

Another old *Camellia* identified

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Jack Goodwin became Curator of Pukekura Park in 1949. He recorded that, in the early 1950s, he had measured “a few” of the *Camellias* in the Park. He found that, at that time, there must have been 50 more than 12 feet high and with a spread of 18 feet or more (*New Zealand Camellia Bulletin* 2(4) (1961): 6). Unfortunately, no record exists of the identity of most of the *Camellias* included in Goodwin’s survey but the large old-fashioned *Camellia japonica* cultivar that is prominent at the southern end of Sunken Dell beside the outlet to the main lake may have been one of them. This healthy plant flowers prolifically throughout a long period from early June until late October.

I mentioned in an earlier article (*Supplement to Newsletter of Friends of Pukekura Park* 2(2) (October 2007) that it is not possible to identify most old *Camellia japonica* cultivars, even given that they have been named, without reference to the early illustrated *Camellia* literature, some of which is now available on the Internet. After researching the most relevant of this early and later literature, I am satisfied that the *Camellia* in question is a specimen of the old cultivar *Camellia japonica* ‘Triumphans’.

Camellia japonica ‘Triumphans’ originated in Belgium and was first validly named in 1833. The following description of it by Berlese in *Monographie du genre Camellia* (1837) is taken from the English translation of that work (*Monography of the Genus Camellia* 1838: 72): “147. *C. Triumphans*. - Leaves two and a half inches wide and three long, roundish-oval, slightly acuminate, nerves very distinct, a little undulated towards the middle, thick, very like those of the ‘*Colvillii*’; bud spherical, depressed at the summit, and as large as a small walnut, before it expands into blossom; scales calycinal, large, thick, rounded, of a yellowish colour; flower three and a half inches



Photo David Medway

Camellia japonica ‘Triumphans’ beside main lake outlet

in diameter, very full, regular, cherry-red, No. 1, gradually shaded with a pure rose, whose intenseness diminishes from the circumference to the centre; petals large, a little recurved at the exterior extremity, imbricated gracefully, slightly veined with red and rose; sometimes the petals of the centre, which are small, are striped with white.- *Magnificent*". The accompanying painting of 'Triumphans' appeared as Plate 104 in Berlese's *Iconographie du genre Camellia* (1841-1843).



Camellia japonica 'Triumphans'
from Berlese (1841-1843)

The source of the Park's specimen of 'Triumphans' is not known, nor is it known when it was planted but it is obviously of considerable age. A flourishing specimen of this cultivar, planted at Mangapouri mission station near Te Awamutu in 1834, was still present in 1960 (Durrant *The Camellia Story* 1982: 46-47). I do not know if it survives. In 1960 there was another fine specimen in Cambridge which was subsequently removed to make way for commercial development (*New Zealand Camellia Bulletin* 14(3) (1985): 19). It is possible that other old specimens of 'Triumphans' still exist elsewhere in New Zealand but have not yet been identified as such. In any event, because of its identity and probable age, the Pukekura Park specimen of *Camellia japonica* 'Triumphans' is a notable plant in its own right.



Flowers of *Camellia japonica* 'Triumphans'.

Photos David Medway