old, by providing it with protective measures as illustrated in the author’s previous article (Hiruki et al., 2012).

After removing dead branches of the historic camellia, about 25 cm of topsoil was placed around the tree in a circle about 6 m in diameter. Eight plastic pipes, internal diameter 7.5 cm, 1.30 m in length (25 cm above ground and the rest underground) were laid around the tree to provide sufficient water to encourage new root growth in the ground. Young azalea seedlings were planted in the new topsoil around the tree to deter admiring visitors from trampling the ground close to the tree and to make the area look beautiful.

Within a month of completing the work, the vigour of the old historic camellia had returned, a result that encourages us in our efforts to expand the programme of applying these protective measures to other historic camellia trees in the future.

**Research on blight resistant camellias**

There is another project that is in progress. Plants of yabutsubaki (*Camellia japonica*), which originated in Goto, are being studied to select those that are resistant to flower petal blight (*Ciborinia camelliae*).

Other articles relating to the giant camellias of Goto and their protection can be found in ICS Journals 43, 2011 and 44, 2012.

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**Camellias at the Auckland Botanic Gardens, New Zealand**

Mark Fielder & Shaun Rice

In August Auckland Botanic Gardens was privileged to host delegates from the Camellia conference. We were particularly pleased to receive so many positive comments about our Camellia Collection, especially since it is still a relatively young garden with the first planting taking place in 1985. Since that time it has become one of the largest Collections of camellias within New Zealand. A large proportion of these plants were either recommended or supplied by renowned New Zealand camellia breeder Neville Haydon, the former owner of Camellia Haven, once the largest specialist camellia nursery in the country. Neville continues to support and advise us on the Collection as it evolves.

Earlier this year, the International Camellia Society recognized the Collection as a Garden of Excellence. The Collection here at the Auckland Botanic Gardens, is only the second one in the country to have received this award with Dunedin Botanic Gardens being the other recipient. The award is the culmination of a great deal of work from a number of people connected to the Botanic Gardens, in both initiating the Collection and helping it grow into its current form.

The objective of the Collection is to educate visitors about the wide diversity of the genus *Camellia* and to emphasize the long-standing importance of the genus, both in a cultural and economic sense. We promote the various options that are available for growing them in the Auckland region and encourage people to utilize species and small leaved hybrids within their home gardens.

Since the first plantings were made the Collection has expanded to the point that it now contains in excess of 400 hybrids and 60 species. Over the years we have conducted trials and research to gauge how well different *Camellia* species and hybrids grow in Auckland’s soil and climatic conditions. This information has in turn been compiled and provided to the public in a series of advisory leaflets that are available from our Visitor Centre and the Botanic Gardens’ website.

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Based on evaluations of the various types of *Camellia* that we have within the Collection, we have determined that smaller-leaved *Camellia* species and hybrids perform exceptionally well. They grow to varying sizes from graceful small trees to small dense shrubs, and many are well suited to growing in small home gardens or in containers. Generally they require little ongoing maintenance.

Most of these camellias flower between March and December and are generally less cold-hardy than other species although Auckland’s climate is normally temperate for most of the year. Many produce clusters of small flowers in great profusion over a long period during the winter and spring months. The flowers are often sweetly scented and their size is usually in proportion to the size of the leaves. An added attraction is the reddish coloured new growth of certain species and hybrids that contrasts attractively with the darker green mature leaves. This feature can make them very pleasant to look at in a garden, even when they are not in flower. Some of the better performing small leaved species that we have identified within the Collection include *Camellia cuspidata*, *C. lutchuensis*, *C. transnokoensis* and *C. minutiflora*. Among better performing small leaved hybrids within the Collection include ‘Festival of Lights’, ‘Fairy Blush’, ‘Sugar and Spice’, ‘Quintessence’, ‘Gay Baby’ and the recently released ‘Transpink’.

One of the true highlights of the Collection are our yellow flowered *Camellia* species which include *C. nitidissima*, *C. microcarpa*, *C. flava*, *C. tunghinensis*, and *C. impressinervis*. Some of these yellow flowering species have the added attraction of red coloured juvenile foliage that changes to green with maturity. They are a real novelty for our visitors whenever they flower and they attract lots of attention and comment since they are not well-known in New Zealand.
Camellia petal blight is a major concern at Auckland Botanic Gardens just as it is worldwide. Recently the New Zealand Camellia Trust contributed funding towards further research into determining the degree to which different *Camellia* species and hybrids are resistance to petal blight. From this work and through ongoing consultation with Neville Haydon, we are working towards a list of potentially viable hybrids and species from which we can eventually base our own breeding and trialling work.

One of the other initiatives that we have conducted recently is to illustrate the importance of *Camellia sinensis* to our own health and wellbeing. In particular we have interpreted how it is used to produce the time-honoured beverage of tea. For a couple of months we had a highly successful display in our Visitor Centre that included demonstrations and tea-tasting events given by two tea manufacturing companies, Zealong and Dilmah, guided tours around the camellia Collection and a high tea at the Garden Café. This interactive display and the events organized around it proved to be extremely popular with our visitors and gave them a new perspective into the benefits of *Camellia* as well as promoting our Collection here at the Botanic Gardens.

Mark Fielder is now our Collection Curator Magnolias & Camellias, replacing Shaun Rice in January 2012 when Shaun was promoted to a senior gardener role. Mark has been working at the Botanic Gardens since 2005 when he started an apprenticeship. He then assumed an amenity gardener position until he was appointed to the Collection curator role.

Mark’s has had a lifelong interest in plants and gardening, starting his own vegetable garden as a young boy. When he was 15 he started working at Kings Plant Barn and then he went to Palmers. He was granted a scholarship to study at Manukau Institute of Technology and graduated with a diploma in horticulture in 2004.

Mark is delighted to be able to spend time learning from renowned camellia breeder and expert Neville Haydon. He also hopes to collaborate with Neville to breed camellias resistant to petal blight.

Mark is committed to studying our camellia Collection and aspires one day to become our resident camellia expert. He wants to continue to develop the species Collection and promote their use in gardens.