

step of informing buyers of the proper description of cultivars (which should include variation recognized as acceptable in the authoritative description of the cultivar) and describe deviations that may occur in the plants they supply. The buyer is then in a better position to assess the risk of purchasing the listed plants. For cultivars in groups that sport promiscuously, this approach is welcome—though short of what is desired by the buyer (whether landscape architect, collector, or knowledgeable home gardener).

The problems of maintaining stock true-to-name and dealing with variability in azaleas are especially difficult for the nurseryman serving a mass market. For example, most large nurseries cannot handle variability. They expect a 'Hinod giri' to have the common decency to remain a 'Hinod giri' and produce respectable Hino progeny. In the past thirty years only relatively genetically stable hybrids have been mass-produced commercially.

In the mass-production environment, much of what has been suggested above as ways of keeping output true-to-name cannot be implemented economically. The bread and butter of the azalea industry is the trade gallon container. Typically, these are potted in the early spring and sold the following spring. Cuttings are taken during the first summer for the following year's crop. The propagation cycle involves only vegetative stages. **From cutting to finished product, the nurseryman may never see the plant in bloom.** The blooming period, moreover, coincides with the shipping season. In the spring this can mean as many as twenty to thirty thousand azaleas per employee must be graded, pulled, tagged, and shipped in a three- to four-week period. No one has the requisite skilled labor to excise, rogue, or tag sports at that time.

Nonetheless, when plants are sold as cultivars, the buyer deserves

true-to-name plants. This calls for the grower to rogue—eliminating misidentified stock plants, liners (sometimes foliage or growth habit may indicate errors), and container or field-grown stock at the flowering stage.

The message to readers is:

Buyers—you must recognize that price and quality are often positively correlated.

Sellers—you must recognize that buyers (who are becoming more knowledgeable and selective) expect that plants tagged with cultivar names should be true-to-name.

REFERENCES

- (1) Webster's *New International Dictionary of the English Language*. Second ed., unabridged. Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1934.
- (2) Brickell, C. D. et al., eds. *International code of nomenclature for cultivated plants—1980*. Utrecht: Bohn, Scheltema & Holkema, 1980.
- (3) Morrison, B. Y. *The Glenn Dale Azaleas*. Agriculture Monograph No. 20. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 1953.

CULTURAL NOTE

Ovulinia Petal Blight

It is frequently mentioned that *Ovulinia* might not spread outside the milder winter areas of the USA; i.e., north of, say, New Jersey. Let's put that to rest. The Gartrells, Robin Hills, and *nakaharae* and its hybrids along with a few other hybrids, especially 'Polar Bear', *R. camtschaticum* are plagued here [Halifax, Nova Scotia]. With no signs of it this year (due to an attempt at control) the sclerotia still appeared on a few plants. The problem starts after June 12. Let's get it straight—*Ovulinia* is perfectly cold hardy.

Contributed by John Weagle

Help Wanted: Participate in Azalea-Sporting Research

Richard T. West
Columbia, MD

Donald H. Voss
Vienna, VA

Here is an opportunity for you to be involved in important azalea research. We don't know of previous participatory research of this kind by Azalea Society members. But if it works, it might lead to other studies and expand our knowledge of azaleas. Specifically, we seek a better understanding of sporting in azaleas. (A sport is mutant growth that has characteristics outside the range recognized as defining a cultivar or a botanical taxon.) In this study we propose to concentrate on flower sports.

What, exactly, is an azalea flower sport, and how do sports occur? Questions frequently arise about sports and sporting, such as how does one know if an odd flower is a sport, and what is known about year-to-year variation in flower color patterning. We have found little published information about azalea sports, but a few experienced individuals have provided anecdotal data that seem to match the rather large amount of mostly undocumented common knowledge. We also have heard what might be myths about sporting; one example is the belief that sports, if not removed, will "take over" an azalea and become the dominant flower (we have thus far not found this to be true). These bits and pieces of data are all interesting, but not very useful in answering with confidence the questions posed.