

Craig Carroll spoke to us on hand pollinating Camellias

The main thing you need is patience; it is the main secret for success when you are investing in hand pollination.

If you decide to try, decide your objective [goals]

- You can do it for fun
- Fragrance
- Cold resistance
- Specific colour [i.e.. yellow or blue]
- Outstanding flowers

Craig has mainly crossed for early flowers with reticulatas using japonicas, which also help with a more compact growth habit, [inherited from japonicas]

Stronger plants [so reticulatas have less chance of getting dieback caused by the fungus *Glomerella circulata*]

To hand pollinating a camellia

- Select a camellia you know that will produce a lot of seeds [one that you have observe sets seeds regularly] [usually a single or semi-double like Edith Linton, Cho Cho San or Dr Tinsley Select the pollen parent, emasculate the flower on the seed parent that is to be pollinated [select a bud that is just about to open]
- Cut off the petals to the calyx, using fine sharp scissors
- Then remove all stamens to the same level
- Place pollen on the emasculated flower [the pollen is placed on the stigma, thoroughly cover with the pollen]
- Craig does his pollinating in August when the day is warm [you can tell this by the bees being around]
- Cover the pollinated flower with a paper bag
- Keep records of what has been done

After Care

- Craig uses a netting bag, so he does not lose any ripe seeds in Autumn [ seeds are harvested and sowed]
- Remember it can take up to 7 years for a seedling to flower [ Howard Aspers did 400 crosses to get "The Girls"; Show Girl, Drama Girl and Dream Girl]
- You need to then evaluate your seedlings which takes time and care
- If you really like a seedling it will take 3 to 5 years to evaluate on ten or more plants
- To start with you need to graft 10 plants
  - Keep records on its performance-at the end of three years, you should have a good general idea of its characteristics
- Record its flowers, foliage, growth habits, leaves, blooming time and distinction [all these things must show up on your 10 plants, the bad qualities will show up as well]
- Most commercial growers need it to set buds in an 8" pot as a 3 year old plant and easy propagation [i.e.. growing plant from cuttings]
- You are now in year 4 after you have selected your seedling flower of choice it is still not in production- assuming it will root from cuttings you still have 5 years more to go
- It is a long time to grow only a so camellia [so choose 'the parents' wisely]
- Naming should come last after the plant has been proven and it measures up to all evaluations given

Craig's most famous camellia is "Ellie's Girl", Craig started when he was 16 years old and has also grown commercial Azaleas, Irises and daylilies.

A thoroughly interesting evening with both our speakers giving us a lot of really interesting information, I cant wait to have a little play at pollinating this year. Liz (editor NSW Camellia Research Society )