

Stop 390 Adult Tour – Camellia Corridor Overview

This glass hallway, called the Camellia Corridor, was once an open-air walkway before it was roofed over in 1981. It houses several plants that were historically grown in the earliest European conservatories, structures that were often designed to grow exotic citrus fruits such as oranges and lemons, and became known as ‘orangeries.’ In addition to citrus, in our orangerie, you’ll also find orchids and large potted camellias lining the corridor. During the spring and early summer, pots of bright yellow canary broom also contribute *their* fragrance.

Camellias are evergreen natives of eastern Asia. They belong to the same family as tea and were first introduced to America in 1797. At one time they were a big cash crop in the Connecticut River Valley, and some local greenhouses even had their camellias flown to England for Queen Elizabeth’s Coronation. During late winter and early spring the branches of the camellias fill with eye-catching blooms. We also have some wild species camellias. Although their flowers are much smaller, they’re very fragrant. For decades we’ve maintained our camellias with a once a year program of clipping, root pruning and repotting in new soil.

Another plant that does well in the corridor’s cool climate is the cymbidium orchid, unlike many other orchids, which prefer the warmer atmosphere of the stove house. Prized for their spikes of large beautiful flowers, there are over three thousand Cymbidium hybrids that have been developed! They’re extremely popular for bridal bouquets and corsages, as the flowers last quite a long time.

Also, you might want to check out the many different varieties of English ivy hanging in the pots along the glass wall. See how many assorted leaf shapes and colors you can find. A former graduate of Smith College donated the plants, and now, every new student who comes to study at Smith is given a cutting from one of these plants so they can grow their own ivy and perhaps be inspired to take a horticulture class or two.