Thirdly, the plan is to further enhance the Camellia Collection in conjunction with the Botanic Garden landscape plan.

**A Mix of Science and Art**

The Garden strongly supports horticultural training and education programmes providing hands-on work experience opportunities for youth trainees and international students and volunteers.

Important plant collections need conservation and protection. It is important for educational purposes to have plants grouped in botanical relationships, but it is in the end imperative that the Collection is a place people want to be, because camellias are beautiful and Camellia Gardens of Excellence provide us with knowledge as well as joy.

Vergelegen,  
**Somerset West, South Africa**

Laura Dickenson

Vergelegen has been a gardener’s paradise since the van der Stel era in the 1700s and today there are seventeen exquisitely themed gardens for visitors to enjoy.

The camellias at Vergelegen all started with Lady Florence Philips who planted the first plants in about 1920, beneath the 200 year-old Camphor trees in the Octagonal Garden. Later on the next owners of Vergelegen, the Barlow family, planted extensive areas of camellias from 1950 onwards until the 1980s. From 1990, Mir Jan Van Bergen donated his camellia collection to Vergelegen and a new era began for these gardens.

In 2010 we received recognition as an ICS Garden of Excellence.

Vergelegen celebrated their camellias over the weekend of 24 and 25 August 2013 with guided walks for the general public through the extensive Camellia Gardens. There are over a thousand camellias in the Vergelegen collection and five hundred and fifty varieties and a tour can take up to two hours.

Visitors have enjoyed the flowers tremendously this year and you can see why they are referred to as the ‘Winter Rose’. We have had a very wet winter and whilst this is not unusual because Cape Town is a winter rainfall area, we have not experienced this amount of rain for several years. Nevertheless, the camellias have been a shining light in the Vergelegen gardens.
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.

Jan Van Bergen with his favourite camellia

*C. j.* ‘Laurian Brown’

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.

Malcolm Pharoah, Head Gardener at Marwood Hill

*C. j.* ‘Coronation’ at Marwood Hill

We added more new cultivars last year as well as planting young plants from cultivars, which were in an area, not open to the public.

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.