

PROPOSAL FOR THE REGISTRATION OF *Camellia x williamsii* 'Delia Williams'

ID:

Country : United Kingdom

Year Published/Registered : 1965

Cultivar Type : For Ornamental

Scientific Name : *Camellia* 'Delia Williams'

Species/Combination : *C. williamsii*

Chinese Name :

Japanese Name :

Meaning :

Synonym :

Delia Williams RHS, 1965, The Rhododendron and Camellia Yearbook, No.19, p.165 and pl.3: RHS., "Award of Merit", April, 21, 1964. Typical of the grex as a whole, this cultivar has narrow leaves attenuated at the tip and some 10 cm long and 3.8 cm wide. The flowers are 10 cm across, contain 8-10 petals and are coloured rose-pink (HCC.427/2) with some darker staining on the outer petals. In the centre is a cluster of stamens, a few of which are petaloid. See coloured illustration pl.3 facing p.56. Exhibited by Mrs Alison Johnstone, Trewithen. Cornwall, England.

Named 'Delia Williams' by Mrs Johnstone for her friend, Mrs Delia Williams of Caerhays Castle.

7 May 1964, West Briton and Royal Cornwall Gazette. Report of the public opening of the gardens at Trewithen: '*Notable among the many superb camellias was 'Delia Williams' in pale pink (named after Mrs Williams of Caerhays Castle) which won an award of merit at the RHS Show in London a few days previously'*



Photo: J. E. Donnell
Pl. 3—*Camellia williamsii* 'Delia Williams' A.M. 21st April, 1964 when exhibited by Mrs. Alison Johnstone, Trewithen, Grampound Road, Cornwall (see p. 165)



1964 RHS Award of Merit, The Rhododendron
& Camellia Yearbook 1965

'Delia Williams' © Jaimie Parsons, Caerhays

All references to 'Delia Williams' as a synonym of *C. x williamsii* 'Citation' should be deleted.

The evidence to support the registration of

Camellia x williamsii 'Delia Williams'

For reasons unknown, the cultivar *C. x williamsii* 'Delia Williams' appears in the Register of the International Camellia Society as a synonym of *C. x williamsii* 'Citation'. Careful study of both cultivars has proven that they are completely dissimilar in form, and therefore 'Delia Williams' should rightfully be registered as a different unique cultivar. The origin of both cultivars is unknown.

The Register states that 'Citation' was registered by Charles Puddle in 1958, with the information that it '*originated in England. It came to Bodnant in 1933 under the name 'Williamsii semi-double'*'. Bodnant exhibited 'Citation' at the RHS London Show in March 1960, and it received an Award of Merit. The award was reported in the RHS 1960 Rhododendron and Camellia Yearbook, with the following description:

'The flowers are semi-double, measure 3½ inches across and contain 16 petals; the stamens are numerous in a central cluster and a few are petaloid. The flowers are coloured Rose Pink (H.C.C. 427/2) with a slight deepening of the colour at the base of the petals and in the veination'



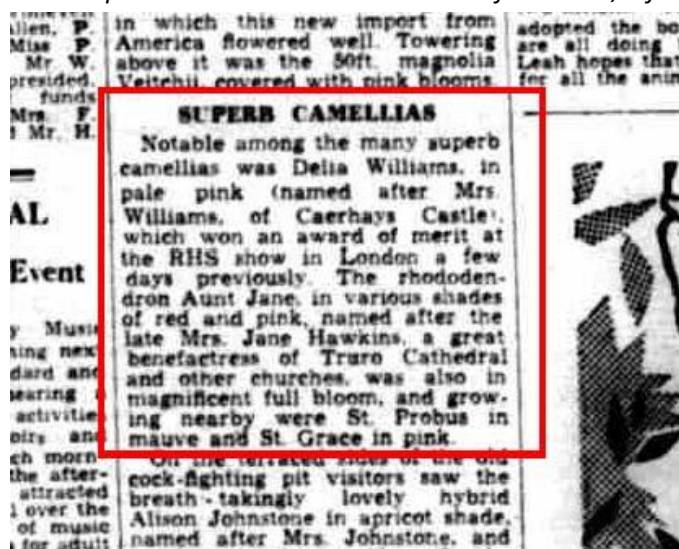
C. x williamsii 'Citation'

By kind permission, from the ICS Register

©Gianmario Motta

No archival information has yet been found to confirm when and how the cultivar now known as 'Delia Williams' appeared at Trewithen in Cornwall. Mrs Alison Johnstone exhibited it as *C. x williamsii* grex 'Delia Williams' at the RHS London Show in April 1964 and it received an Award of Merit. The award was reported in the RHS 1965 Rhododendron and Camellia Yearbook, with the following description:

'Typical of the grex as a whole, this cultivar has narrow leaves attenuated at the tip and some 4 inches long and 1½ inches across. The flowers are 4 inches across, contain 8 – 10 petals and are coloured Rose Pink (H.C.C. 427/2) with some darker staining on the outer petals. In the centre is a cluster of stamens, a few of which are petaloid'.



A report appeared in the *West Briton and Royal Cornwall Gazette* on 7 May 1964 relating to the public opening of the gardens at Trewithen on 3 May 1964. This includes the information:

'Notable among the many superb camellias was 'Delia Williams' in pale pink (named after Mrs Williams of Caerhays Castle) which won an award of merit at the RHS Show in London a few days previously'

It also confirms why the plant is so named.

Evidence has been found that Mrs Johnstone sent cuttings of 'Delia Williams' to the Head Gardener at Caerhays, in Philip Tregunna (1956 -1996) on 29 September 1965. He noted in his plant records book that they received cuttings of *Camellia* 'Delia Williams' from Mrs Johnstone. The plants continue to grow there to the present day.



Image from the
1965 RHS
Rhododendron
and Camellia
Yearbook

Photo: J. E. Downward

PL. 3—*Camellia williamsii* 'Delia Williams' A.M. 21st April, 1964 when exhibited by Mrs. Alison Johnstone, Trewithen, Grampound Road, Cornwall (see p. 165)

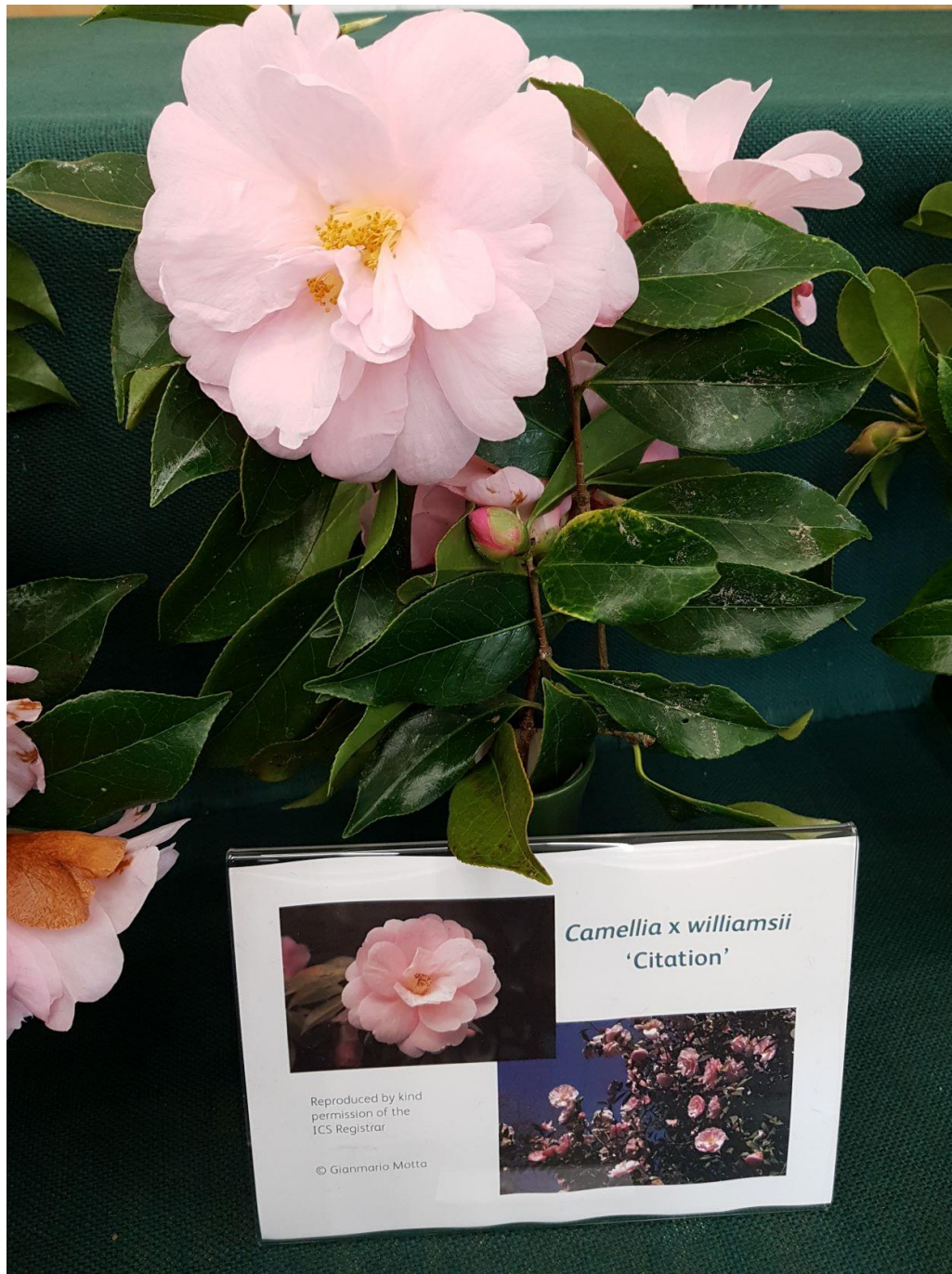
The descriptions of these cultivars back in the 1960s immediately demonstrate that they were very different plants, both in flower size and petal count, with the only similarity being the colour. There is no indication in the Register as to why 'Delia Williams' was absorbed into the entry for 'Citation' as a synonym.

RHS Rosemoor 12-13 March 2022

As part of the process towards examining the two cultivars more closely, RCMG members were invited to bring along plant material – flowers and foliage, of the plants of ‘Citation’ and ‘Delia Williams’ growing in their gardens. Three gardens were able to supply material of both cultivars, and these were put on display for inspection and for the general public to observe and give an opinion on whether they were all the same or whether the differences were easily apparent.

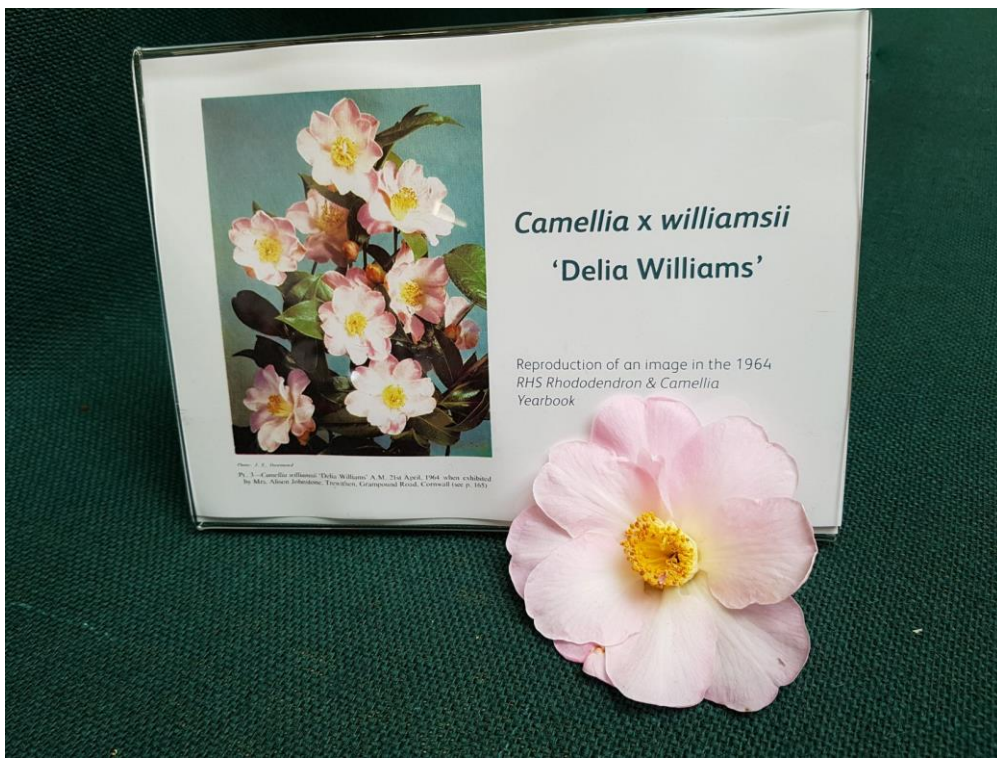
The overwhelming conclusion was that there were two different plants on display.

‘Citation’ showed the correct form and number of petals. It also had noticeably more rounded leaves.

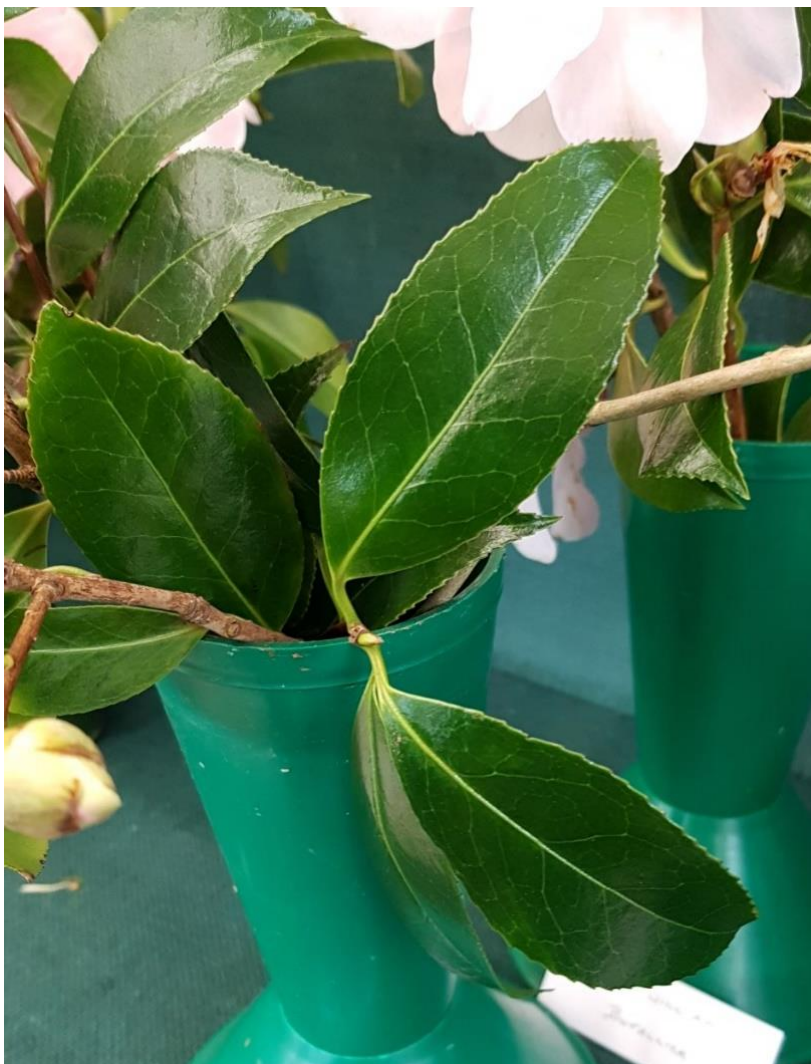




'Citation' foliage



'Delia Williams' flower at Rosemoor, exactly replicating the 1964 photograph.



'Delia Williams' long, narrow foliage

Prior to the Rosemoor Show, there was no evidence to be found that 'Delia Williams' was still growing at Trewithen. Subsequently however, the Head Gardener, Gary Long, using our analysis and evidence, managed to trace the original plant which had been growing unnoticed, hidden by a laurel hedge. It has grown into a tall tree, commensurate with it having been growing there for at least 58 years. It was easy to recognise the flower and the long narrow foliage from Gary's photographs.



The original *Camellia x williamsii*

'Delia Williams' at Trewithen



In conclusion

I request that *Camellia x williamsii* 'Delia Williams' should now be registered as an individual, unique cultivar together with the record of the Award of Merit made by the RHS in 1964 and full reference to the information that appeared in the 1965 RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Yearbook. Reference should also be made that it originally grew at Trewithen and was named 'Delia Williams' by Mrs Alison Johnstone of Trewithen, in honour of her friend, Mrs Delia Williams of Caerhays, mother of Charles Williams, the present owner of Caerhays.

I also request that all reference linking it as a synonym to the cultivar 'Citation' be deleted as irrelevant.