

Dunwoody Garden Club: You Just Never Know What You Might Stumble Upon at a Garden Club Meeting

A funny thing happened during the Dunwoody Garden Club's March meeting! The meeting was held at an outdoor pavilion at Brook Run Park in Dunwoody on March 10, 2021. After our social half hour - which the ladies did not want to end (we hadn't gathered since November) - we had a club meeting and then a program on camellias.

John Scarpucci, the President of the North Georgia Camellia Society, gave a great presentation all about camellias – different varieties; hybrids; flower colors, forms and sizes; how to grow; forcing; pests and diseases; pruning; propagating; and, public and private gardens with wonderful camellias to see.

In addition, he discussed “lost treasures” – camellia varieties that were developed in Georgia but have been lost. There were five, and they have found three. They are still looking for ‘Wheeler’s Fragrant’ and ‘Virginia Rich’. He said the ‘Virginia Rich’ was named after Virginia Rich of Rich’s department store. He had a picture of what the flowers looked like. One of our members, Norma Barfield, raised her hand and said “I think I have the ‘Virginia Rich’”. It seemed to several of us that John was thinking “sure lady, that’s what everyone says”, but he gave her his card and told her to send him a picture. As he continued his presentation, she called her neighbor and asked her to take some pictures of the flowers and send them to her. She interrupted John again to show him the pictures. He seemed a lot more interested and asked her to email them to him so he could send them to his expert with the North Georgia Camellia society. The program ended with a lot of questions and answers. We all thoroughly enjoyed it.

Within a couple of hours after our meeting had finished, John called Norma, over the moon with excitement, saying they were pretty sure that in fact her bush *is* the long-lost ‘Virginia Rich’, and could

they please come see it!! Long story short, the next day he and the vice president of the North Georgia Camellia society went to see the camellia, verified it is in fact ‘Virginia Rich’, took cuttings and did some air layering!! Norma actually remembers purchasing the camellia at Rich’s at Perimeter! She had gone to Rich’s for a demonstration/class by Chef Paul Prudhomme and when she left the store from the lower level, they were selling the camellias outside!

Lesson learned – if you are looking for an old plant, look no further that a bunch of old lady garden clubbers!!

