

Back Acres Hybrid, 'Margaret Douglas', with an unnamed/unknown Belgian azalea. He has two spectacular plants from this cross, one that is double and the other single. This year Bob made about 60 different crosses, and with such productivity and because he maintains excellent records, he is getting a good feel for which crosses work well and which ones do not.

Bob has a masterful eye when it comes to evaluating azaleas, and has served as a judge at flower shows for many years. He is very critical of his own creations, and will give other hybridizers an extremely honest and candid assessment of any new azalea hybrid. Such impartial evaluation is really essential for a hybridizer. As "proud new parents" of azalea creations we have raised from seed, we tend to be very impressed with the wondrous perfection of our own "brilliant children." However, a critical eye is needed to see how they rank against the best things in existence already and decide if these new plants are really worthy of introduction. When Bob finally registers some of his new azalea varieties, we can be certain that they will not be just nice plants, they will be fantastic.

Conclusion

As those of us who have played around with azalea hybridizing know quite well, we are involved in a very exciting and rewarding hobby that has few equals. We may have had that hybridizing fever for years, but we know our fascination will not wane. Each spring we will be making new crosses, marveling at first blooms on our latest crop of seedlings, and evaluating others that have bloomed before. We would like you to join us, so try making a few crosses of your own this year. Help us create the next generation of stunning new azalea hybrids, the plants that will grace the gardens of the next century. You won't regret the adventure.

Don Hyatt has been hybridizing azaleas and rhododendrons for over 30 years. He has been president of the Northern Virginia Chapter, and currently serves on the Board of Directors. He has taught mathematics and computer science in the Virginia school system for 28 years. □

AZALEAS, VITIS VINIFERA, AND THE RHS COLOUR CHART

Maarten van der Giessen

Semmes, Alabama

Two (of Many) Considerations Affecting Use of a Color Chart

Sooner or later, any color chart will suffer the ravages of time—the deleterious effects of light, moisture, heat, and atmospheric gases. Changes may involve chemical reactions between components of the colorant mixtures or the paper. Those who rely on color charts as standards must seek to minimize these effects. Kept dry, clean, and not exposed excessively to heat and light, a chart such as the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Colour Chart should remain reasonably stable for many years.

In using a color chart, avoid contamination by moisture and matter! Using the holes in the center of the 1986 and 1995 RHS color patches is a questionable practice. It may assist in color evaluation to see the specimen color through the hole in a color patch, but there is substantial danger that moisture and matter from the specimen will adhere to the back of the patch. Then, when the color fan is closed, these contaminants may be transferred to the face of the following leaf in the fan.

The selection of a light source is very important for color evaluation. Artificial lamps designed for household or commercial use must be avoided. Color experts favor "full-sky" daylight—the blend of sunlight with horizon-to-horizon sky light—between two hours after sunrise and two hours before sunset. Because this full-sky exposure may not be available and direct sunlight is too red, the use of "north-sky daylight" is often recommended. With clouds or some atmospheric haze present, this may be a useful light source. If, however, the north sky is perfectly clear, the light may be too blue for proper color evaluation.

The allegorical tale of woe by Maarten van der Giessen aptly dramatizes these concerns.

With great glee I found my RHS color (Colour) chart in yesterday's mail. Congratulating the English on their great wisdom in not shipping UPS [during the UPS strike, ed.], I hurried home to unravel the mysteries that have haunted me since the beginnings of azaleaphilisticism.

Reclining in my Lazy Boy and enjoying a glass of Merlot in the glow of the Yellow Red group, I leafed through card after card. Yes. THESE will do it. THIS is SCIENCE. No more poetic nonsense of Alizarine something or even Madder.

With Merlot and fan in hand I paraded to the garden. The early dew was on the grass, flowers softly glowing in the gentle morning light. "Do not use the chart in direct sunlight." Of course not. That was obvious. "Compare colours in an indirect northern light." Northern light? I glossed over this technicality and proceeded to the task at hand.

I've always been a little skeptical of my Robin Hills. It seems Gartrell took a perverse pleasure in choosing tones and forms maddeningly similar to each other. Each beautiful in its own right, but the devil himself to tell apart. In particular, 'Gresham' and 'Sir Robert' have always troubled my sleep.

I decided to approach my subject in an empirical manner. Galle's text would verify what the cards had to tell me. It should take no more than a

week to cover the four or five hundred cultivars in the garden and the nursery. Within the month I should be able to straighten out Mobile County and then ...

The dew on the flowers made the cards a little sticky. As it soaked into the paper the cards began to wrinkle a bit. Maybe it wouldn't hurt if the sunlight were a bit more direct. I laid the project aside for a few hours. When I returned sometime later I found to my horror that the cards had firmly glued to each other, and prying them apart left the paper backing on the chips. O.K., check for a color match on a couple of bushes and see if I can fix this later. At worst I should be able to approximate the right color, and let Galle pin it down.

I flipped through the deck quickly. Too rich, too dark, too purple, close, closer, closer...yes. 49C. That was the answer--no question. Of course it fades a little toward the edge, and maybe this isn't the freshest flower. A good quantitative analyst always runs three samples, so I check again. 56D. Was that what I got the first time? I rechecked the first flower. 56D. Wait a minute. Realizing that I was tampering with raw data here I dropped my doubts and bent down to analyze my final sample. 38D or I'm blind.

Later that evening I sat in a funk waiting for the North Star to rise above the horizon. I whipped out my sticky color cards and checked again in the fading light. Yes, if you looked at it this way then 55C would work. But so would 35C through 90D. And these mercury streetlights aren't helping. About then my cards began to flash electric blue. "Turn that damn light off, can't you see I'm working here?" I snarled at the patrol car parked at the curb. In the back seat of the cruiser, I couldn't help but notice that the crumpled blossom in my hand matched the Merlot stain on my white trousers almost exactly. I wondered if the vintage would matter.

Maarten van der Giessen is the Manager of the Van Der Giessen Nursery in Semmes, Alabama. The nursery is a wholesale liner operation specializing in modern azaleas and other ornamentals. Maarten is a collector of azaleas. □

SOCIETY NEWS

BROOKSIDE GARDENS CHAPTER

Dianne Gregg, *President*

A number of members went to Atlanta in April for the National Convention in Atlanta and enjoyed seeing spectacular gardens. There were excellent speakers and of course the legendary Southern hospitality by the Oconee Chapter.

Spring Chapter meetings featured Anne Brooks in April speaking on "Plants with Good Foliage," and in June, Gordon and Roberta Hagen exploring a new topic to many of us, "Magnolias as Good Companion Plants for Azaleas."

The first weekend in May featured the annual Brookside Gardens Chapter Azalea Show at the Landon School Azalea Festival. Bill Miller's 'Palestrina' won the top award. The Azalea Mart sale was held the second Saturday in May. This annual sale is happily anticipated by many people in the Washington area.

In July, the Chapter held a picnic at Lee and Jim Blue's garden. They were the lucky people who bought the Stelloh property. Fortunately, they are gardeners too.

In September there was another annual event, the Azalea and Companion Plant Auction at the National Arboretum. Bill Miller was again the Auctioneer. This auction is lots of fun and a good fund raiser for the Chapter and the Arboretum.

In the photograph at the right Bill Miller (left) and Bobbi McCeney (center), both members of the Brookside Gardens chapter, present a specimen of the new evergreen azalea 'Landon Pride' to Landon School Headmaster Damon F. Bradley (right) at a ceremony in the Perkins Garden at the 1997 Landon Azalea Festival in Bethesda, Maryland. A Miller F2 hybrid of two 'Kobold' open-pollinated progeny, 'Landon Pride' (syn. Landon #6) is a single, 2 to 2-1/4-inch flower. The flower is a very attractive, glowing purplish red, RHS86-60C, with darker dots on the upper lobe and a yellowish tinge in the throat. 'Landon Pride' was introduced at the 1997 Landon Azalea Festival and can only be obtained from the Landon School.



Photo by Dianne Gregg

OCONEE CHAPTER

Ruth Bryan, *Secretary*

The Oconee Chapter met at Allison Fuqua's home/garden for an azalea cutting swap with 24 present. Members arrived and left at different times because of the weather. Allison demonstrated his method of propagation. Earl Hester, our president, asked members to introduce themselves and welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Maddox as new members. Earl expressed regret that he was not able to attend the ASA Convention. Earl volunteered his place for next year's (1998) cutting party. We are hoping to set up a regular meeting date and place to be able to schedule speakers.

A CD was purchased, and a donation to the ASA was agreed upon. The new meeting place will be at the Conyers Kroger meeting room. Jim Thornton, president of the ASA, discussed the ASA Board meeting and stated that the