

# News from the Tea Gardens At Camellia Forest

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Greetings and happy fall,

We love this time of year - cooler weather is here and the tea flowers are in bloom! [Connect with us](#) on social media to stay up to date with the tea gardens!

## Fall Tea for All – Sunday, October 24, 10am-4pm

Our second open house of the year is right around the corner! Visit us at Camellia Forest to celebrate the end of the 2021 harvest, taste our summertime teas, and see the tea flowers (and other flowering camellias) in bloom. There will be tours of the tea gardens throughout the day, tea for sipping in the shady grove, and we will have small batch samples for sale onsite only. Registration is not required, but do [let us know](#) if you plan to attend. This event is free, but there is an option to donate so we may continue our community outreach and public events.

## Meet the Makers Market – Saturday, November 6, 11am-4pm

Join us for our 4<sup>th</sup> annual Meet the Makers market. Check holiday shopping off your to-do list with our local vendors. There will be ceramics, local honey, fresh tea, and treats - in the beautiful outdoors surrounded by flowering camellias.

## Fall, 2021



## Workshops

### [GROW YOUR OWN](#)

#### SEEDS & SEEDLINGS

October 10, 10am-12pm

Learn about growing your own tea from seeds in the ground or in pots. Take home your own potted seeds and watch them grow!

#### PLANTS & PLANTING

October 17, 10am-12pm

Discuss choosing plants, site preparation, planting, and care in early years. We will also address growing tea in pots.

## Camellia Forest Nursery & Tea Gardens

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Contact us: [teafloergardens@gmail.com](mailto:teafloergardens@gmail.com)

## The Buzz Around the Tea Gardens

Recently we welcomed a growing hive of honeybees to Camellia Forest. West Orange Farms brought this hive to join in pollinating the gardens, yielding some special honey from the tea flower nectar this fall. The taste of honey is impacted by the nectar's flower source. Honey from *Camellia sinensis* has been shown to contain L-Theanine, an amino acid that is also found in tea. It can contribute to the calming effect you might experience after enjoying a cup of tea.

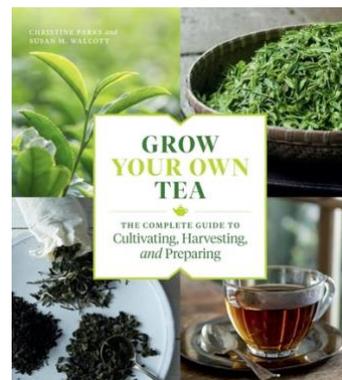
West Orange Farms will have several different types of honey at the Meet the Makers Market, and maybe even some samples of tea-flower honey! Robert from West Orange Farms said, "I look forward to meeting with people and connecting with them on discussing bees and honey, and related topics." We have really enjoyed getting to know Robert, who is a member of the Certified Honey Producers Program from North Carolina State Beekeepers Association, ensuring the quality of pure



natural honey from NC honey bees. We encourage you to support your local beekeepers. After all, tea and honey sure do pair well together!

*West Orange Farms offers hive rentals, ideal for someone who wants bees without having to deal with all the work. It includes maintenance and regular hive check-ups, with an option to harvest your own honey. Visit their [website](#) or connect with them on [Facebook](#) to learn more.*

## GROW YOUR OWN TEA



After 5 years of planning, research, and writing we're still celebrating! Published a year ago we are honored that booklist named it "the guide of guides to growing tea." And we have been so very gratified by the interest and appreciation from customers, and are happy to be able to provide this support for all types of growers who want to get started with tea! The book is available at [Camellia Forest](#) (signed copies by request/at in person events), and the proceeds go towards expanding our educational opportunities and community outreach.

## SPEAKING OF TEA

We're excited to be returning to the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association Sustainable Agriculture Conference on November 14<sup>th</sup>. In addition to offering a recap of last-year's recorded talk, participants will be able to join us for a presentation and discussion of practical considerations, including extended time for Q&A! We love spreading the word about growing local tea and recently enjoyed speaking with members of the Durham Garden Forum. In November we look forward to visiting with the Raleigh Garden Club, and other custom tours. The gardens will be closed over the winter holidays. However, winter is a great time to dream about gardening, and we're still taking reservations for virtual and in person talks in 2022. [Contact us](#) to book us at your next event in person or online, or to schedule a visit – times fill up quickly!

## Planting Seeds

Collecting tea seeds for future planting is an easy way to expand your tea garden. If you start with more than one plant, you will likely have seeds developing; but less so if you have only one plant as they don't like to self-cross, though they will sometimes at a lower frequency.

We pick our seeds in fall, just before the pods begin to split and the seeds inside are dark brown. A pod may have one or two seeds, and sometimes even 3 or 4 seeds develop, depending on the efficiency of pollination. We then store the seed in an airtight container (we use plastic bags) with a damp paper towel for just a bit of moisture, and keep them refrigerated for a few months or up to a year or more before planting.



Seedlings have several advantages, the most important being greater resilience. In a population of seedlings, genetic diversity can increase resistance to various stressors. A single plant grown from seed can also create a tap root, extending into the soil three or more feet, increasing resistance to drought and even improving the quality of tea leaves harvested under hot, dry conditions.

### Fun Fact

(We admit our nerdish nature and invite you to learn with us as we explore all aspects of tea)

Think about it - tea seeds take more than a year to develop, from the initial flower bud that starts developing in May, maturing over the summer until it blooms in the fall. After cross-pollination, the seed then takes an entire year to develop and ripen! They also have a long lifespan in storage, under cool and humid conditions. Germination rates are greatly improved by cold stratification, at least 3 months of cold moist storage. Seeds then require warm moist soils to get started. In our garden, new seedlings emerge in the summer from seeds that fell under the plants the previous fall. [Read the study—](#)

## Friends of Camellia Forest

This past season we partnered with RambleRill Farm to host Carolina Piedmont Summertime Tea Talks: a symposium on growing local tea and community. The event was a great success and we thank everyone who attended!

We've become good friends with RambleRill Farm, and share an interest (and passion) for growing community and developing a local network of tea growers. RambleRill Farm was started in 2009 by Jane and Darin, who have always been gardening enthusiasts. As Jane puts it, "the gardening bug bit" and the interest kept growing. They sell fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, herbs, and eggs at their USDA certified organic farm. *Camellia sinensis* is one of the newer additions to their garden; through one of Christine's talks several years ago, they learned

about growing tea, and then took our Harvest & Processing workshop. After several years, the plants have grown, and this past August, we collaborated for the first time on a batch of green tea from their leaves, which was sampled by visitors to their "Saturday Slowdown" farmers market. At the Summertime Tea Talks, we admired Jane's talk on the health effects of tea, and

"Tea time is a chance  
to slow down, pull  
back, and appreciate  
our surroundings"

*-Letitia Baldrige*



RambleRill Farm has about 25 tea plants. Pictured are some alongside their barn

and the fact that Jane brings a scientific background, and a fresh perspective as she is learning about tea as a new plant for their farm. Jane and Darin both earned doctorates in neuroscience and psychology. After working in medical communications for over 20 years, Jane transitioned to working full-time at the farm. She became a registered horticultural therapist and has delved deep into the topic since, a perfect fit given her dual interests in psychology and plants. Jane personally finds working with plants to be

very therapeutic, and loves to provide opportunities for others to share in this experience.

People in the Piedmont Triangle area of North Carolina come to farming from many different backgrounds and at different points in life. For Jane, farming fulfills a need "to be outside and in the environment, with (her) hands in the soil." At Camellia Forest, we resonate with the love of being in the tea gardens and processing the leaves to make all types of tea, welcoming home gardeners, farmers, and tea lovers to join us in learning more about growing tea. Together with Jane and Darin, we are enthused by the local support expressed at the Summertime Tea Talks, and for community interest in growing local tea and foods. These values underlie the vision of RambleRill Farm of building local resilience in our food systems, supplying and educating our communities.

You can visit the [RambleRill Farm website](#) to shop their online store for pickups. On the first Saturday of each month, they host Saturday Slowdown at their farm. Including RambleRill Farm produce, there will be local vendors to shop from. There are also trails to walk around, animals to visit, and a chance to see the tea growing alongside their barn. Connect with RambleRill Farm on [Facebook](#) to learn more.