

**MORNING TEA TO MARK THE
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CAMELLIA SOCIETY OF TASMANIA
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FRIDAY 11 JULY 2025**

Good morning, everyone. I warmly welcome you all to Government House to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Camellia Society of Tasmania.

May I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose land we gather. I acknowledge today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community as ongoing custodians of country. I recognise their enduring culture and deep connection to land, sea, sky, and waters.

Today, we acknowledge the contributions, commitment, and community spirit that have seen this Society blossom and flourish for half a century.

Founded in 1975, the Camellia Society of Tasmania is dedicated to the cultivation, appreciation, and promotion of the camellia—a flower whose grace, colour, and quiet beauty has captivated gardeners and artists for generations. It is a symbol of elegance, with roots in both Tasmanian gardens and horticultural history around the world.

Camellias originated in East Asia, with the most famous and renowned species, *Camellia sinsensis* appearing in Chinese literature as early as 300 BCE. We know this species, as tea. From China, the tradition of tea drinking spread to Japan where their tea ceremony evolved into a cultural practice.¹

From those origins in East Asia, the camellia found a home in Tasmania's cool climate and fertile soils. Camellias first came to Australia in 1823. By the mid-nineteenth century, Australia was in the throes of a camellia boom. That boom waned in the 1880s, only to be rekindled in the early 1900s when hybrid forms were introduced. In 1952 this resurgence led to the formation of the

¹ <https://www.sci.news/biology/hainan-tea-13550.html> accessed 1 Jul 25

Australian and New Zealand Camellia Research Society. By 1962, it had more than 1000 members.

Here, in Tasmania, cultivation of camellias began in 1838 with the founding of the Launceston Horticultural Society. Then President, Reverend R.R. Davies, brought camellias from China in 1846. Some 354 plants arrived in consignments over the following years.²

The first meeting of what was then the Tasmania Branch of the Australian Camellia Research Society was held on 19 February 1975. Sixteen of a total of 23 members attended. Since then, the membership has grown and currently stands at 58.

The first display by the Branch was held in August 1976. Displays have been held annually at nurseries around the south of our State. Each September, members show their camellias at the Claremont Spring Flower Show and Hobart Horticultural Society Early Spring Show.

Society members planted and have maintained the camellia garden in the grounds of the Narryna Heritage Museum since 1979. Most of the plants were provided by the Society without charge.³

Over the past five decades, your Society has held exhibitions, garden visits, and workshops. You have brought together people from all walks of life—united by a love of plants, learning, and the shared joy of seeing the first bloom of spring.

You have also made a significant contribution to horticultural education in Tasmania.

On this golden anniversary, may we acknowledge the vision of the founding members of the Society, and those who have stewarded it through the decades.

² <https://camelliasaustralia.com.au/history/the-history-of-camellias-in-australia-ken-tate-2/> accessed 1 Jul 25

³ Email Vicki Cowles / Amanda Banks 2 Jul 25

To the current committee and members, thank you for continuing this tradition with enthusiasm.

May the Camellia Society of Tasmania continue to blossom for many years to come.

Congratulations on your fifty years.

Thank you.