

# HINTS ON CAMELLIA PROPAGATION

## SEEDS

**Seeds** generally start to ripen around March when many seedpods will have opened exposing their seeds, which should be harvested as early as possible. Those pods which have not yet cracked will do so very soon after picking.

**The sooner seeds are planted the easier it is to have them germinate.** They do best in a 50/50 mixture of damp peat or sphagnum moss and sharp sand, placed in a sealed bottle and kept in a warm place. The first signs of growth will be noticed after about a month or two when first, the radicle (root) will appear growing downwards and then the plumule (stem) will begin growing skywards.

When planting out into say 4-inch (10mm) pots, the tip of the radicle can be nipped off to promote a branching root system.

Besides growing potentially interesting seeds, it is worth growing a number of sasanqua seedlings each year so that after 3 or 4 years there is a good supply of grafting stock. There is a slight chance of getting something different in flower colour, form, or plant habit. Some growers like to use *reticulata* understock for retics and the chances of an interesting flower (at least in the mind of the raiser) are somewhat better.

The photos are of recently germinated *reticulata* seeds potted into small pots. They have started to develop tiny leaves, which probably will not grow much until the weather warms up. Interestingly once they were brought out into the light, the plumule (top bit) does not grow any longer; it just starts to develop leaves. These seeds which were sown fresh only three months ago are now little plants with roots and leaves, whereas of the sasanqua seeds sown at the same time only one has produced a small radicle (root), most of the others are just starting to split. Therefore, for best results, plant seeds as fresh as possible and keep them warm.

