



Focus on Beginners

Easy Propagation of Azaleas at Home *Page 88*

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for Azaleas** *Page 91*

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President's Letter

L. Malcolm Clark

Dues are due. Barely half have renewed. Lay this down, go find the form and send it in. If you can afford a little extra, that too, please. Improved services depend significantly on these gifts.

A ballot is enclosed and biographical sketches herein published. Last year 5% bothered to vote. Really now! There are choices to make and these seem real. Having long worked to democratize the election process, the current "turnout" raises questions about my own judgement (i.e., what other windmills do I chase?). Bother to become informed, and vote.

During 1993 ASA plans to open a "bookstore". As a beginning the basic literature will be offered, hopefully, including some Japanese titles. If you have any suggestions, please pass them on to me. Also a seed exchange is in the works, with initial distributions planned for next winter, so produce an extra pod or two. If you have dreamed of crosses, you had neither time nor space to grown on, now's your chance.

Let me devote the remaining space here to our main abiding problem—less than 1% of ASA members feel any obligation to periodically submit an article for publication in **THE AZALEAN**. General appeals have long been made, but to no lasting effect. A different approach is clearly called for and "itemize and assign" seems appropriate.

Possible articles may be roughly categorized and a tentative list follows. This is meant to be a "sign up sheet". Both individuals and chapters are solicited. Forward your responses to me personally and I will synthesize these into what amount to committees. To get the job done on any long-term basis we need a commitment from each chapter and 30 plus individuals. Less than this will have me "on the horn" buttonholing by mid-January. To get the ball rolling I have signed up for "Hybridization" and a regular "Breeder's Corner" column will begin in March 1993. This is meant in part to go hand-in-hand with the new seed exchange. Clearly, I will need help in both word and seed, so don't consider that category "taken".

General Culture (soils, planting, mulch, pruning, pests, etc.)

Special Culture (Bonsai, hanging baskets, forcing, etc.)

Propagation

Hybridization

Clonal Description

Clonal Evaluation (hardiness, pest resistance, color fastness, etc.)

Research (may partly overlap evaluation)

Companion Plants

Landscaping with Azaleas

Gardens (public and private)

History

Book and Article Reviews

On the Cover: Mass planting of azaleas
Transplanted azalea seedlings

Photographer: Jean Minch

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*).

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THE AZALEAN is published during March, June, September, and December by the Azalea Society of America, Inc., P. O. Box 34536, West Bethesda, MD 20827-0536.

Additional copies of the current and back issues can be obtained from the Treasurer, Glenn W. Taylor, 5203 Queensberry Avenue, Springfield, VA 22151, (703) 321-7053. Volumes 1 through 4 published from 1979 through 1982 consist of 15 issues at \$2.50 per issue. The price for each issue beginning with 1983, Volumes 5 through 12, is \$3.50.

Opinions and views expressed in **THE AZALEAN** are those of the contributors or the Editor, not necessarily those of the Society, and are presented to foster a wider appreciation and knowledge of azaleas. Advertisements are presented as a service to our readers and do not imply endorsement by the Azalea Society of America. Advertising and other contributions to **THE AZALEAN** are used exclusively to help defray the costs of publishing **THE AZALEAN**.

Address all editorial and business correspondence to:
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737 Walnut Avenue,
North Beach, MD 20714.

Lay-out of **THE AZALEAN** by:
Donna Ziegenfuss
North Beach, MD

Printing of **THE AZALEAN** by:
Hour Printer
Silver Spring, MD

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Report of the Nominating Committee

The positions which are open for the 1993 election are President, Vice-President and three At-Large Directors, each to serve for a two-year term starting with the 1993 Annual Convention. The nominees were selected by the nominating committee based on their knowledge, enthusiasm, experience, geographical location, and their willingness to use their capabilities to serve the Azalea Society.

For President

L. Malcolm Clark, *Southern Pines, North Carolina*

Active in the Azalea Society since its beginning, Mal is a past chapter President and national President, and the organizer of several national conventions, as well as our current national President. He is well-known as a scholarly and thoughtful speaker on all aspects of azaleas, and his commitment to meeting Azalea Society goals is well established. He retired from a career as teacher and administrator in the Caldwell, New Jersey, public school system in 1986 and moved to his home town, where he works as the third-generation proprietor of Chandler Gardens Nursery, propagating over 3,000 different azalea cultivars and working on his own hybridizing program.

For Vice-President

Stephen S. Brainerd, *Rowlett, Texas*

Steve graduated from Oklahoma State University with a B.A. in Chemistry. He is a 20-year veteran of U.S. Naval Fighter Aviation, with a career including 200 combat missions in Vietnam, graduating from Top Gun, commanding an F-14 Fighter Squadron, and promotion to Captain. He began work on a degree in Landscape Architecture at the University of Texas, Arlington, and has been working with an extensive azalea collection in Dallas as a landscaping contractor. An avid azalea gardener, Steve has been serving the Azalea Society for three terms as President of the Dallas Chapter, which will be hosting the 1993 Convention.

For At-Large Director

Jeff Beasley, *Lavonia, Georgia*

Jeff, his wife, Lisa, and his mother, Mary Beasley, work together in running Transplant Nursery. His background includes an A.A. degree in Horticulture from North Georgia Technical College, and 12 years as a nurseryman. He has been a member of the Azalea Society since 1980, he is a member of the Azalea Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, and helps Mary as Director of District 10 of the ARS. Jeff is very active in the Georgia Green Industry Association, which is embarking on an ambitious long-term program to evaluate new plants and get them into the wholesale nursery trade.

Jack Beith, *Carriere, Mississippi*

As the son of Janet Rhea and the nephew of Al Reid, Jack worked in Al Reid's nursery, and quite literally grew up with azaleas. After serving 22 years in the US Coast Guard, he retired in 1980 as a Chief Warrant Officer. Jack is within a few credit hours of earning his A.A. in Horticulture from the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, and has been proprietor of the Linwood Acres Nursery since 1986. He is a long time member of the Louisiana Chapter of the ASA, and is currently serving as their Secretary. Jack is also a member of the Mississippi Nurseryman's Association and President of their Pearl River County Chapter.

Bill McIntosh, *Churchville, Maryland*

After serving three years in the U.S. Army, Bill earned a B.S. from Virginia

Tech and an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan, all in Biology. He worked as an Associate Professor of Zoology at Ohio State University, and retired in 1986 after 24 years as a statistician for the U.S. Department of Defense. With an interest in horticulture and gardening most of his life, he has been a very active member of the Brookside Gardens Chapter of the Azalea Society since soon after he retired and is serving the national society as the Chairman of the Finance Committee. Bill has held a variety of positions in other organizations, including President of the Harford County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, President of his community association, and Chairman of his community Neighborhood Watch Program.

Fred Minch, *Puyallup, Washington*

After serving in World War II and the Korean War, Fred has had a varied career, including working with inks and dyes for Crown-Zellerbach, and the owner of a bar and restaurant for 20 years. He and his wife, Jean have been interested in azaleas for almost 30 years, and they run the Sea View Azalea Nursery, working exclusively as hybridizers. Fred is also active in the American Rhododendron Society, and is heading their Azalea Study Group. He would carry on the work of Eleanor Stubbs in representing our West Coast members, since Eleanor has now served the limit of three consecutive terms as a Director.

Rosalie Nachman, *Richmond, Virginia*

Best known for her superb garden, Rosalie is a charter member of the Richmond Chapter where she has served in a variety of capacities. She is a current Director of the Azalea Society. She is also a Director of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, and she has served as the District Representative on the Azalea Committee of the American Rhododendron Society. Rosalie has studied and teaches Ikebana, and continually demonstrates her strong commitment to azaleas and other plants, both for themselves and as art forms. □

1993 Convention and Annual Meeting

Steve Brainerd
Dallas, Texas

The 1993 ASA Convention and Annual Meeting will be held April 1-3 at the Doubletree Inn Campbell Centre in Dallas, Texas. The Doubletree Inn, located on the southeast corner of Highway 75 and Loop 12, is centrally located to shopping, restaurants, entertainment and fine gardens in north Dallas. It is an intimately sized hotel which will give national convention delegates a sense of group.

Tours on Friday and Saturday will celebrate the landscape architecture of Naud Burnett II. Mr. Burnett uses azaleas often in his projects. Delegates will be treated to formal and informal residential gardens, public and private gardens, and urban and rural sites.

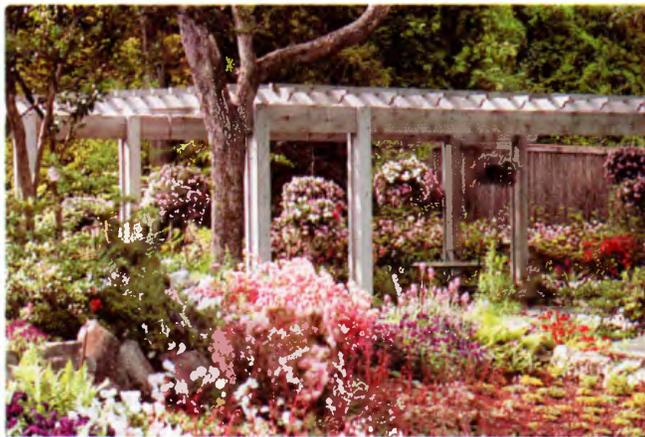
Speakers on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings will include Jeff Beasley of Transplant Nursery, Pete Girard, Jr. of Girard Nurseries, and Fred Galle, noted author and azalea expert.

Registration and plant sales will be Thursday afternoon and evening. Following the dinner hour, an introduction to the tours will be presented by Naud Burnett. Friday morning and afternoon will feature a sensual feast of planting design in exceptional urban gardens. Lunch will be served at the Dallas Arboretum overlooking White Rock Lake. Following dinner which is not a scheduled event, speakers Friday evening will be Pete Girard addressing the Girard evergreen azaleas and Jeff Beasley discussing native deciduous azaleas. Saturday morning and afternoon, delegates will experience a twenty-five-acre country estate with six acres devoted to 850 varieties of azaleas. Lunch will be served near the estate. Saturday's banquet will be at the Doubletree Inn with Fred Galle as keynote speaker.

On Friday morning the group will tour gardens constructed in the fall of 1990 which surround a French style home and guest house. Baroque cast iron sculptures made in Paris, France, in 1897 by sculptor J. J. Ducler-Fils are prominent. Planters on the entry terrace are carved in Indiana limestone by sculptor Michael Cunningham. Inside the gates are two elaborate wooden arched arbors to focus the eye on a fountain between the arbors and a distant view of a raised planter with another sculpture. The arbors are detailed based on one at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. The gardens are surrounded by beds of mid-season azaleas in pink shades. Clipped hedges of boxwood surround the gardens in front of the azaleas. Carved stone pedestals have been installed at intervals in the boxwood hedges to aid the gardeners in pruning the hedges to exact heights and widths. All exposed surfaces have been carved in a botanical motif. The pool area is enclosed in tree Savannah hollies. The pool and spa were finished in a grey-green marble dust finish and slate green tile to complement the Pennsylvania blue-green sandstone terraces and walks. Seasonal color throughout the gardens is changed twice a year using mixed flowers around the sculptures. In the fall, pansies and bulbs are planted and replaced in the spring with red leaf "Cocktail Series" begonias, strap-leaf caladiums and impatiens.

The second tour on Friday will be the gardens of the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Society (DABS) where lunch will be

served. DABS is the site of a 6.5-acre planting of over 2,400 varieties of azaleas. Designed by Naud Burnett and Partners at a cost of three million dollars, the gardens were dedicated in the spring of 1990. The raised azalea planting beds consist of 60% finely milled pine bark and 40% coarse Canadian peat moss with 1-1/2 pounds of Micromax fertilizer per cubic yard. A fertilizer injector and acid injector were installed with the irrigation systems to provide nutrition and adjusted water pH to the plants. The annual budget for seasonal color is \$400,000. A fog system in the fern dell provides mood and a theatrical flair. The borders of perennial phlox are stunning. Within the azalea beds and fern dell are collections of all varieties possible of crape myrtle trees, redbud, dogwood, hardy fern and ajuga with hundreds of species of other shade and sun loving plants.



The third tour on Friday will be the gardens of Dr. Willis Cattel, a noted cancer surgeon, active gardener, and member of the Dallas Chapter of the Azalea Society. Originally from the west coast, Dr. Cattel is accustomed to extensive use of color and variety of foliage. The garden is richly planted with rare and unusual plants which bloom over long periods and have a soft, natural appearance. The garden was constructed in 1991 and is a favorite of the author.

The fourth and last tour on Friday will be a private estate garden. Initial construction was completed in the fall of 1990. The site is dominated by a lake with an arched free span bridge connecting the house to the tennis courts, gazebo, entertainment areas, and additional plantings. Sixty varieties of azaleas which bloom over a three-month period in the spring are complemented by Louisiana phlox, pansies, petunias, tulips, English daisy and assorted flowering bulbs. Two thirty-foot water fountains, white and black swans and three waterfalls give an idyllic quality to this estate garden in an urban setting.

Saturday will find convention delegates on a tour of a rural estate in east Texas. Much of the garden design was influenced by the French architecture as well as the topography of the land. The style of architecture demanded simply-structured, formal gardens adjacent to the home while the sloping lawns to the front and back were developed with soft, natural plantings of shrubs, perennials and trees which bloom or produce berries for seasonal color.

The house is framed by large groves of native pine in the front. A drive circles around the pines to a large motor court to greet guests. Two formal gardens are located on the north/south axis to center of the motor court. The larger garden to the south has as its terminus a large bronze sculpture. The children's allée is a smaller garden to the north and terminates with bronze sculptures of the grandchildren playing on the

lawn. The sculpture group may be expanded as the families grow. A bronze sculpture of cherubs and unicorn fountain on a carved limestone base is a focal point of the motor court.

The axis of the center of the house is terminated by a 30-foot fountain in the larger lake at the rear of the property. Formal beds with clipped holly hedges and seasonal color extend across the length of the 325-foot home. The walks and terraces in the formal gardens are of Pennsylvania blue-green sandstone. The back gardens are enclosed in beds of low azaleas and Louisiana blue phlox. These gardens were planned to have soft bark paths from the house to encircle the natural plantings for exercising and for guests to view the plantings with paths that weave throughout the 6.5 acres of expansive beds of 12,000 azaleas, dogwoods and woodland plants. These paths were later changed to asphalt to accommodate a golf cart. A gravel road to the fountain lake was also added to allow cars to enter into the lower gardens.

Several acres of wildflowers were added to the adjacent undeveloped pasture and include cornflower, poppies, phlox, pink coneflower, larkspur, blackeyed Susan, and other wildflowers adapted to East Texas.

The two lakes are kept full with water from a well and rainfall. The lakes have been partially edged in lichen and moss-covered boulders of Arkansas limestone. The upper "Turtle Pond" has as its focal point an eight-foot stone forming a turtle back with a carved stone turtle head in the lake with stepping stones across the water to the turtle so that it becomes the focal point for viewing or fishing. Water is circulated from the lakes to small ponds and a stream located near the house. Water cascades in a boulder-lined stream back to the lake.

The basis of the planting design consisted of a series of plant species collections throughout the 25 acres. It is truly a mini-arboretum. Some of the collections include evergreen and deciduous holly, evergreen and decidu-

ous azaleas, rhododendron, phlox, violets, hardy fern, dogwood, redbud, deciduous magnolia, viburnum, daffodils, hosta, pieris, kalmia, salvia, and many other plants. Many experimental plants are being tested for hardiness as well as new varieties of azaleas not released to the public. A profusion of rare and unusual plants may be seen throughout the gardens; however, it will take years for many of these to reach maturity.

The plantings were handled in an unusual manner. Rather than each plant being placed by name on the plans and then purchased, trips were made across the country looking for specimens, unusual plants, and rare plants before deciding where they would go. The understory trees were located on the plan according to the color scheme, and the balance of smaller plants were located according to color, texture, height and light requirements. This necessitated on-site decisions and a layering of multiple plantings. This would not be possible in a small city garden, but was possible on a private project of this size with an understanding client.

While most colors in nature seem to blend well, the color scheme in the planting of azaleas and flowering trees starts with purples and lavenders on the south side, then graduates into purplish pinks, clear pinks, yellow pinks, and on into reds. Whites are scattered throughout to accentuate the colors.

The Dallas Chapter cordially invites you to join us April 1-3, 1993. Convenient transportation is available from Dallas/Ft. Worth airport as well as Love Field. Continental Airlines is the official airline of the convention. A 5% discount airfare below any advertised airfare will be offered into Dallas during the convention by calling 1-800-468-7022 from 6AM to 12PM weekdays and 8AM to 9PM weekends Central Standard Time. Identify yourself as an Azalea Society delegate and use identification number ZD 29. We hope to see you in Dallas! □

George Harding Azalea Garden - A Progress Report

Robert Stelloh
Darnestown, MD

Status

As of the end of October 1992, a very few volunteers have put in almost 700 hours of work, and have accomplished the following:

- The garden site has been completely cleared of grass, great quantities of English ivy, and a variety of miscellaneous weeds and shrubby growth.
- Several malformed trees have been removed and others trimmed.
- Four huge piles of somewhat-composted leaves, about 200 cubic yards, were dumped on the site by Arlington County at no charge, through the efforts of the American Horticultural Society (AHS).
- About half of the leaves have been spread over the garden site and about half of those leaves have been tilled into the soil.

Other items of interest include:

- A soil test indicates a pH of 4.8, which we will raise somewhat with agricultural lime.
- A proposal was received by the AHS for getting water to the site and installing an irrigation system, along with a pledge from AHS to pay 2/3 of the cost.
- We have a pledge of 80 cubic yards of pine bark for the cost of hauling it from North Carolina; this bark will be spread and tilled in as a longer-lasting soil amendment than the leaves.
- We have a pledge of another 200 cubic yards of leaves from the County later this fall, which we will spread and let sit over the winter.
- We have pledges of many, many plants from individuals and nurseries, including a number of nurseries which advertise in **THE AZALEAN**.
- We have received just over \$4,000 in cash contributions from individuals and chapters, including \$500 each from the Ben Morrison, Brookside Gardens, Northern Virginia and Richmond, Virginia Chapters of the ASA and several \$500 memorial gifts.

Problems

The major problem has been the lack of labor, except for a handful of dedicated volunteers who have come week after week, some from almost 60 miles away. Without their effort, we would hardly be getting started with the tremendous job of clearing about 10,000 square feet of mature English ivy, spreading the mountains of leaves over the 400-foot length of the site, and repeatedly tilling about 20,000 square feet of soil. With more help, we could have been finished with the basic site preparation long ago, and be getting on with the detailed design of the garden layout.

Because of the lack of help, we're wearing out. We now plan to use a front-end loader to ease the work of spreading leaves and bark, somewhat regretfully because of the attendant soil compaction as well as the expense. Fortunately, our membership has been quite forthcoming with money.

Forecast

It's going to be a magnificent garden at a very prominent site, fitting of its title and its purpose. Although we are somewhat behind our development schedule, we have the winter to catch up by lining up all of the plant donations, deciding exactly where each of the plants will be going in the garden, developing a visitor's brochure for the garden, and getting ready for a massive planting effort in the early spring. At this moment, the dedication is still tentatively planned for May 1993, in time for the blooming season.

Help

It's not too late to help, whether with plants, money, or just plain work. Our schedule has evolved to every Wednesday and most Saturdays, from 8:00AM to about 1:00PM. If you are available to help on Wednesday, or Saturdays, first call Bob Stelloh at (301) 840-1714 or Milt Lerner at (703) 765-0225 to make sure that we'll be there. River Farm is at 7931 East Boulevard Drive, just off the George Washington Parkway about five miles south of Interstate 495. □

Easy Propagation of Azaleas at Home

Richard T. West
Columbia, MD

It has seemed to me that the Azalea Society of America should promote the periodic publication of certain "basic articles" on azaleas, such as their culture, the various hybrid groups, propagation, and the like. I said as much to society officers, and they replied with not only agreement, but with the request to write something—not quite the response I expected. I was reminded, however, when noting my own propagation training in an article for the last issue of *THE AZALEAN*, that few things about azaleas have been as gratifying as being able to successfully grow my own plants. Additionally, I have found that once one is confident with propagating, other aspects of azaleas become more interesting: the identification of hybrids, the judgment of quality, etc. So, I am glad to share what I know about a fundamental skill for anyone interested in azaleas. It is based on the experience of an amateur suburban azalea enthusiast who successfully raises small numbers of plants.

The propagation method I present here is for the rooting of cuttings from evergreen azaleas. It is not much different from the well-described procedure for rooting cuttings from all kinds of plants. How this is done for azaleas has been described numerous times and with some variation in procedure. I will explain the best way I have found for rooting and growing, but also with some comments on variations and alternatives. The basic idea is to take good cuttings, to place them in a moist environment until new roots grow to take up water naturally, and to provide protection during further growth until the plants are mature enough to be planted outside. With the method I use, a miniature greenhouse is created by putting containers of cuttings in sealed plastic bags. Unlike many articles that don't tell you what to do after the cuttings are rooted, this article also discusses further growing using a light table and cold frames. The supplies you will need should be readily available from any larger nursery or garden store [1]. I should say also that the following is based on a six-page typewritten information sheet that I have given over the past few years to friends who wanted to know about propagation. It has worked well for them.

The first thing to do well in advance of taking cuttings is to decide what plants you want to propagate, how many cuttings you want, whether the plant can provide that number, and where on the plant to take your cuttings. The latter is important if the azalea has sport flowers or any variation from the "official" description of the flowers. In such cases you should mark the places for cuttings with tags or ribbon when the plant is in bloom. The number of cuttings may be limited by the type of container you use for rooting; for example, the way I use my container (which is a tray or flat) results in four or five cuttings in a row, so that's how many I typically take for each cultivar. You should consider also when determining the number of cuttings to take how many rooted plants can be accommodated in further stages of growth; as I describe later, the arrangement I have permits a maximum of 216 plants.

Rooting Materials and Preparation

☞ **Mix:** 1/2 perlite, 1/2 peat moss, well mixed and damp, but not soaking wet. One way to tell if the dampness is about right is to take a handful of mix and squeeze it. It should hold together, but no water should drip out.

☞ **Container:** Flat measuring 12 x 6 x 2 inches deep. I now use a plastic flat, but previously I have used 5-inch square plastic market packs divided into cells, and also plastic pots. Just about any kind of container could be used as long as it is at least two inches deep, can be handled easily, and can be covered or enclosed with a plastic bag.

☞ **Materials:** Plastic label stakes and waterproof pen, rooting hormone (Rootone or Hormex #1), spray bottle with fungicide mix (i.e., Captan), and plastic bags to fit container [2]. I save and use the plastic bags that cover clothes from the laundry. Zip-top or plastic storage bags can also be used if they will fit snugly around the container used.

☞ **Preparation for Cuttings:** Fill the container with the damp rooting mix to near the top, and tamp down somewhat, but don't compress the mix too tightly.

Cuttings

Take cuttings of new growth beginning at the end of June or so after growth has matured somewhat (professionals say about six to eight weeks from flowering). Immature growth is light green and very flexible; cutting material should have some resilience, but should snap or break if bent too much. Use small, sharp scissors to make clean cuts. Cuttings should be about 1-1/2 inches long, but may be as short as 3/4 or even 1/2 inch. The thickness of the stem of the cutting doesn't seem to matter, but I prefer neither the very thin nor the thick main stem pieces. If plants are growing together, be sure to take cuttings from the proper azalea; also make sure cuttings are insect free. (Some say cuttings can be rooted anytime the plant is in active growth, including well into the fall before dormancy; others say rooting can be

done anytime on old or new wood as long as the proper strength rooting hormone is used.)

Cuttings should be taken when the azalea is full of water ("turgid"), so cut a day or so after a rain or a good watering, and cut only in the morning as the plant dries out somewhat during the day. If the plant and cuttings are dry, some say putting new cuttings in water for six or more hours will work to make them turgid. Place cuttings in a small cup or container of water, and immediately add a plastic label stake to identify the cuttings so there will be no mislabeling problems later. If cuttings are made away from home, put them in a zip-top plastic bag with a label and a damp paper towel, seal and keep out of direct sunlight. Coolness helps keep the cuttings from wilting, so bags of cuttings done away from home can be placed in a picnic cooler for temporary storage and transportation. Cuttings taken at home that can't be used right away may be placed in water in the refrigerator for a day or so.

To prepare the cuttings for bedding, snip out the very top of the cutting that contains small new leaves and maybe an early flower bud. Remove all lower leaves up to the top two or so. If the leaves are large, they may be cut in half (See Figure 1). When stripping or removing leaves, be careful not to pull off any epidermis (i.e., bark) as such a wound will not heal. Long cuttings may be taken

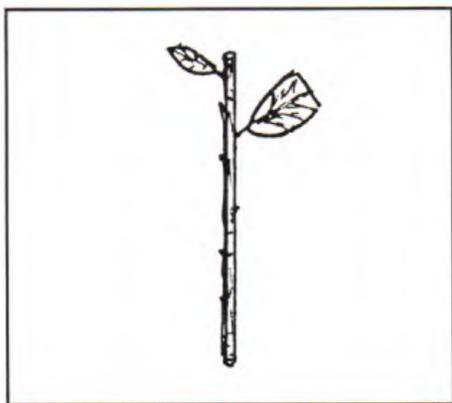


Figure 1

from a plant, cut into 1-1/2 inch pieces, and rooted successfully, but make sure to remember which way is up by saving leaves at appropriate places or in some other way. (Cutting out top growth isn't really necessary; it's a matter of personal choice. I have seen some growers who in the interest of time don't even strip leaves, but I think stripping really should be done.)

Bedding Cuttings

In preparing to bed or stick cuttings, try to put cuttings of plants that bloom about the same time in the same flat or container as they seem to develop roots at about the same speed, and successful propagation of all cuttings will be more likely, as explained later.

With a ten-penny nail or similar pointed object, punch holes in the mix in the container 1/2 to 3/4 inch deep, depending upon the length of the cuttings. Remove cuttings from water and shake off excess, dip in rooting hormone to about the length of the hole and tap off excess, and place in holes. Tamp and firm the mix around the cuttings, but don't press too hard. Stick in marked plastic label stakes for each cutting or row of the same cuttings. (If the cuttings are good, I no longer use rooting hormone and just stick the cuttings into the mix. Some azaleas are considered "hard to root," and it does seem the hormone helps them. Using hormone gives me about 95% success or better in rooting and not using it seems to reduce success to about 80-85%. I always use the hormone for cuttings taken later in the year.)

Before preparing to bag the container, check to make sure the bag won't sag on any of the cuttings. You may want to add some blank label stakes at strategic places or even make a support framework with a coat hanger, some wire, or other material. Spray the bedded cuttings lightly with fungicide even though the peat moss and perlite is a sterile

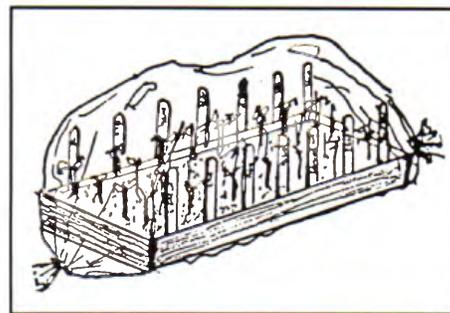


Figure 2

mix. Place the container into the plastic bag and seal. If covering just the top with a bag, secure the bag with a rubber band to assure no moisture escapes (See Figure 2). Place bagged containers on a light table, in bright fluorescent light, or in indirect sun; never put in direct sunlight. If you use artificial lighting, give the cuttings about 18 hours of light a day. Don't unseal or uncover the containers for any reason, and watering is not needed. Ideal rooting temperature is about 70 to 75 degrees. Moisture will form on the inside of the bag after a day or so indicating the seal is tight, the miniature greenhouse is working, and everything is okay.

Lighting and Light Table

Fluorescent lighting using plant or wide-spectrum light bulbs is fine for azaleas. I built my own light table using 2 x 4's, plywood for shelving, and some 1 x 4-inch framing. I waterproofed the shelves and hung 4-foot long two-bulb shop lights 18 inches above the shelves. I also used a timer on the lights. For those who also want to build their own, drop me a note and I'll send you a sketch, but it isn't really necessary. Metal storage shelving can be rigged with the fluorescent lights and made to work quite well. In fact, all you need to do is figure out an adequate way to hang lights over any flat surface where you can put the pots. Remember you will need to water about once a week after potting, so consider how that can be done easily. I use a device purchased at a garden store that has a long thin plastic hose that attaches to a faucet.

Potting Rooted Cuttings

In general, new leaf growth is the same as new root growth; that is, new leaf appearance and size is an indicator of the amount and length of root growth. It usually takes about six weeks for roots to grow; but don't wait any longer than two months. When two new leaves have fully opened, roots have developed enough to take up water and food for the cutting, the process of removing the bag can begin. The removal of the bag must be done slowly and in stages so as not to shock the cuttings when exposed to air. Begin by punching one or two 1 inch holes in the top of the bag. The next day enlarge the holes, and again on the third day. The bag may be removed entirely on the fourth day. A typical problem at this stage is when to start removal of the bag if all of the cuttings haven't produced new leaves at the same rate. Little leaf growth means small roots and the cuttings will have a hard time surviving in the open air; too much new growth in the bag may prove too fragile in the open air and die. This problem will be lessened if all of the cuttings are from plants that bloom about the same time. After uncovering the plants, you will need to begin watering them, but don't overwater. To minimize disturbing the cuttings, water from the bottom of the container by placing the container in a larger tray filled with water and let the water seep up through the mix until it appears at the top. Remove the container and let the excess water drain out. Wait a week or so before potting cuttings.

Carefully remove rooted cuttings from the container to minimize root disturbance and plant in 4-inch pots for continued growth. I have found that using smaller pots almost always causes the plant to become root-bound too soon, and much larger pots take up too much space. Use label stakes for each pot. You could use the same one-half peat and perlite mix-

ture for potting, but I lighten the mix at this point by adding fine pine bark mulch to give a one-third portion for each ingredient. It is also a good idea to cover the top of the mix with a little shredded hardwood bark mulch to prevent washing of the mix or root exposure during later watering.

Return potted cuttings to the light table for further growing. It is important now to provide cooler temperatures for growing, about 60 to 65 degrees, to reduce the possibility of diseases. Although some recommend no fertilization while plants are on the light table, I spray a weak application of Miracle-Gro one or two times during the next nine months of growing (over-fertilization will cause too much growth, promoting poor air circulation and disease). Be careful not to overwater. Pinch out the tops of new shoots as needed to cause a bushy plant. (Some growers do place newly potted rooted plants that have been hardened off in cold frames for the winter, but I prefer to have continued growth on the light table and not to suffer any losses from being outside.)

Final Potting or Liner Growth

The following May or about ten months from the time the cuttings were taken, and after some eight months' growth on the light table in the 4-inch pots, the azaleas are at "liner" size. I re-pot the liners in standard 6-1/2-inch azalea pots for another year's growth in cold frames. They could be planted or "lined out" (i.e., planted in lines) in prepared beds made with a lot of peat moss mixed in the soil, and protected from direct hot sun and wind. Before doing either, the liners must be acclimatized to the out-of-doors by taking them outside for increasingly longer periods of time over three or four days.

For the potting mix, combine one bucket (about 2-1/2 gallons) each of perlite, peat moss, and fine pine bark chips or mulch. Mix well and add

three tablespoons each of Epsom salts, gypsum, and superphosphate (0-44-0), two tablespoons of iron sulphate, and nine tablespoons of cotton seed meal [3]. Mix well and dampen. I usually do this potting mix on the garage floor with a rake and water hose.

As shown in Figure 3, put about one inch of shredded hardwood bark in the bottom of the 6-1/2-inch pot for drainage, fill with the potting mix, add the liner plant, and tamp down. Check to make sure the liner is not root-bound; if so, pull the roots apart some so the new roots will grow outwards. Set the liner slightly high in the mix to create a dome. Top off the pot with some shredded hardwood bark to protect roots and hold the mix in place. Add the plastic label stake, and at this time I also put a flexible vinyl tag on the azalea as indicated. During the next year of growth in the cold frame, fertilizer isn't especially needed, but I usually spray a single foliar feeding of Miracle Gro.

A cold frame is nothing more than a box that sits in or on the ground, and provides winter protection from wind and weather extremes. If constructed tightly and with some sort of

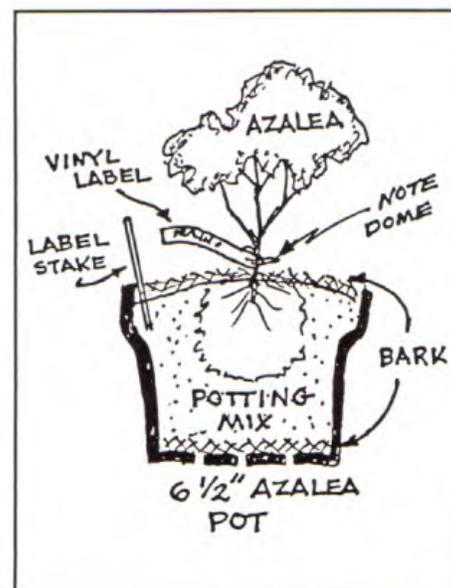


Figure 3

Selecting, Planting and Caring For Azaleas

Steve Brainerd

Dallas, Texas

cover, it reduces moisture loss. I have seen cold frames made from boards, cinder block, and all kinds of materials. Mine are made of outdoor plywood, 4 x 8 x 2 feet deep with one foot being underground. They are covered with old windows with the glass painted white to reduce overheating from direct sun, but I have also used wood frames with heavy plastic sheeting as covers. Sometime in December I cover the cold frames for the winter and don't open them again until March or April. I check periodically to see if any watering is needed.

Conclusion

The method for propagating azaleas at home is not complicated, and by following a few simple procedures you can obtain a high level of success. The process presented here can be adjusted to produce just a few plants or hundreds. An ending word of caution: friends who have used these instructions have gone from yards of a few azaleas to yards of many hundreds, and they are still propagating. A restrained approach to propagation is a good idea.

Comments

(1) I buy many supplies in bulk from Mellinger's Inc. of North Lima, Ohio.

(2) The best pen I have found is the "Nursery Marking Pen."

(3) My mix is the result of combining suggestions from a number of growers.

Azaleas are beautiful as small trees, shrubs and ground covers, capturing the interest of many new gardeners as well as new azalea enthusiasts. The requirements for planting and caring for azaleas are well documented by many fine references including Fred Galle's book, *Azaleas*¹, which is recommended reading for anyone with more than a passing interest in these plants. The focus of this article is to give the new azalea enthusiast a quick start approach which will enhance success and enjoyment in selecting, planting and caring for azaleas.

As with any worthwhile endeavor, preparation is a key to success. If a significant number of azaleas is contemplated for planting, then it is best to begin the process with a landscape design which comprehensively addresses plant, architectural and climatic relationships at the site with human requirements. If the azalea planting is limited in scope, then an appreciation of the geographical climate zone may be the logical first step.

Many azalea varieties are adapted to broad geographical areas in the United States. The hardiness zone map published by the United State Department of Agriculture divides the United States into temperature zones designated from 3 in the North to 10 in the South. A tropical azalea requiring a hardiness zone 10 may not tolerate freezing weather. Conversely, many cold-tolerant azaleas will not be happy with the hot, dry summers typical of the southwestern United States. Viewing established plants in the locale where planting is desired is a good start. A visit to a local arboretum is usually helpful. Contact reputable local nurseries to see what varieties are available for purchase. If a local nursery specializes in azaleas, you have probably found the best source for advice and direction in plant selection. Mail-order companies are excellent sources for unusual varieties, but be sure to verify the recommended hardiness zone for each purchased plant. *Azaleas* has a hardiness zone map, hardiness zone recommendations for thousands of azalea varieties and lists of regional azalea favorites.

The planting site is very important. It is useful for beginners to think of azaleas as woodland plants. Some characteristics of woodlands are frequent rainfall, overhead protection of shrubs and small trees by the larger canopy trees, relative wind protection (as opposed to open prairies), and acid, well drained soils which have a humus built up from years of leaf and tree decay. By imitating nature's woodland sites, the success of azalea plantings will be enhanced. Most planting sites have microclimates. In the United States, north- and east-facing building exposures will generally afford azaleas protection from the sun as do the canopy trees of the woodlands. Too much shading, however, restricts photosynthesis, in turn reducing blooming and proper plant growth. Azaleas must be planted in well drained, acidic soil. Leaf mold and decaying organic matter provide a rich well drained growing medium for woodland plants. The gardener can duplicate nature's soil with materials such as peat moss, leaf mold, compost or pine bark. Highly alkaline clay soils may require complete replacement with a well drained, loose, acidic soil mix. One technique is to build beds on existing

¹ Galle, Fred C. *Azaleas*. Timber Press, 1985. Portland, Oregon.

clay soil surfaces to a height of 15 to 18 inches, which naturally provides drainage out the base. Do not pile soil mixes against a building's wall so that the foundation vents are covered or interior floor beam height is exceeded. If clay soils are excavated, insure that a drainage system is in place to move excess water away so that a "bath tub" effect is not constructed. Mortar is very alkaline. Any planting against concrete and mortared brick and stone should be completed only after removing alkaline soil and construction refuse. Sandy soils should be amended with decomposed organic material which helps to hold soil moisture, reduce leaching and improve aeration. County extension agents will have information on soil testing. Azaleas like a pH from 4.5 to 6.0. Flowers-of-sulfur should be used to lower pH. If azaleas are to be planted in a relatively windy location, thought should be given to wind breaks which could be wooden fences, rock walls or plantings such as holly, boxwood and yew. Do not plant against highly reflective surfaces, such as sidewalks and walls facing south and west which generate high temperatures in the summer. Avoid frost pockets where cold air collects in winter. Mycorrhizae soil fungi are important in azalea culture. Planting in pure peat moss may inhibit the growth of mycorrhizae fungi as well as hold too much water, which encourages root rot. Pine bark as a soil amendment is inexpensive in many parts of the United States and contains chemicals which discourage root rot. In cold climates exposed azaleas may suffer split bark which can be mitigated by providing overhead protection. During dry weather it is necessary to provide water to azalea plantings. The more experienced azalea enthusiast may want to plant azaleas in full sun for heavier flowering, more intense fall leaf color and tighter compactness as compared to shadier plantings. Windy locations are possible if the experienced gardener is sen-

sitive to the plants' stresses and can respond with fertilization and water when required. For the beginning azalea enthusiast, imitating a woodland site brings rewards.

Buying an azalea should be one of the last steps in planting. Only after studying the planting site, planning, modifying the soil if necessary, providing a means to water the plants during dry periods, and selecting adapted varieties appropriate to individual taste should an azalea be purchased. Only vigorous plants with good foliage color and attractive plant shape should be purchased. Most azaleas today are sold as container-grown plants which can be planted at any time that the soil can be worked. Protect azaleas from the wind with a tarp or enclosed vehicle when transporting from the nursery to the planting site. Do not place newly purchased plants which have been in shade at the nursery in full sun at the planting site. If necessary, leave azaleas in containers while gradually exposing them to increasing amounts of sun at the planting site. If container azaleas are not to be planted immediately, insure that they are inspected daily and watered as necessary. When ready to plant, remove the azalea from the container taking care not to damage the foliage canopy. Many container plants will be root bound with a mat of roots on the outside of the ball. Using a sharp knife, cut three or four vertical lines 1/2" deep into the root ball. Soak the root ball thoroughly with water. Avoid using a common container for dunking plants which could potentially spread disease. Remove any old leaves, dead flowers and loose material on the top of the root ball. Dig a hole shallower than the height of the root ball, firm the base of the hole, place the plant in the hole and firm the soil around the top of the root ball. Widely spaced small azaleas in open sites will require a mulching to protect root systems from high sun temperatures and

desiccation. Do not place mulches on the azalea trunk above the root ball. Small plants can be planted close together and then thinned as they grow. Tight plantings shade root systems with the plants' own canopies. If planting in masses, study the individual plant's shape and select placement for a pleasing overall form. Study flower color, flowering period, plant texture and plant form for pleasing design. White flowered evergreen azaleas generally have green winter leaves, while pink and red flowering evergreen azaleas have bronze and wine colored winter leaves. Think of azaleas as outdoor potted plants. If later you don't like the placement just transplant from the loose soil mix, even while the plants are in full bloom. An azalea planting is an evolving experience, not a static construction.

Healthy plants placed in well drained, acidic organic soil and watered when necessary will have few insects and diseases. Most problems can be traced to poor drainage, improper watering or azaleas which are not adapted to the area planted. Plants should be watered in the shade of the morning if possible to reduce flower blight and leaf fungus. Chlorinated water reduces the incidence of root rot and fungus. Mulching should be routinely done in the spring. Pruning should be done immediately after the spring bloom to shape the plants before the next season's flower bud formation. A fertilizer specially formulated for azaleas can be applied after flowering and once again 30 days later. Fertilizers containing nitrogen should not be applied to landscape plants late in the calendar year or when freezing weather is anticipated. Diazinon is effective for most insect problems. Subdue can be used for most diseases. Selecting adapted azaleas, planting properly, and providing water when necessary will insure years of trouble-free enjoyment for the azalea enthusiast. □

Seedlings - Freddie's Method

Jean Minch

Puyallup, Washington

When it comes to raising seedlings there are as many methods as there are growers raising them. Fred has been growing azalea (and rhododendron) seedlings for over 20 years and has changed, added to and experimented until he now has a method he finds the most successful. His small greenhouse produces approximately 30,000 that he transplants and moves on to completion. He does not end up with anywhere near 30,000 plants but does not weed out or eliminate any himself. By exposing them to the elements, nature takes care of sorting them out.

The benches in his 24' x 8' greenhouse are filled 2" deep with pumice from Crater Lake¹. Heat cables are placed on top of the pumice and set for 65 degrees to 72 degrees F. The cedar flats² are filled with a mixture of 2/3 bark and 1/3 pumice that has been sifted through a 1/4" screen³. Flats are then set on top of the cables and contents are wet down well. The seed is then sprinkled on top of the screened medium.

In about 12 days the seeds should begin to sprout. At about 18 to 20 days he sprays once a week with a weak solution of 20-20-20. The timer for watering is set for one minute a week from December through February. If humidity is high, the water is turned off completely.

When the plants have three or four leaves, he transplants them into cedar flats filled as above with 2/3 bark and 1/3 pumice. A flat holds 60 to 80 plants.

Plants are left in greenhouse for approximately three months, then sprinkled with 14-14-14 and moved into the lath house for the winter. All seedlings are raised outside in the field to check for hardiness. Raising in hoop houses or greenhouses is not a true test for hardiness.

Plants in the greenhouse start with one minute of mist a week, then as summer comes on it is increased accordingly. Plants in the lath house start with one minute a day in May; this is increased to four minutes or more when it is 80 degrees F. and over.

Transplanting into the field is done in the spring or early fall. Growth will occur whenever it is over 32 degrees F. Roots, buds and plants grow all winter. Fred uses 0-25-25 in February and April and then 16-16-16 (which includes all micro ingredients) in the amount of one tablespoon to each gallon pot, one cup for four-foot or bigger plants. After blooming he applies 16-16-16 again. Since he uses bark and sawdust he needs to use more nitrogen before planting. When he plants a section he mixes in 21-0-0, Epsom salts (magnesium sulfate) and iron. He then spreads 16-16-16 over the section prior to planting. After the plants are in the ground he sprays with 20-20-20 Peters Solution (one tablespoon per gallon of water). Spray onto the plants until it drips off the leaves. He does this every 20 days. After the plants are in the field about a year they start to bud.

You may have noticed throughout these instructions on how Fred grows from seed that he tries to get them out of greenhouses and hoop houses as soon as they are about three months old. If they do not survive then he feels they are not hardy enough to propagate. Fred is also very particular about preparing his

seed. He screens them very carefully and keeps them at the freezing point until he is ready to use them.

References

1. Pumice from Crater Lake is clean, a good size, available locally and worth the \$30.00 per yard cost.
2. Flats made with cedar hold moisture better than plastic.
3. After sifting Fred fills half of the flat with the large pieces of bark he sifts out and then fills the top half with the sifted portion. The large bark pieces retain the water and encourage root growth. □

Membership Dues

Dues are essential to our society's functioning. The by-laws state that annual dues are due and payable by 1 January of each year. We allow a grace period (members not renewing are dropped as of 1 March), but strongly urge members not to abuse the privilege.

As with your chapter operations, our bookkeeping and membership-record maintenance is done by volunteers. Timely renewal and adherence to procedure greatly reduce the considerable burden of dues collection on these individuals.

By mid-November, annual members should have received a dues-payment envelope. The member should enclose a check and mail the pre-printed envelope to the society's post office box. Use of the envelope supplied is important: the member's address label on that envelope contains the data-base record number for the member. This greatly reduces the time and effort required to post a renewal. Also, the member may indicate changes of address at this time by correcting the information on the label.

When dues are posted, a list is prepared to accompany the check for transmittal to the chapter. Our hope is that, with cooperation of the membership in remitting dues on time, the procedure would have to be repeated only a few times each year.

The first dues notice, which you have received, is sent via low-cost bulk mail; in January a second is sent by first-class mail. Prompt payment not only helps us but also reduces the considerable cost of this extra postage. □

Proposed Amendments to By-laws of the Azalea Society of America

The Board of Directors recommends that the membership at its regular 1993 meeting adopt the following amendments to the Society's By-Laws. The first amendment will simplify investment management and financial reporting. The second amendment will enable the Executive Committee and the Board to consider third-quarter financial results when they formulate the budget for the following year (the date specified for budget submission is currently September 30).

- (1) **ARTICLE III. Membership. C. Dues. 2. Life** is amended to read:
2. Life.—Life membership dues shall be payable to the Society. Dues received for new life memberships shall be added to the General Endowment reserve. All principal and accumulated interest previously designated for the ASA Life Membership reserve shall be transferred to the General Endowment reserve.
- (2) **ARTICLE VIII. Committees. E. Finance Committee. 1. Budget** is amended to read:
1. Budget.—The committee shall prepare and submit to the Board by the fifteenth day of November each year a proposed budget (financial plan) for the following fiscal year. □

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Ben Morrison Chapter

Sue Switzer, *President*

A meeting of the Ben Morrison Chapter was held September 27, 1992 at the Calvert County Tourist Information Center. Barbara Bullock, Curator of Azaleas at the U.S. National Arboretum led a great discussion on "Labelling-Problems and Answers".

Officers for 1992-1993 were elected as follows:

President: Sue Switzer

Vice President: Dale Flowers

Secretary: June Thomas

Treasurer: Sewell "Deac" Moore

The next meeting will be the annual Christmas Party to be held at the home of Bobbie and Alan Jones December 20. □

Brookside Gardens Chapter

Bill Johnson, *President*

Our speaker at the October 7 meeting was Bill Miller, who lead us in a round table discussion on diseases and pests of Azaleas for this area. Bill had a number of slides illustrating some of the most common problems in the garden. The slides were not all pretty but were wonderful in helping us identify problems in our gardens. Some members brought in samples of damaged plants which were examined and identified. Carol Allen was appointed chairperson of the nominating committee for election of officers. Denise Stelloh agreed to chair the Flower Show at Landon and we all owe her many thanks for a job that requires organizational skills and many hours of time. Bob Stelloh provided us with a status report on the progress at the George Harding Azalea Garden.

Our December meeting was held at the Potomac Library at 7:30PM on Monday December 7. Jim Plyler was

our speaker. He is the owner of Natural Landscapes in West Grove, Pennsylvania. Natural Landscapes is a nursery that propagates and grows native plants for wholesale distribution. Jim has been studying and growing native plants for the past 13 years and is an active supporter of the conservation of native flora. Jim shared some of his knowledge on collecting native Azaleas.

Mark your calendars for the next three meetings at 7:30PM at the Potomac Library: February 1, April 5, and June 7. □

Oconee Chapter

Jim Thornton, *President*

The Oconee Chapter met May 31 at Mrs. Estelle Ledbetter's estate. Allison Fuqua discussed proper azalea pruning techniques, and Jim Thornton presented a few azalea companion plants such as ground covers and *Acer palmatum* trees.

After a short break, members joined together for some real "hands-on" pruning work on some of Mrs. Ledbetter's Southern Indica azaleas, including specimens of the variety 'Formosa', which had been around her place for nearly 40 years. (Evidently this is a strain more hardy for this area than today's plants.)

On July 11, the Chapter met at Fran and Allison Fuqua's home and gardens to hear James Harris on azalea propagation from cuttings. James gave an actual demonstration and led a discussion on use of the "Nearing propagation frame." In addition, the Chapter had its first swap and sale meeting. Although many members brought cuttings, a surprise visit by Hugh Caldwell (from Doctor's Inlet, FL) bearing bags of Glenn Dale cuttings created quite a rush on the cutting table.

Our last meeting for 1992 was held on October 25 to elect the Chapter's 1993 officers. Jim Thornton continues as president; Tom Anderson is our new vice-president; Pheleta Hambrick is our new secretary, and Fred Vick continues as treasurer. Jimmy Hambrick continues as editor of our newsletter. We want to thank Monty Laster, our out-going vice-president, and Cindy Dial, our out-going secretary, for their excellent work during 1992.

The meeting concluded with a superb slide presentation conducted by Ralph Bullock. Ralph brought some beautiful slides taken on his family's trip to the Azalea Society of America's convention.

The Oconee Chapter closes out 1992 with 80 members (not bad for one year, huh?), and looks forward to 1993 and continued growth. □

Addition to Azalea Book List

Title: *"Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas"*

Author: H. Edward Reily

Publisher: Timber Press, Inc.

Date: 1992 □

In Memory

Azalea Society of America, Northern Virginia Chapter member Mr. Clyde M. Stewart, 77, a retired Veterans Administration statistician, died November 8, 1992. Mr. Stewart who lived in Annandale, Virginia, was born in Milam County, Texas and moved to the Washington area in the 1930s. He graduated from American University. Mr. Stewart was an enthusiastic gardener, a former president of the National Capitol Dahlia Society, member of the American Rhododendron Society and a consultant to the U.S. National Arboretum. □

September Mailing Statistics

There were 943 copies of the September issue of **THE AZALEAN** in the bulk mailing.

Below is a state-by-state summary of the mailing:

Foreign = 13	Delaware = 10	California = 30	Rhode Island = 2
Virginia = 189	Oregon = 14	New Jersey = 36	North Carolina = 44
Washington, DC = 14	Pennsylvania = 24	Georgia = 74	Mississippi = 11
Maryland = 161	Alabama = 23	Ohio = 9	West Virginia = 3
Kentucky = 6	Wisconsin = 1	South Carolina = 20	Indiana = 25
Illinois = 2	Florida = 16	Minnesota = 2	Kansas = 3
Massachusetts = 17	Missouri = 5	Arkansas = 5	Connecticut = 9
Louisiana = 27	Texas = 73	New York = 32	Oklahoma = 5
Hawaii = 2	New Hampshire = 3	Washington = 15	Tennessee = 13
Michigan = 2	Florida = 16	Colorado = 2	

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