

| <i>Variety</i> | MEDIOCRE | <i>Variety</i> |
|-----------------|----------|------------------|
| Augusta Wilson | | Nagasaki |
| Cameo Pink | | Sergeant Barrios |
| Elizabeth Arden | | |

UNSATISFACTORY

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Agnes of the Oaks | Lilyi |
| Anne B. (Anne Brown?) | Lotus |
| Black Prince | Mathotiana Alba |
| Candidissima | Mrs. K. Sawada |
| Captain Martin's Favorite | Mrs. Lurman |
| Cassetti (Churchwell) | Otome |
| Countess of Orkney | Sarah Frost |
| Dante | Shiro Botan (White Peony) |
| Eleanor Hagood | Smiling Beauty |
| Elizabeth | Theresa Massini |
| Feasti | Waterloo (Etherington White) |
| Kelvingtonii | |

PLEASANT OAKS PLANTATION

HARGROVE BELLAMY, Wilmington, North Carolina

THIS lovely old plantation is situated on the Lower Cape Fear River in Brunswick County twelve miles southwest of Wilmington, North Carolina, and by nature is one of the most beautiful and picturesque sites of this famous region. The main entrance (Fig. 59) is distinguished by beautiful old wrought iron gates, flanked with white brick facade.

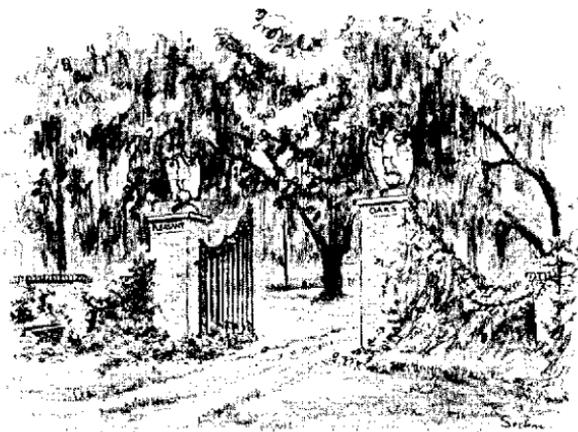


Fig. 59. Entrance to Pleasant Oaks Plantation

The plantation rice fields were among the best in America. The soil was entirely alluvial and represented the deposits of the river for ages. These rice fields were protected by dikes. In their day, they produced the largest grains of rice in the country and enjoyed a world-wide reputation for quality. The plantations were entirely self-sufficing. The old planters were college bred men of travel and culture, and their homes were the center of social life and political influence. Before the advent of good roads, all travel between the rice plantations was by means of boats, the sole means of transportation.

After entering Pleasant Oaks, one drives through a mile of woodland before reaching an avenue of stately live oak trees, extending some two miles to the gardens. This avenue of oaks is considered one of the most beautiful in the South. It is paralleled on either side by white rail fences, enclosing lovely green pastures. One will find in the gardens many of the finest camellias in our country, and thousands of beautiful azaleas, intermingled with countless holly and dogwood trees. The visitor will be impressed with the magnificent old oaks and the mirror-like lake in which are reflected the bordering azaleas and moss draped cypress.

Seven years ago the owners conceived the idea of having as their objective the making of this lovely site into one of the most beautiful camellia gardens in our country, and with the encouragement of Mr. S. L. Marbury, President of the American Camellia Society, they have finally arrived, at this writing, near completion of their plan. With another year for growth and maturity the gardens should have in excess of five thousand specimens of the finest varieties of camellias that are obtainable in this country at their full flowering stage.

The plan of the gardens has been so arranged that one can drive for nearly a mile through lanes of camellias that are banked on both sides of the driveway, intermingled with many thousands of azaleas, and with a canopy of tall long-leaf pines overhead giving perfect screening for growth and flower development. Because of the ideal cultural environment supplemented by virgin soil, amply protected from destructive winds and burning sun, the flower production is unusually beautiful and of longer lasting qualities than normally found throughout the South.

The gardens are under the able management of J. T. Ramseur, affectionately known as "Joe." He has found from experience that

with our favorable soil type, camellias do their best with little or no fertilization. In transplanting, however, a small amount of dehydrated sheep manure or castor bean meal used in the lower portions of the hole stimulates root development and is beneficial to the plant as a whole. If this medium of fertilizer is used properly, it develops nicely the subsurface root structure which is essential to the health of any camellia plant. Camellias, properly watered, can be safely transplanted any day out of the year, except during the time of the full flush of spring growth, with little shock to the plants. Should they be exposed to the direct rays of the sun, normal protection of shading is given for a few days. Contrary to all authorities, our camellias do best if given an opportunity to utilize the elements found in the soil, and, after once becoming established, little or no watering or fertilization is necessary. Although we have had some trouble with root interference, experience has shown that a healthy plant can overcome many handicaps of this nature.

In the so-called hot spots of our gardens, where a few plants are exposed to the direct rays of the sun during the major part of the day, we use a light mulching of pine straw for surface root protection of young and recently transplanted camellias. We believe heavy mulching with pine straw would be helpful should anyone be so unfortunate as to experience petal blight among his plants. Proper mulching should preclude sclerotia from the petals entering the ground and reproducing the disease.¹

We use the simple technique of cleft grafting without any protection at the point of contact of understock and scion. As soon as callus is properly formed and shoot buds begin to elongate, we remove the jars and give minimum protection from the sun. A healthy graft needs all the light and air available in the early stages of development.

We are great believers in pruning plants that are misshapen, or not in top condition, and do not hesitate in using our pruning shears drastically when necessary. We have developed many a sickly camellia into a beautiful plant by literally pruning almost to the ground. We have found that few, if any, of our plants need debudding. They seem to produce about the right number of flower buds each year which later develop into beautiful blooms.

¹ A heavy mulch might retard the movement of the flower blight organism from fallen flowers into the soil, but it is not likely to prevent such movement.—Ed.

We work on the theory (borne out by experience) that a healthy *camellia* properly planted under good soil conditions does best if left alone. Our friends continue to ask us, "What is wrong with my camellias?" They tell us all that they have done for their plants, most of which is wrong. They are always amazed when we tell them "Simply leave them alone and give them a chance."

We experience the average diseases found among camellias, and find that timely spraying with either Malathion or Volck is most helpful in the elimination of practically all scale insects. We use a large power sprayer mounted on a truck and find that we can cover the entire garden, because of the advantageous planting on either side of the roadway, in a day's time.

We have been asked to comment on the condition of our plants at this writing, May 1956. Although we were particularly deficient in rainfall this spring, we have experienced probably the greatest growth development in the history of our gardens. It would seem that nature was compensating the plants for the destructive March 27, 1955, freeze which virtually killed all new growth and stunted many plants. Our plants are producing the greatest number of seed pods that we have ever had, and they are further developed at this time than in any year of our experience. Some of the pods are fully an inch in diameter. The setting of flower buds is likewise far advanced, and they are in great abundance on almost every plant in the garden.

Because of the natural protection of a forest primeval, all types of camellias do well at Pleasant Oaks. Due to the abundance of moisture coming from both river and ponds surrounding the gardens, a minimum of cold and wind damage is experienced. We are now running an experiment on some of our *reticulatas*, hoping that after two or three years of acclimatization and adjustment we will be able to produce flowers without the inside protection normally required. We have been most successful in growing the *japonica Lotus* outside; some of the plants produced as many as seventy-five or more perfect blooms during normal winter conditions.

We invite all camellia enthusiasts to visit our gardens any time from December through April. Although one may drive through the gardens, with their vistas of lake and river, without the necessity of leaving the car, we have provided ample parking facilities for those who wish to linger among the flowers.