia gene pool for future hybridization.

And sitting in on the Third Academic Forum on Yellow Camellias in Nanning, China, I was impressed by the work being done there on developing hybrids that capture the elusive golden yellow of species such as *C. nitidissima* but that do not have the same critical need for a warm, humid climate in order to thrive.

Many of these developments are being reported in this year’s Journal, under the editorship of Bee Robson. When Jennifer Trehane handed over the post for this year’s publication, following her brilliant reign as editor of the *International Camellia Journal*, we all hoped on Bee’s behalf that she would be able to find interesting and newsy articles to fill her first Journal. I think you will see that she has been very successful in this regard, with a wide
variety of subjects that should appeal to our broad membership. Our deep gratitude to everyone who provided information to her for inclusion in the Journal.

What this Journal does not include, however, is any news of Otomo Fund supported projects – because we have not had applications in 2013. Can it really be that there are no research projects of scientific interest that could be helped along by Otomo Fund seed funding? This is especially ironic because during the year we received generous contributions from the Ozone Camellia Trust Fund, Rosamay Davis and the ICS itself, in memory of Greg Davis, our immediate past president, who passed away in 2012.

Much of the material in the Journal will be included, in full, on our website. I trust that by now all members have had an opportunity to visit and use our website, www.internationalcamellia.org. The revamp of the website took place over 2012, prior to the launch at the beginning of 2013. And there is still work to be completed so that ICS regions can post their own local-interest material. This takes some training for volunteer members in the regions, to make sure that the material is posted correctly, and sometimes it is complicated meshing schedules for the web manager David Trehane and volunteers. But we all appreciate your patience – we are working on this.

The website has been invaluable in providing members with information about the upcoming Congress, for one. I hope as many members as possible take advantage of this chance of seeing some of the world’s most impressive and beautiful camellias. Our pre-Congress tour to some truly outstanding gardens in Portugal will be followed by equally outstanding gardens in Galicia, in northwestern Spain, during the Congress and the post-Congress tour. There is something incredibly special about visiting lovely camellia gardens in the company of friends old and new, who share a love and appreciation of these beautiful flowers.

As always, the ICS has lost some of its members. Some have been among our oldest and longest-standing members. As we share our memories of these members, we also think of our dwindling band of old members. If there are long-standing members of the society in your region, I urge you to celebrate these precious members. Invite them as guests of honour to your meetings and events! Invite them to share their memories of the early days of the International Camellia Society – you will find these recollections fascinating.

Lastly, Herb and I were saddened to hear that Kamelien Paradise, the garden of Peter Fischer in Wingst, northern Germany, was permanently closed and all plants sold off at the end of September 2013. Over the decades, Peter – a second-generation nurseryman – designed and built up a garden that deserved its recognition as one of the first five ICS Gardens of Excellence, in 2002, with reaffirmation last year. I understand that a sizeable number of plants were acquired by the German Camellia Society on behalf of the Cologne Flora Botanic Garden. I hope that these camellias can be designated as ‘the Peter Fischer collection’. This would be a fitting tribute to a man whose passion for our genus won respect and admiration throughout the camellia world. We have also heard that Peter’s two sons intend to reorganize the estate. We wish them well in their efforts.

Patricia L. Sharp