

## Buçaco and Villar d'Allen: A story of the camelliomania in Portugal

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**Abstract.** For centuries, the genus *Camellia* played an important role as ornamental. In Portugal, the fascination for these plants had its climax in the 19th century, mainly in the Northwest and in the city of Sintra (West of Lisbon), where conditions are particularly favourable for their cultivation. A less known area of camellias is Mata do Bussaco, an arboretum in the central part of the country. This is a collection that dates from this period when camellias were collector's items for the nobles. The Quinta Villar d'Allen, a major camellia centre in Porto, donated in 1884 a collection of different cultivars to Bussaco. In a manuscript list at the estate are the 30 camellias offered then. The names in this list indicate that most of these old cultivars were developed in European nurseries during the 19th century, but some were Portuguese. It is obvious that the camellias received in Bussaco were a first class selection of the material at Villar d'Allen. Historical data reveals that this was a time of major planting in Bussaco and enrichment of ornamental species.

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