



Camellia Club of Mobile

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December 2025

Monthly Meeting Info

December 14, 2025

Building opens 1:00 p.m.

Potluck prep 1:30 p.m.

Potluck Social 2:00 p.m.

Meeting begins 2:30 p.m.

Meeting Location

Jon Archer Agricultural Center

1070 Schillinger Rd. N

Mobile, AL 36608

🌲 **See you December 14th for our
Christmas celebration!** 🌲 🎅



Blooms: Please bring your blooms to our meeting for show and tell.



Cultivar Spotlight: Camellia sasanqua ‘Yuletide’

Few camellias capture the spirit of the holidays like ‘Yuletide’. This cheerful single red sasanqua, accented by a bright golden center, bursts into bloom just in time for Christmas. The vivid color and reliable winter flowering make it a favorite for both gardens and holiday arrangements.

Beyond its beauty, ‘Yuletide’ is also one of the best hedge or screen camellias. It has an upright, naturally dense habit that forms a tidy evergreen wall with only light pruning. Mature plants typically reach 6 to 8 feet tall, and the glossy leaves provide year-round texture and color.

For best results, give ‘Yuletide’ morning sun and afternoon shade, acidic, well-drained soil, and prune after flowering to shape. The blooms attract pollinators on mild winter days, and the cut branches are lovely in festive indoor displays.

‘Yuletide’ brings Christmas color to Gulf Coast gardens each December.



Malbis: A Legacy of Faith, Community, and Camellias



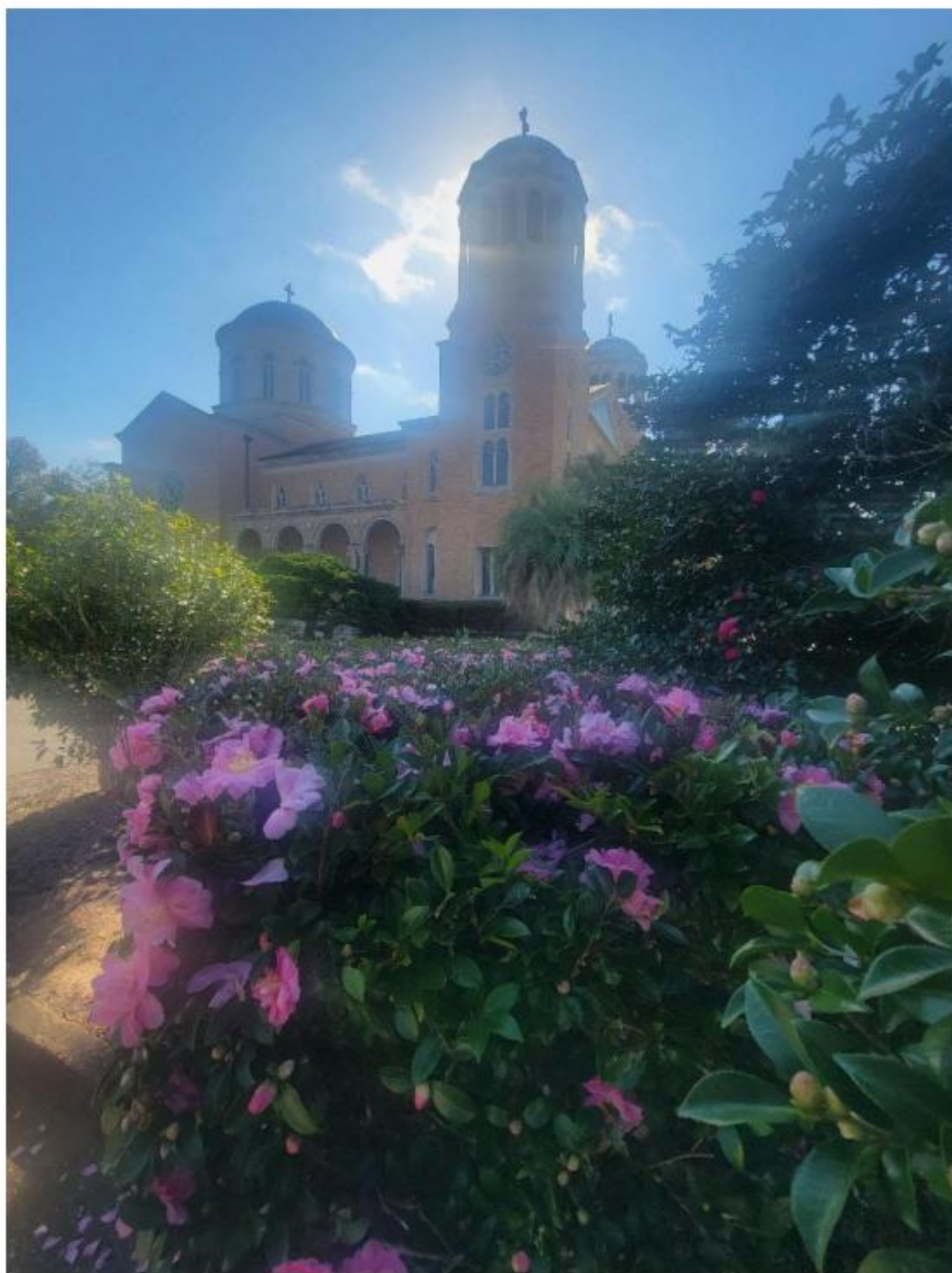
Just off Highway 90 in Daphne sits one of Baldwin County's most remarkable cultural landmarks: the historic Malbis property, home to the Malbis Memorial Church, cemetery, and the remnants of what was once a thriving Greek agricultural colony. Known today for its striking architecture and peaceful grounds, the property also holds a living horticultural legacy—its heritage camellias, many planted generations ago.

A Greek Colony Rooted in Community

The Malbis community began in the early 20th century under the vision of Jason Malbis, a Greek immigrant who dreamed of building a self-sustaining settlement grounded in faith, agriculture, and cooperative living. Over the decades, the colony included farmland, a dairy, a bakery, a hotel, a factory, and a village that supported dozens of families who lived and worked together.

Central to that vision was the Malbis Memorial Church, dedicated in 1965 in honor of the founder. The church, with its Byzantine-style dome, imported mosaics, and hand-carved iconostasis, remains one of the most architecturally significant Greek Orthodox churches in the southeastern United States.





The Malbis Nursery: A Blossoming Legacy

For camellia lovers, one of the most fascinating chapters in the Malbis story is the Malbis Nursery, established in 1928 and operated for 43 years. It quickly became one of the major commercial enterprises of the plantation.

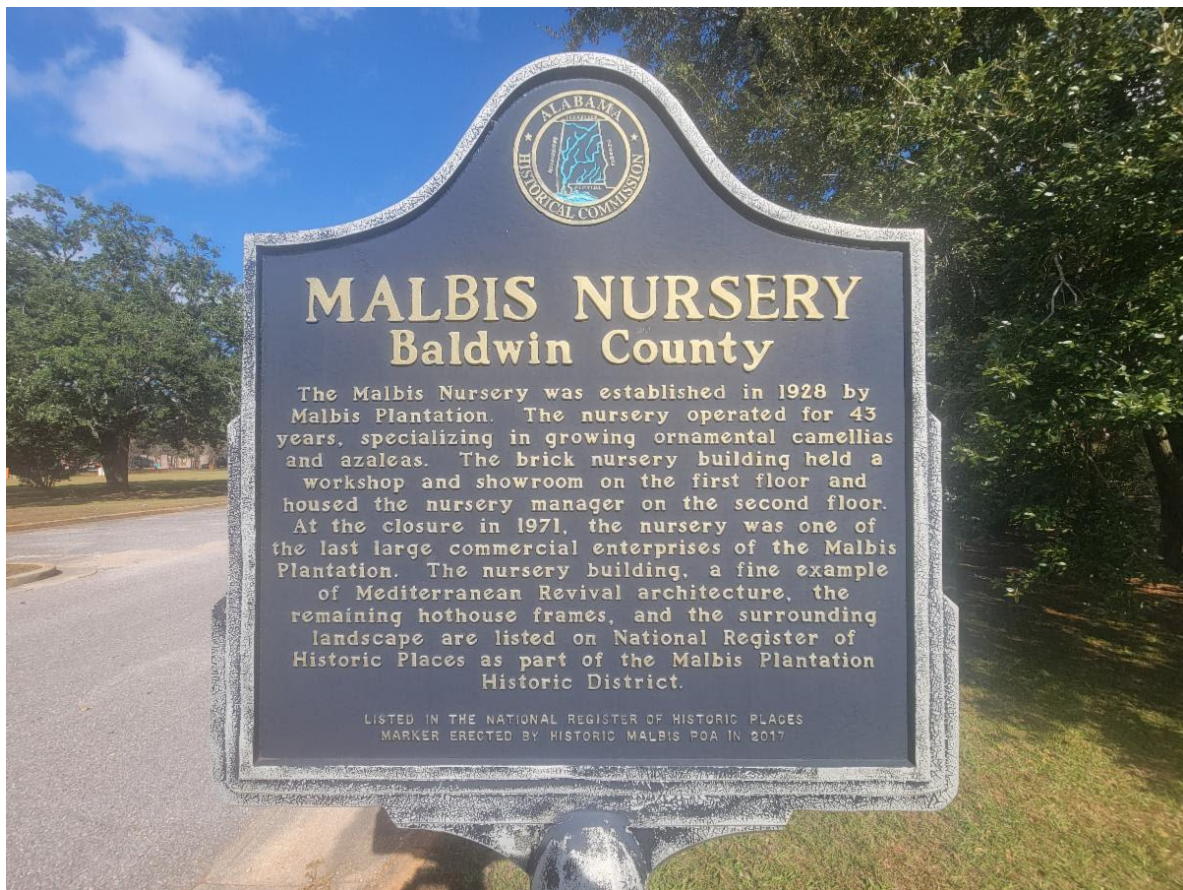
The nursery specialized in growing ornamental camellias and azaleas, supplying the booming horticultural trade of the mid-20th century when camellias were a hallmark of elegant Southern landscaping.

The nursery complex included:

- A brick nursery building with a workshop and showroom on the first floor
- Living quarters for the nursery manager on the second floor
- Multiple hothouse frames for propagating camellias and azaleas
- Surrounding grounds that served as growing fields

The nursery operated until 1971, closing as the agricultural operations of the plantation scaled back. Today, the historic building, surviving frames, and landscape are all listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Malbis Plantation Historic District.

These nursery-era camellias still grace the grounds of the church and cemetery, quietly blooming each winter—living remnants of a once-thriving horticultural enterprise.



Camellias That Tell a Story

Walking the property today, you'll find mature camellias lining the edges of the church and cemetery. Some are clearly older cultivars, with massive, sculptural trunks that speak to many decades—perhaps even a century—of growth. Their bases twist and flare in ways only very old camellias do, forming thick, tree-like structures rather than the shrub shapes most gardeners are familiar with. These impressive trunks, some so wide they require two arms to encircle, are living proof of the long horticultural history of the Malbis grounds (pictured below is one of two massive camellias which I was actually able to walk up under to take the picture!).



Their varieties, reminiscent of mid-century plantings, still bloom reliably each winter. Shades of pink, white, and deep red connect the present to the Malbis Nursery era, when camellias were among the plantation's signature crops and a source of pride for the community.

These camellias serve as botanical storytellers, their towering forms and ancient trunks bridging the agricultural past with the cultural heritage of the Malbis colony.

A Landscape That Has Changed

As Baldwin County has grown, much of the original Malbis property has been sold or developed. Shopping centers, neighborhoods, and businesses now occupy land that once held fields, barns, and worker cottages. Only a fraction of the historic acreage remains intact.

Yet the church, cemetery, and remnants of the nursery endure—quiet, dignified reminders of a remarkable immigrant community and its contributions to the region.





Preserving What Remains

Historic landscapes like Malbis are increasingly rare in fast-growing coastal communities. They offer more than scenic buildings and old plantings—they hold cultural memory, immigrant history, and horticultural heritage that cannot be replaced once lost.

Preserving sites like these ensures that:

- Greek immigrant history in Alabama remains visible and respected
- Heritage camellias and historic horticultural landscapes are protected
- Sacred spaces and cemeteries retain their dignity
- Future generations can appreciate the interconnected stories of faith, agriculture, and community

As development continues to reshape Baldwin County, safeguarding places like the Malbis property becomes even more important. Its church, cemetery, and surviving camellias remind us that history is not just something to read about—it is something to see, touch, walk through, and protect.

Camellias currently in bloom on the historic Malbis property:



We hope you'll join us over the next couple of months as we prepare for our annual **Camellia Show** on **January 17th!** Everyone is welcome to enter blooms—from beginners to expert growers—so bring your best camellias and be part of the fun. 🌸

For a list of upcoming shows, please click the link below.

[Upcoming Camellia Shows - 2025-2026 Season | American Camellia Society](https://www.american-camellia-society.org/shows)

**For additional information regarding
Camellia Club of Mobile please visit
our website:**

<http://www.mobilecamellia.org/>

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