

President's End-year 2025 Message

For the first time, I am sending a message, through our membership representatives, to all ICS members. I think it is important that all ICS members are aware of ICS activities and missions. Indeed, ICS is working in multiple directions: meetings, publishing, preservation, and popularization.

Congresses and symposiums are a good way to gather people from all over the world. The Tokyo congress gave the opportunity of knowing many kinds of Japanese gardens as well as the wild camellias in North Honshu and Oshima Island. In fact, Japan is home to famous ornamental camellia species, like *C. japonica*, *C. rusticana* (recently acknowledged as a separate species), *C. sasanqua* (the autumn blooming camellia), and *C. lutchuensis* (the fragrant camellia). Japanese breeders created over 6,800 registered cultivars, with 1,000 registered cultivars before year 1700! The Tokyo congress has certainly been a milestone. Let me thank the chair of the organizing committee, Professor Tanaka, and all the congress staff. We had an exceptional welcome dinner, where Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado gave a memorable speech.

In 2027 the ICS Congress will be held in Macon, Georgia (USA) on January 26-31, with a pre-congress in Mobile, Alabama (January 22-26) and a post-congress in Savannah, Georgia (January 31-February 4). You can read details in this journal issue. Let me remember that around 7,800 cultivars have been created in the USA. Camellia parks are in West states, from California up to Washington, and in Southern and Eastern states, from Georgia down to Florida and Texas. The congress itinerary will not only cover outstanding camellia gardens in South-Eastern States but also will let us meet protagonists of camellia history, like Jim Nuccio, son of Julius Nuccio, who founded Nuccio's Nurseries with his brother Joe. Nuccio's nurseries created hundreds of wonderful cultivars of *C. japonica*, *C. sasanqua*, *C x williamsii*, etc. We will also meet George Sawada, grandson of the famous nurseryman K. Sawada, who imported from Japan the famous camellia *sasanqua* Cleopatra (Sawada).

A second important ICS mission is conservation of the wild camellia species, *in situ* and *ex situ*. While in China and Japan, thanks to the efforts of their respective governments, wild camellia species are preserved and respected, the situation is dramatic in Vietnam, where anthropic pressure, predation and agriculture are gradually destroying the original flora. We discussed this issue in Directors' meeting in Tokyo, and the Otomo Committee agreed on funding for 3 years a park in Da Lat, as proposed by Anthony Curry. Da Lat is a nice city, close to Ho Chi Min City (formerly Saigon), that enjoys a mild mountain climate at 1,500 meters. The park will be supported by Da Lat university. It is a great achievement, and I hope we find further funds to sustain it. Let me thank also Professor Tran Ninh and Anna Le, who did let me and Anke Koschitz know the world of Vietnam yellow camellias. In this same journal, you will find a report on our visit in Vietnam, where you can admire *Camellia tienii*, among the nicest camellias in the world.

A third mission is the conservation of ancient camellia plants. This is the aim of the ICS Committee for Historic Camellia Conservation, chaired by Stephen Utick. Specifically, a special award is given to significant historic camellias. In 2025 we awarded Sanmen Tsubaki, which is at least 770 years old, and, in 2024, the Pillnitz camellia, a champion of the camellias imported to Europe, which was planted at the end of the 18th century. We expect that other ancient trees will be identified in Australia, China, and other countries.

Disseminating camellia knowledge is also a key mission we are accomplishing through Website, Register and books. Our website offers access to articles and to the full collection of the International Camellia Journal, describes all camellia gardens of excellence, and, finally, posts selected news. You can read details in the report of our web manager, Frieda Delvaux. Our key resource is the database of camellias. In 1993, over 30 years ago, ICS printed the first volume of the International Camellia Register, and in 1996, with the help of the late Neville Haydon. In 2006, I developed the computer version of the Register. Nowadays, the Register, run by the Kunming Institute of Botany, includes thousands of pictures and over 27,000 cultivars. The Register is continuously updated with new cultivars and has added camellia species. Let me thank Professor Wang for his work on the Register. Special attention has been given to the *sasanqua* cultivars. In fact, *sasanqua* cultivars not only extend the season to autumn, but, with their hybrids with *C. oleifera* and *C.*

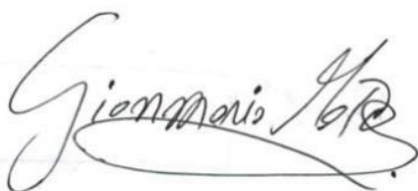
yuhsienensis, become very hardy, thus fitting temperate climates. For a detailed illustration of the sasanqua world, we published, with Professor Tanaka as editor, the first volume in 2023 and we are preparing the second volume. An international sasanqua symposium will be held in Shanghai in winter 2026, where we plan to present the second volume of the sasanqua book.

Finally, ornamental camellias, which require space and care, will survive if we are able to let them know and appreciate them for younger generations. Key resources are gardens of excellence, where visitors can see the wide range of camellias throughout the year: japonicas and reticulatas in spring, everblooming hybrids in summer, sasanqua and species in autumn and winter. Many gardens of excellence promote initiatives for schools and special camellia shows. Moreover, some gardens, especially in China, do research on camellia species and develop new hybrids, also for municipal planting, alkaline soils, and polluted areas. Gardens of excellence, as you can see on the ICS website, are 61. We revise gardens every 10 years and every year we assess new applications.

Let me wish a wonderful and bright 2026.

Feel free to mail me gianmario.motta@unipv.it

Professor Gianmario Motta, ICS President

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gianmario Motta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the name.