

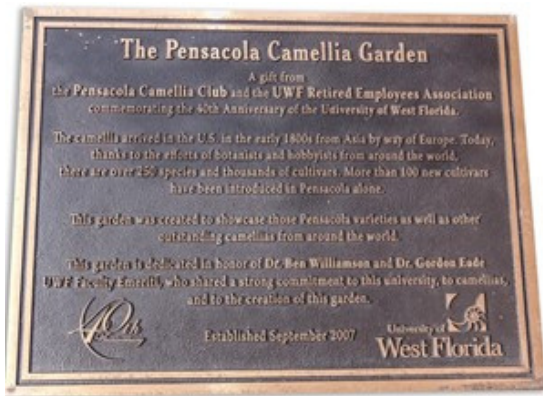
CAMELLIA GARDEN HISTORY

By Joy Ward

Who doesn't love flowers...

Especially southern grown camellias with blooms featuring a stunning array of sizes, colors and petal formations. Just imagine a garden full of heritage varieties that were propagated and registered right here in Pensacola! Finding a public space for such a garden was the dream of the Pensacola Camellia Club. At the same time, the newly formed UWF Retired Employees Association Board was searching for a gift to celebrate the University's 40th Anniversary. As serendipity would have it, a few REA members were also camellia enthusiasts and thus the connection was made. The idea was presented to the UWF administration, and a formal agreement was signed.

Over the years, the UWF Camellia Garden has become a source of pride for UWF and the Pensacola community. It provides a quiet place for students to study as well as a campus destination for visitors.



When REA members help maintain the UWF Camellia Garden, we honor the memory of two UWF retirees who were the first to search for Pensacola's "lost" camellias. Dr. Ben Williamson who served in the Health, Leisure, and Exercise Science department for 34 years. Dr. Williamson passed away on June 24, 2008. Dr. Gordon Eade joined the faculty at UWF in 1968 and served in the Department of Education until his retirement in 1990. He passed away at 97 on August 1, 2022.

To assist you on a self-guided tour of the garden please visit the [Pensacola Camellia Club](#) website.

UWF Camellia Garden Milestones

Sept. 2007 – Pensacola Camellia Club and UWF Retired Employee Association established a permanent camellia garden at UWF with the primary purpose of housing and protecting one specimen of every known variety that had been registered by Pensacola camellia growers. Currently, over 100 of the approximately 125 Pensacola originated varieties are growing at the UWF Camellia Garden.

Feb. 2017 – With the completion of the Camellia Garden Enhancement Project in recognition of the University's 50th anniversary, the three-fourths of an acre garden was rededicated. The garden was transformed with paved walkways, lighting, memorial benches and bricks to honor loved ones in an enduring reflective space.

March 2020 – The American Camellia Society named the UWF Camellia Garden as an American Camellia Trail Garden, becoming one of 57 in the U.S. and only three in the state of Florida.



Feb. 2024 – February 14th of 2024 was not just Valentine's Day, but the formal presentation of funds from the Pensacola Camellia Club and University's Retired Employees Association totaling \$25K. Those funds were matched by an anonymous UWF REA member donor, for a total of \$50K to establish the UWF Camellia Garden Endowment. Now we have financial support to maintain the existing garden and leave a beautiful legacy on the University of West Florida campus. Let's take care of it!

