
President's Letter

L. Malcolm Clark

If you ever feel your enthusiasm for azaleas waning, go to the next convention. Though each is different, all are sure cures for whatever the ailment. Thanks to the Ben Morrison Chapter for continuing an amazing string of sterling conventions. And thanks to those who make it special—the attendees.

The Harding Memorial Garden is well on its way. Enthusiastic support from the membership was voiced at the convention and about half the plants and dollars needed have been committed. Site preparation is under way now, so not to dally. As I said before, "one beautiful plant, one day's labor, or dollars on this order from most members." Please don't make me buttonhole you one by one.

Speaking of dallying, when you receive your dues notice for 1993 in a few weeks, return it promptly. For 1992 two-thirds had renewed by the end of the year, one-third were sent second notices and about one-sixth third notices. Ten people waited until after the convention to renew! Untimely renewal wastes both money and the time of an already overworked Membership Committee. If you mean not to renew, please tell us. Our main job is to serve your needs. If we fail in that tell us about it. (Occasional positive mail is also welcome, and helpful.)

Total membership continues to grow. For 1992 the growth rate is about 6%. If this rate is maintained I see no annual dues increase on the near horizon. Though there is surely room for improvement here, I want to thank recruiters for a job well done. Keep up the good work. All of us, however, need to give more attention to the flip side of recruiting, which is renewal, especially first time renewal. Each year some 20% of our members are new. More than 30% of these first-year members do not renew. After the second year this drops to about 8%. Clearly, we must attend more carefully to the needs of new members. At the national level the new member packet is being upgraded and THE AZALEAN openly seeks articles addressed mainly to newer members. For chapter members we can do more than this—buddy systems and activities designed to attend to the specific needs of individual new members. The point here is that recruiting a new member is only the beginning of what should be thought of as a long-term relationship. If a member does not renew, find out why and take the feedback seriously. To do less turns recruiting into little more than depletion of the pool of potential members.

Finally, the fall meeting of the Board of Directors will be held in late October. Pass along your ideas to Chapter Presidents, Directors-at-Large and/or officers. We want your input.

Malcolm Clark

On the Cover: G. Flippo Gravatt Garden (Beltsville Hybrids)
'Nannie Angell'

Photographers: Jean Cox
George Switzer

Azalea Society of America

The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation and appreciation of the series *Azalea* (subgenus *Anthodendron*) of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (Ericaceae).

OFFICERS FOR 1991-1992

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Terms Expiring in 1993	Terms Expiring in 1994
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Chapter presidents serve as ex-officio directors.

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- Delmarva** (chartered May 1986)
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- Dallas Chapter** (chartered May 1989)
Stephen S. Brainerd, *President*
- Oconee Chapter** (chartered November 1991)
Jim Thornton, *President*

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual contribution of \$20.00. Life membership is \$300.00. Members receive THE AZALEAN and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society including those of the chapter with which the member affiliates. For information and membership application, write to the Secretary, Azalea Society of America, P. O. Box 34536, West Bethesda, MD 20827-0536.