Enjoy camellias and the Camellia show in Fort Walton Beach

"In the whole range of splendid exotics which have been introduced into this country, there are few, if any, that combine so much elegance and beauty, either as it regards the dark, shining evergreen of their foliage, or the dazzling brilliancy of their flowers, as those constituting the natural order Camellia. At all seasons of the year it is unrivaled for the richness of its foliage, but in the dreary months of winter, when almost all the attractions of the floral kingdom are wrapt in slumber, it stands forth with peculiar splendor, displaying its showy blossoms of varied hue, and reigning at once the pride and glory."

This statement by M.P. Wilder, Esq. in The American Gardener's Magazine of January 1835 certainly tells the world why camellias have been so important to and so loved by gardeners for so many centuries.

In today’s article, Fort Walton Beach Camellia Society member Joseph Jenus provides information on camellias and invites you to a camellia workshop.

As you drive around Okaloosa County or anywhere in Northwest Florida during the winter months, almost every home will have one or more blooming camellias in its landscape.

The Greater Fort Walton Beach Camellia Society began in 1958, with Sarah Frances Brooks Pryor presiding over the earliest meetings. The Society’s biggest event of the year is its Camellia Show which is a regional competition in which hundreds of blooms (last year over 1000) are entered by members from various camellia clubs and also by amateurs from all over the Southeast. The Shows are sanctioned by the American Camellia Society. Admission to the Show is free.

The Fort Walton Beach Camellia Society’s 50th Annual Camellia Show will be held Saturday, November 9, 2013 at 12 Noon to 4 PM at the Westwood Retirement Resort, 1001 Mar Walt Drive, Fort Walton Beach (opposite the hospital).

At the Show, a limited selection of special camellias will be available for sale.

The public is invited to come to see the beautiful blooms. Also, anyone having blooms they would like to enter in the Show is welcome. Contact Joseph Jenus (850-862-4526) for details and procedures for entering your flowers.

For information about the Show or the Society, contact President Scotty Robertson (850-496-1221) or Vice President Cindy Warriner (850-496-3197).

Special Note: The next time you have a cup of tea, toast the camellia. Tea leaves come from camellias!

Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County, October 31, 2013