

WHO NEEDS FLOWERS

By Barry Johnson ©

Should it be all about a pretty face or, the complete package. We've all heard the 'blonde bimbo' jokes and ones about the new-age, metro-sexual, exfoliating Adonis'. We can't all be Hugh Jackman or, Elle MacPherson. Do these people really look that good when they fall out of bed in the mornings? Our camellias are much the same. Most of them look stunning when they are in full plumage (flowering) but, what about when they're not. Do they have to be resigned to the back garden stalls as innocuous background shrubs or can they offer more? Camellias can suffer from the same expectational fate as roses in that, we can only think of them in terms of their flowers. Many camellias (like roses) can also feature great foliage colours, textures and shapes. As a landscaper, I am always trying to think beyond the standard seasonal repertoire of the full spring symphony and the autumnal amen. Intermingling and juxtaposing foliage colours and textures can go a long way towards adding garden interest in the interceding periods when your camellias aren't being too sexy for their leaves. Enter stage left the species and many hybrid cultivars.



Sp. Nitidissima



Sp. Tsaii

We should always grow more camellias so, why not rip out some of those other boring background shrubs you haven't noticed in years and plant some of the camellia species cultivars. Try the 'orientalis' and fragrance of *Sp. Lutchuensis*, the weeping, twistedness of *Sp. Tsaii* and the burnished salaciousness of *Sp. Salicifolia*. Other species with interesting foliage are *Minutiflora*, *Transnokoensis*, *Nitidissima*, *Microcarpa*, and *Assimilis*.



Sp. Assimilis



Sp. Transnokoensis

If you're an exhibiting junkie then many hybrids might take your fancy. While the dark flowers of *H. Night Rider* have mysterious appeal, so does its claret-coloured foliage regrowth. Fine-leaved cultivars such as *S. Slim n Trim* and *H. Transtasman*. The weeping cascading ones like *J. Kujaku Tsubaki* (Peacock camellia), *H. Sweet Emily Kate*, *H. Will's Wonder*, *H. Bridal Bouquet* and *S. Marge Miller*. If you're looking for some foliage variegation to brighten up a background try *J. Tsubaki-Benten* or *H. Golden Spangles*. For quirkiness try *J. Quercifolia* (The fish-tailed camellia) or, *J. Holly Bright* with its crepe-like flowers and holly-like serrated foliage.



H. Night Rider



J. Kujaku Tsubaki (Peacock camellia)



J. Quercifolia (The fishtail camellia)



J. Holly Bright foliage



H. Edina Cascade



J. Tsubaki-Benten