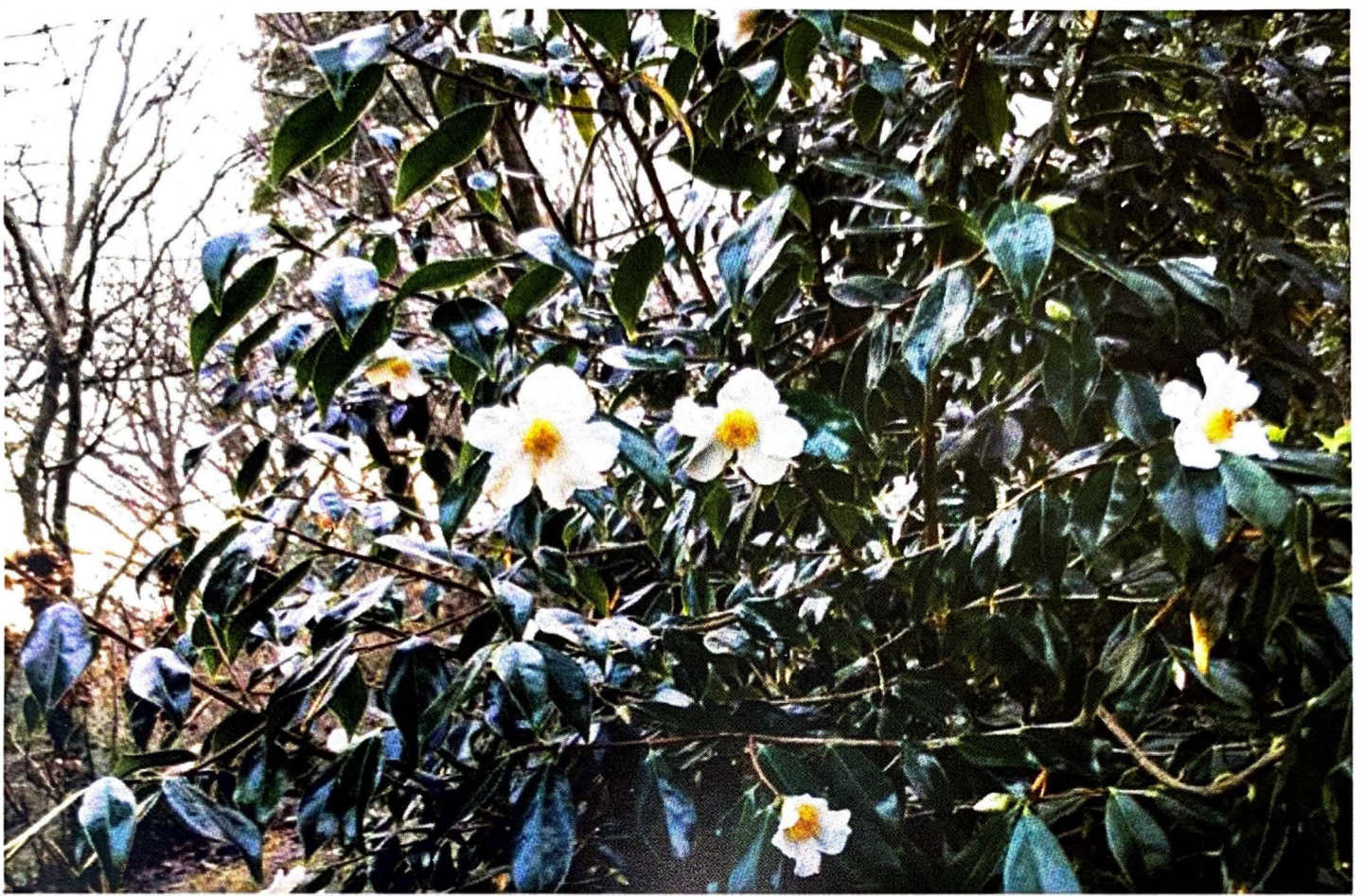


## ***Camellia pitardii* – A valuable addition to the scented winter garden**

**I**n 2009, Maurice Foster kindly gave me a small seedling *Camellia* which he had collected and which he called *Camellia tunganica*. After a year of growing it on, I planted it out in a sheltered part of my garden at the edge of a small area of woodland, shaded by a dwarf form of Chilean *Podocarpus salicifolius* growing a couple of feet away. After a further three years, it produced three pure white single flowers in mid-January which, to my surprise, were richly and sweetly scented. Since then, it has reliably flowered every January into February providing a succession of pure white flowers with a golden central boss of stamens, set against the deep green foliage. A most attractive sight, lighting up its slightly shaded position.





*Camellia pitardii* in John Marston's garden.  
Both the photos were taken by him.



*Camellia tunganica* is now considered one of the many synonyms of *C. pitardii* Cohen-Stuart, which appears to be the accepted name for the species. In the Flora of China *C. pitardii* is described as growing anything from 3m to 7m tall (my plant is 1.5m after eight years) and as having flowers with five or six petals ranging in colour from deep pink to white. This white form, like my plant, has been synonymously known as *C. pitardii* var. *alba*. Rather surprisingly, no mention is made of its powerful scent. It is possible that the pink forms are not so strongly scented – I would be interested to hear from other members who can comment on this. The leaves are a glossy deep green with serrated edges and a prominent midrib as can be seen in the photograph taken in mid-January, and they do set off the flowers beautifully.

*C. pitardii* is to be found in forests and thickets at lowish altitudes in southern China; Guizhou, Yunnan and Sichuan from where I believe Maurice made his collection. For a plant from only about 2,500m altitude, mine appears to be remarkably hardy and the flowers are untouched by the weather. Another excellent feature is that the flowers drop off the shrub while still a pristine white, so no brown mushy flowers desperately hanging on.

I would strongly recommend that *Camellia pitardii*, and in its white form, should have a place in the winter garden for colour, poise and above all, rich sweet scent. Move over Daphne.

*John Marston*

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