

THE SEBIRE CAMELLIAS

By Kylie Waldron

Between 1969 and 1989 over 60 camellias were registered by Edgar Sebire of Wandin North, near Melbourne, Victoria, making him one of the highest contributors ever to Australian bred camellias. Of these, 37 were *C. reticulata*, 11 were miniature hybrids, 5 were *C. japonica*, 2 were *C. saluenensis* hybrids, 1 was a *C. sasanqua*, and 6 were other hybrids.

Of his 60-odd registrations, it is easily apparent that the majority of Sebire's seedlings were chance seedlings; only one registration bore the pollen parent's name. Still, of the hundreds of seeds he raised, he selected the more promising for registration, and in some cases, those camellias are now treasured favourites.

Sebire's first registration was a *C. saluenensis* 'Donation' seedling; the pale pink, formal double *C. hybrid* Corinne Dawn in 1969. His following registrations to 1976, however, were mainly *C. reticulata* crosses. The exceptions were *C. japonica* Barbara Carol, *C. japonica* Pamela Jane, and *C. japonica* Carolyn Winift-ed, all from *C. japonica* 'Ville De Nantes' seed, and his only *sasanqua* camellia, Chiemalis Peerless, which was a double pink seedling of Chiemalis 'Showa no sakae'.



But it was the *reticulatas* to which Sebire would dedicate the majority of his time in the early 1970s, as were many other camellia hybridists around the world. As a seed parent, he favoured *C. reticulata* 'Dataohong' (Crimson Robe) which was the seed parent of 8 of his *reticulatas*, *C. reticulata* 'Buddha' (9), *C. reticulata* 'Talicha' (Tali Queen) (3), *C. reticulata* 'Lasca Beauty' (3) although, in total, he utilised 11 different *reticulata* seed parents.



His first *C. reticulata* registration was in 1970 with *C. reticulata* Kalimna (x *C. reticulata* 'Dataohong'), a red informal double of notable size (15 cm) and wavy upright petals. Registered in the same year were the all-reds Burgundy Queen (x *C. reticulata* 'Talicha') a semi-double, and Cherry Glow (x *C. reticulata* 'Dataohong') an informal double. In 1971 Harbinger (x *C. reticulata* 'Dataohong') an early flowerer, Loloma, the salmon pink Rose Gem and Pink Delight (seed obtained from the USA, so not technically 'Australian') were produced.



In 1973 Sebire registered the first camellia to incorporate 'Sebire' into its name; *Creticulata* Winifred Sebire the semiinformal double, deep pink, seed from *C.reticulata* 'Dataohong'. Also in 1973-1974 were Sebire's first registrations from *C.reticulata* 'Buddha' - the deep pink Keteam Burch and mid-pink Blossom Time.

C.sasanqua Peerless appeared in 1975, and the *C.reticulata* May Westbrook (x*Creticulata* 'Dataohong') in 1976. A blotch variegated form exists. The red *C. reticulata* Vi Henderson was also a seed from *C.reticulata* 'Dataohong', registered in 1976.

But 1976 belonged to *C.reticulata* 'Buddha'; six (mainly pink) registrations; Elizabeth Astles, Corinne Sebire (red), Springtime (Sebire), Rita Thornton and Camelot. Sebire also registered Alison Sebire, from a seed from *C.reticulata* Liuye Yinhong'. In 1977 he registered one of his best *reticulatas*, Wandin Sebire (x *C.reticulata* 'Dataohong'), a bright, glowing deep pink informal double.



Equally splendid was the deep pink Ada Sebire, a chance seedling.

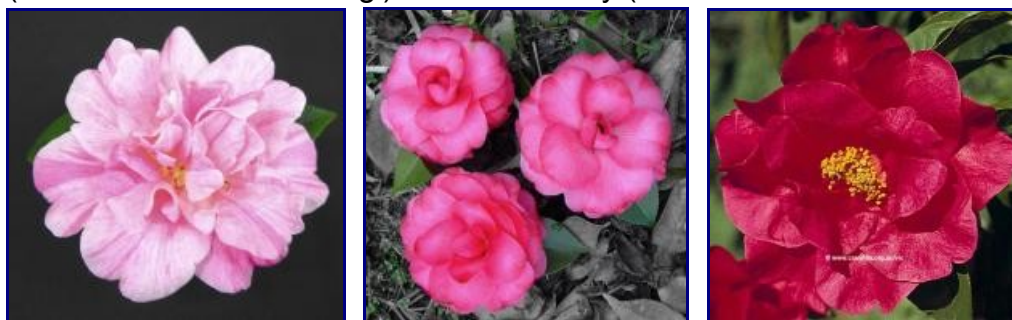
Sebire had obtained a plant of *C.Pitardii* var. *Pitardii*, and its seedlings fascinated him. For the first time, he moved slightly away from *reticulata* breeding, and dedicated himself to *pitardii* and other species crosses.

His first *C.pitardii* var *pitardii* registrations came in 1977: a collection of small flowering pinks (around 10 cm across): deep pink informal double Pink Cameo, light pink informal double Fairy Bouquet, and the only one of the group considered a miniature by today's standards, Sprite, (6.5 cm) a light salmon pink informal double.



In 1977 Sebire also registered one of his better hybrids; *C. saluenensis* hybrid Winter Gem (x *C. saluenensis* 'Margaret Waterhouse'), which is one of the few red *C. saluenensis* camellias. It is a formal double of reasonable size, which flowers late in the season. The colours red or deep pink appear to have been his favourites; 15 of the 63 camellias registered were described as red, 17 as red-pink or dark pink, 9 light pink, 8 mid-pink, 6 salmon pink, and only 4 white or white blushed pink or striped.

In 1979 the double pink striped Gay Pixie (x *C. pitardii* var *pitardii*) was registered, and remains Sebire's only striped camellia. A further two red *reticulatas* were also registered: Lowanna (x *C. reticulata* 'Dataohong') and De Lancey (x *C. reticulata* 'William Hertrich').



But the crowning glory for Sebire in 1979 was the registration of Chybrid Snow Drop (*C. pitardii* var *pitardii* x *C. faterna*), one of the earliest crosses in Australia between two different species camellias. The flower, today, does not appear very impressive (its white bell-shaped flowers blushed pink are not of outstanding texture and the olive green leaves never appear totally healthy) but at the time, Snow Drop was the smallest hybrid on the market, it was extremely floriferous, and one of the first cluster miniatures. It would also prove its worth as a parent. Also registered in 1979 was one of Sebire's better *C. pitardii* var *pitardii* hybrids, Adorable, a deep pink formal double of at least 8 cm diameter.

In 1980 we were introduced to Sebire's largest flowering *C. reticulata*; Beryl's Choice (x *C. reticulata* 'Talicha') a pink salmon bloom of 17 cm diameter. The size of Sebire's camellias is another interesting point to note. Many were registered with a particular size stated which is often much smaller than they have since flowered elsewhere. Adorable, for instance, was never under 10 cm when we grew it, and this bush was under 5 years old. Many of Sebire's *reticulatas* also are 3 or 4 cm over their registered size in other regions without disbudding, which suggests that his growing conditions were less than favourable for the types of seedlings he produced. Snow Drop, however, is generally the same everywhere.



1980 was one of the most interesting years of registrations for Sebire, and also included *C. hybrid* Annette Carol, a lovely pale pink which appears to have *pitardii* in it, although blooms are generally well above the 7 cm at registration, although the flowers are small. The ruffled deep pink *C. reticulata* Flamenco (x *C. reticulata* 'Buddha') and the full and heavily veined deep pink Georgie Girl (x *C. reticulata* 'Dataohong') were also registered in 1980. The most unusual camellia for 1980, though, was Gypsy Rose, a seedling of *C. japonica* 'Lady Kay', which was, of course, red informal double, with a finely serrated edge on the petals.



1981 saw the introduction of another species hybrid that would contribute greatly as a parent; *C. rosiflora* hybrid Rosabelle. The deep to mid-pink dainty semi-double was no more than 6 cm across, with good texture, and seeded readily. Sebire's only formal double *reticulata* was also registered in 1981; the pale salmon pink *C. reticulata* 'Lovely Lady' which still appears on show benches.



In 1983, *C. hybrid* Pink Ruffles (Sebire) (x *C. Pitardii* var. *Pitardii*) was registered. In 1984 the second *C. rosiflora* seedling was registered, the beautiful Mandy, a light pink semi-double. Again, hybrids bred since then have been better than 'Mandy', but at the time it was one of the few many petalled miniature hybrids available, and it became very popular during this period. The other 1984 releases were all *C. reticulata*: the pale pink Ida Cossom (x *C. reticulata* 'Lasca Beauty'), the pink-red Our Selection (x *C. reticulata* 'Shizitou' (Lionhead)), and one of Sebire's best, Bright Beauty (x *C. reticulata* 'Lasca Beauty'), an indescribable glowing pink red.



The 1985 reticulatas included the salmon pink Barbara Sebire (x *C. reticulata* 'Buddha'), the USA-originated seed Mark's Surprise (x *C. reticulata* 'Francie 12') (which has a variegated form in the USA), the pink salmon Crinoline (x *C. reticulata* 'Lasca Beauty'), and Dark Jewel (x *C. reticulata* 'Damanao' (Cornelian)). Two *C. pitardii* var *pitardii* hybrids were also registered: the single semi-double pink blushed pink Popsy, and the red semi-double Rhonda Elizabeth. But the leap forward in Sebire's registrations for 1985 was his *C. hybrid* 'Snow Drop' seedling Alpen Glo. Dainty, single to semidouble florets in clusters with small leaves and long branching like a fern, and its gorgeous colour of white blushed pink, made it an instant favourite. Today it is one of the best known miniature Sebire hybrids.



The calibre of Sebire's miniature hybrids had moved up a notch in the mid-1980s, as Snow Drop continued to produce worthy offspring. However, in 1986 it was a *C. pitardii* var *pitardii* hybrid that turned heads; the pale pink and white double Our Melissa. It was an upright weeper, miniature cluster hybrid, extremely floriferous, and as successful in the garden as it was on the show benches. Mandy had suddenly become Mandy who?, although Our Melissa never wiped out Alpen Glo. Also registered in 1986 were the 'Snow Drop' twins Blondy (a tiny white bloom) and the deep pink Spink. Neither, though, were as floriferous as Our Melissa or Alpen Glo. Blondy proved its worth as a pot plant.



Later camellias registered include C.pitardii var pitardii Mopsie 1987, C.reticulata Eileen Sebire (C.reticulata 'Damanao' (Cornelian)) 1987, C.Pitardii var. Pitardii - Moonbeam 1988, C. Pitardii var. Pitardii - Bright Forecast 1989 and his georgeous H. Pale opal, 1993. So Edgar Sebire did not just raise reticulatas or just Pitardii hybrids. He gave us some brilliant camellias and excellent parent camellias, many of which will be around for many years to come.

My recommended Sebire camellias are: C.hybrid Adorable, Creticulata Wandin Sebire, C.reticulata Bright Beauty, C.miniature hybrid Alpen Glo, C.miniature hybrid Our Melissa, C.saluenensis hybrid Winter Gem, C.japonica Gypsy Rose, C.japonica Andrea Sebire, and Cminiature hybrid Rosabelle.



Who Were They?

Some of the names were derived as follows:

Beryl = as in 'Beryl's Choice'= Edgar Sebire's wife.

Elizabeth Astles = Elizabeth Astles = Edgar's mother-in-law. Ada = Ada Sebire = Edgar's mother.

Wandin = Wandin Sebire = Edgar's father & the name of the area that his family founded.

The other names are mostly those of daughters and granddaughters.