



## IF THE BLOOM IS OFF THE ROSE FOR YOU, TRY CAMELLIAS

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Camellias, native to Asia, have become fixtures in the West ever since their introduction in the 1700s. Their leaves are dried to make traditional green or black tea, and many gardeners plant them for their showy winter blooms, which have a wide range of colors. Camellias thrive in temperate regions, but there are now also cold-hardy varieties that have expanded the growing range as far north as Canada.

Florence Crowder, a founder of the Great Gardens of America Preservation Alliance, said that although camellias have beautiful flowers like roses, "only camellias are easy to care for, don't have thorns and aren't ugly when they aren't blooming." There are countless species in the genus camellia, but these three species (or hybrids of them) are the most common.

- \* **C. JAPONICA** The most common ornamental species, it has large showy blooms, like a cabbage rose or a peony. The flowers fall off like a wilted pompom when spent, rather than shedding their petals one at a time.
- \* **C. SASANQUA** Another ornamental, but its blooms look more like an antique rose with fewer petals than C. japonica and a prominent yellow stamen/ the petals fall to the ground singly.
- \* **C. SINENSIS** Also known as the tea plant, this species is the source of traditional black, green, oolong and white teas. It is squat and has small, fragrant white flowers.

Some of the must-have camellias for the Conroe-Huntsville area which will be available at the Huntsville Show are Punkin, Southern Secret, and Brother Rose.

The nicest thing about camellias are the people you meet.