The last winter, 2012/13, was relatively mild. The first japonicas flowered at New Year. Longer periods of frost with temperatures below – 10°C did not start until March and caused the loss of many open buds. Due to continuing low temperatures and extremely low light levels during the whole winter, the flowering time of camellias in the garden was prolonged until the beginning of July. Although the summer has been very warm, the high temperatures have not caused any significant damage and the flower bud development promises a good flowering season next spring. We are now eagerly awaiting the first sasanquas.

The vacant position for a gardener was filled again by one of our own newly trained gardeners who joins Mr Rösner’s excellent team, which is responsible for camellias, potted plants, proteas and more!

Protective work in progress for historic camellias at the Goto Camellia Forest Park in Japan

Chuji Hiruki
The Goto Camellia Society

The Goto islands are historically known as islands of camellias (Hiruki, 2011).

The Goto Camellia Forest Park was recognized as one of the ICS Gardens of Excellence in 2010. It has approximately 300 outstanding camellia cultivars with an additional 3,000 yabutsubaki, native to the islands, planted systematically on a carefully selected site overlooking the vast East China Sea. There are about 20 old historic camellia trees that have been replanted in the Garden having been rescued from different construction sites where they were threatened by removal or destruction.

Following our advice, the city of Goto has completed a programme of protective work to encourage renewed growth of one of the historic camellia trees, estimated to be about 300 years
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.

After providing the protection measures (2013)

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

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.