



The Azalean

The Newsletter of the Azalea Society of America

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THE ROBIN HILL AZALEAS

by Matthew Nosal

As the days of May come to an end the azalea collector is suddenly faced with a dilemma: the garden that was a riot of color throughout most of May is suddenly facing a void. Most of the azaleas are finishing their blooming season. There is still some bloom to look forward to, however, since some of the late Glenn Dale and Gable hybrids are just starting to flower, and in mid-June the Macrantha hybrids will burst forth with flowers. There are also Satsuki hybrids that hold promise for June bloom.

Ah, the Satsuki hybrids! What promise they have for the azalea lover: large flowers, unusual color patterns, beautiful foliage and growth habit, late blooming to extend the season into June. But mostly they just promise, since they are not reliably hardy north of Philadelphia. They are capable of providing some color in the New York area, but many gardeners find them too much trouble to consider seriously.

If you ever have tried to grow Satsuki hybrids and found them disappointing, then explore the answer to an azalea lover's dream, the Robin Hill hybrids.

Bred by Robert Gartrell of Wycoff, NJ, this group of evergreen azaleas offers all those qualities that the Satsukis offer, but they deliver what they promise. They have large flowers, nice rounded growth habits, beautiful foliage, and they bloom from late May into early June. However, if you like strong colors, except for a few cultivars the Robin Hill hybrids may not be to your liking because most have very soft pastel color tones rarely seen in evergreen azaleas.

THE LINWOOD HARDY AZALEAS

by Frank B. White, Jr.

The Linwood Hardy azaleas. These exquisitely beautiful evergreen azaleas are the life's work of G. Albert Reid of Linwood, NJ. Very little, much too little, has ever been written about Al Reid and his Linwoods.

A quiet, retiring, humble and very unassuming man, Al Reid apparently possesses little of this world's material goods. Yet, as one gets to know him you realize that here is a very, very wealthy man.

Now in his advanced years, suffering from chronic emphysema, he broke his back during the winter of 1979. But in May of 1979 when I drove into his yard for a visit there was G. Albert working with a shovel transplanting some of his two-year old Linwoods. Some hours later he showed me what he calls his "ego corner": a walk-in closet lined with frames of awards his Linwoods have received. At one glance I saw more sweepstakes ribbons and blue, red and white ribbons than any one person had ever won in truss shows of the American Rhododendron Society--all won by Linwoods exhibited at various truss shows.

Certainly the Linwoods are among the most outstanding American hybrids yet introduced. What characteristics set them apart? For one thing they all are double or hose-in-hose, vivid and pure in color, flowering early and mid-season. Their size is intermediate. This fact, plus their habit of growth and good green winter color, makes them excellent landscape material. Even young plants quickly develop a rounded, densely-branched form.

Bess Hallock, 0-9 semi-double red

Dr. Curtis Alderfer C-24 semi-double red

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The Robin Hill Azaleas (continued)

If one compares the color descriptions as listed in the ARS Plant Registry to the appropriate color chart, the flower colors may appear to be flat or lifeless, but this is how a color chart may be deceptive. Because many of the colors are pastel, or soft muted tones, the chart cannot show the color as the flower does, but should be used merely as a guide. In many cases the flower petals are of a texture that transmits sunlight, giving the flower a translucent quality that enhances the basic color. To see a mass planting of Robin Hills in full bloom is a sight to behold.

The goal of Robert Gartrell's breeding project was to produce hardy, late blooming azaleas comparable in flowering characteristics to the Satsuki hybrids. One of the prime plants in his project was a selected clone of *Azalea kaempferi* he calls "Oakland", which tends to add hardiness to the progeny without changing the desired flowering characteristics of tender varieties in many cases. Other useful cultivars used were Gable's 'Louise Gable', the Glenn Dale 'Glacier', and the Satsukis 'Shinnyo-no-tsuki' and 'Tama-giku', to name but a few.

Starting in the late 1930's, Gartrell had made over 1,000 crosses and had grown some 25,000 seedlings by the mid-1960's. At present over 200 have been selected and grown under number, with about 45 of these having been named, and about 25 clones selected for registration. Collections of these fine azaleas exist at the National Arboretum, Tyler Arboretum, and many other arboretums, as well as in Australia, Germany, New Zealand and Switzerland.

As beautiful and unique as they are, the Robin Hills do not seem to be destined for the commercial success they deserve, mainly because they bloom when general interest in azaleas is on the wane. Perhaps in a few years, as the general public becomes more aware of the vast number of azalea cultivars available and the lengthened blooming season, some of the Robin Hill hybrids may become entrenched in the American nursery trade as have some of the Glenn Dale and Gable hybrids. Of course this goes not only for the Robin Hill hybrids but for all the recently introduced azaleas such as Linwood Hardy and North Tisbury hybrids, and the beautiful azaleas of Tony Shammarello and Peter Girard. All these superb azaleas should enjoy much greater use in our gardens.

To say that we are saturated with azalea cultivars is an understatement. Just the thought of 454 Glenn Dale hybrids confuses the most ardent azalea enthusiast. When I first heard of the Robin Hill hybrids my own reaction was simply, "just another group to add to the confusion". How wrong I was! Now after growing them I sincerely feel they are perhaps the most beautiful group of azaleas we have available. There isn't another group of azaleas with comparable blooming time that can match the Robin Hill hybrids for garden display.

Descriptions of the Robin Hill Azaleas:

Following are descriptions of the Robin Hill hybrids. Included are the parentage, color descriptions using the RHS Colour Chart, and comments concerning growth habit, foliage, and garden value where appropriate. Last, in parentheses, are the breeder's plant number, and, where applicable, synonyms. These are listed because many of the cultivars were distributed before being named, and some names have been changed to conform with registration rules. Blooming times are for Wycoff, NJ.

The Robin Hill Azaleas (continued)

Betty Ann Voss: (Louise Gable x Tama-giku) x Shinnyo-no-tsuki. Light pink. (RHS 62A varying to 62C), 3" hose-in-hose double flowers; blooms late May to early June. Plant habit broader than tall, actually a compact, free-branching mound, with beautiful dark green foliage. A very heavy-flowering cultivar, when in full bloom leaves very little to be desired. (U17-B).

Conversation Piece: (Emil Rosseau x Gable cv. Carol) x Eikan. Light pink. (RHS 68C), 3 1/2" single flowers with lighter margins; some flowers with heavy dotting of red (RHS 57B) in blotch area, other flowers with pink sectors and/or blotch; blooms late May and early June. Mounded growth habit; responds well to, and should be pinched and shaped as a young plant. A very variable cultivar, very aptly named. (T 36-6; Effie Bunce).

Dorothy Hayden: (Glacier x (Louise Gable x Gable C8G)) x Getsu Toku. White with pale green throat (RHS 149D), 3 1/2" single, flat-faced flowers; blooms in early June. A dwarf growth habit, growing about three times as broad as it does tall. (T5-2).

Dorothy Reese: Glacier x (Louise Gable x Tama-giku). White with pale green throat (RHS 145D), 3 1/4" single flowers with overlapping lobes and wavy margins; blooms late May to early June. A fast-growing, free-branching, mounded growth habit: very lush bright green foliage. This cultivar will require more garden space than most Robin Hill hybrids. (V1-9).

Early Beni: (Louise Gable x (Oakland x Belgian hybrid)) x Gable cv. Carol. Pale scarlet (RHS 43 B), 2 1/2" hose-in-hose double flowers; blooms in early May. Upright semi-dwarf growth habit. Flowers somewhat similar to the Macrantha cv. Beni-Kirishima. (N26-2).

Eunice Updike: Louise Gable x Shinnyo-no-tsuki. Pale scarlet (RHS 43C), 2-2 1/2" hose-in-hose double flowers; blooms late May and early June. Dwarf, mounded growth; very free-branching and very floriferous, with very glossy elliptic foliage. (U22-2; Mrs. Updike).

Glamora: (Louise Gable x Tama-giku) x Wako. Pale lavender pink 3" single, occasionally semi-double flat-faced flowers; blooms late May and early June. Very dense, semi-dwarf rounded growth habit. (V21-1).

Glencora: Shinnyo-no-tsuki x (Louise Gable x Tamagiku). Light red (RHS 47C), 2 1/2" double flowers; blooms early June. Dwarf, broad growth habit. (V5-1).

Greta: (Oakland x (Belgian hybrid x Gable cv. Carol)) x Getsutoku. Dark pink (RHS 5BC), 3" single flowers with wavy margins; blooms mid to late May. Low, mounded free-branching growth habit. (T13-8).

Gwenda: (Louise Gable x Tama-giku) x Eikan. Pale pink (RHS 56B) single flowers with wavy margins; blooms in early June. Plant habit semi-dwarf, mound-shaped. (T 37-4).

The Robin Hill Azaleas (continued)

Lady Louise: Louise Gable x Tama-giku. Pink (RHS 48C), 3" single flowers with slightly darker blotch (RHS 51A); flowers flat-faced and occasionally semi-double; blooms in late May. Broad, mounded, compact growth habit, and yet a strong growing plant that will eventually need room to sprawl out and show the flowers to advantage; beautiful, dark green foliage, glossy. (J44-7).

Lady Robin: (Glacier x Tama-giku) x Getsu-toku. White 3 1/2" single flowers that vary considerably as to amount of dark pink (RHS 66B) stripes and sectors; some flowers will be white with a pale pink wash, or pale pink with an almost white margin, all with or without stripes and sectors; blooms late May and early June. Light green foliage and broad, sprawling growth habit. (T14-10).

Laura Morland: (Louise Gable x Tama-giku) x (Kaigetsu x Gable cv. Carol). Light pink (RHS 49B) 2 1/2" semi-double flowers with occasional darker stripes (RHS 49A); blooms in late May and early June. Compact, rounded growth habit. Very glossy foliage with a maroon tint that is very striking. (U4-1; Mrs. Morland).

Mrs. Emil Hager: (Louise Gable x Tama-giku) x Shinnyo-no-tsuki. Bright pink (RHS 68A), 2 3/4" semi-double to double flowers; blooms in early June. Rounded, heavy-branching dwarf growth habit and very glossy foliage. This is considered by many as a "hot pink"; one of the more vibrant flower colors to be seen in the Robin Hill hybrids. The growth habit, foliage and flowering characteristics make this cultivar one of the finer Robin Hills. Suitably named for the person who did so much to make the Robin Hills popular. (U14-5; Betty Hager).

Nancy of Robinhill: Vervaeniana x (Louise Gable x Tama-giku). Light pink (RHS 62C), 3 1/2" hose-in-hose double flowers with occasional light red blotch; blooms in mid to late May. Broad growing, with free-branching growth habit. Beautiful in all respects; words cannot describe this cultivar. Named for Bob Gartrell's wife, he considers this his finest azalea. When I recently asked him which cultivar did he think to be the best of all the Robin Hills he answered with one word, "Nancy". (O46-3).

Papineau: Glacier x Swansong. White 3 1/2" flowers with pale green throat and wavy margins; blooms in late May. Very large leaves, 2 1/2" long and almost 1 1/2" wide; very rich green. A large, fast-growing, very beautiful cultivar. Perhaps the largest growing of the Robin Hills; certainly the fastest. (RB-5).

Redmond: (Louise Gable x Tama-giku) x Heiwa. Pale scarlet (RHS 39B), 3" flat-faced flowers with conspicuous dotting of rosy red (RHS 47B) on dorsal lobes; blooms in late May and early June. Very dense, mounded, dwarf growth habit, and large dark green round leaves make this a superb garden specimen with year around interest. The pale scarlet flowers accented by the red spotting create a most unusual effect. (T21-1).

Robin Hill Gillie: Oakland x ((Belgian hybrid x Gable cv. Carol) x Getsu-Toku). Pale orange red (RHS 42C), 3 1/2" single flowers with wavy margins; blooms in late May. Semi-dwarf, mounded growth habit. (T13-6; Gillie).

The Robin Hill Azaleas (continued)

Robin Hill Frosty: Oakland x ((Belgian hybrid x Gable cv. Carol) x (Louise Gable x Tama-giku)). Bright pink (RHS 6 2 A), 2 3/4" single flowers with distinct dark pink blotch (RHS 55A), and lighter petal edge (RHS 62D) and very wavy margins; blooms in mid to late May. Plant habit mounded, slightly upright; very free branching and semi-dwarf. A very unique flowering appearance, since the lighter pink margin is just a very thin line along the margin edge, not a band, and almost appears to be white, giving the flower a frosted appearance. The very wavy margins make the flower appear larger than it actually is, and amplifies the frosted appearance. This is a very heavy-blooming cultivar. Combined with the good growth habit, the flowering qualities make it one of the best of the Robin Hills. (N31-9; Frosty).

Spink: Parentage unknown. Bright pink (RHS 62A), 1 1/2" hose-in-hose flowers; blooms early to mid May. Semi-dwarf, compact, slightly upright growth habit. (K 34-3).

Watchet: Amagassa x (Louise Gable x Tama-giku). Light pink (RHS 49B), 3 1/2" single flowers with slightly ruffled margins; blooms in late May. Dense, rounded, semi-dwarf plant habit. (T28-10).

White Moon: (Glacier x Tama-giku) x Getsu-toku. White, 3 1/2" single flowers with a pale green wash (RHS 149D) in the blotch area, and occasional stripes and/or sectors of pale scarlet (RHS 43C), some flowers will be one third to one half scarlet sector, the remainder pure white; blooms in early June. Beautiful bright green glossy leaves give an ideal background for the unusual flowers. Plant habit mounded, branching nicely, but somewhat loose, which tends to show flowers to good advantage. (T17-7).

(to be continued)

The foregoing article is excerpted from The Rosebay, the newsletter of the Massachusetts chapter of the ARS. It is reproduced with the permission of The Rosebay, and its author, Matthew Nosal.

The Linwood Hardy Azaleas (continued)

Dr. Franklin West, 0-5 double salmon

Edward M. Boehm, L-18 hose-in-hose dark pink

Emma Reid, 0-19 double red

Garden State Garnet, 0-12 hose-in-hose red

Garden State Glow, E-26 hose-in-hose pink

Garden State Pink, E-30 hose-in-hose pink

Garden State Red, N-3 hose-in-hose red

Garden State Salmon C-36 hose-in-hose salmon

The Linwood Hardy Azaleas (continued)

Garden State White, H-11	hose-in-hose white	Linwood White, H-5	double white
Hardy Gardenia, L-30	double white	Mary Elizabeth, O-24	hose-in-hose pink
James Dunlop, O-13	hose-in-hose pink	Nellie, C-4	semi-double pink
Janet Rhea, N-4X	semi-double variegated	Opal, L-1	double fall and spring pink
Linwood Blush, E-4	semi-double salmon pink	Orchid Beauty, E-52	double, lavender pink
Linwood Charm, O-2	double pink	Peach Fuzz, L-34	double salmon
Linwood Lavender, H-1	semi-double lavender pink	Pink Pincushion, L-8	double light pink
Linwood Lilac, E-15	hose-in-hose lavender	Reid Red, O-1	hose-in-hose red
Linwood Lustre, H-4	semi-double white	Salmon Pincushion, L-4	double light salmon
Linwood Pink No. 1, C-28	hose-in-hose pink	Slim Jim, L-14	double pink
Linwood Pink No. 2, K-2	hose-in-hose pink	Tiny, L-28	double dark pink
Linwood Pink Giant, K-11	hose-in-hose pink	Victoria Hohman, O-3	double pink
Linwood Ruby, O-7	semi-double red	0-23	hose-in-hose red
Linwood Salmon, K-10	hose-in-hose salmon	0-25	hose-in-hose pink

ASA MOVING TOWARD INCORPORATION

Articles of Incorporation for the Azalea Society of America have been filed in the District of Columbia. When the Articles are accepted the society will be registered as a corporation under the laws of the District. Thereafter the Society will apply to the Federal Government for status as a non-profit organization. The incorporators named in the articles are Mrs. Alice Holland, George Harding and Emile Deckert.

Nominations For Board Of Governors

Of the ten governors of the Azalea Society of America who were elected in the spring of 1979, the terms of five will expire in the spring of 1980. A committee appointed by the Society's president has submitted nominations for these five positions as follows:

William Claggett, Derwood, MD. A research scientist with the federal government; a founder of the Society; an azalea enthusiast for the past ten years; has some 500 cultivars in his garden.

Jerry Goodman, North Caldwell, NJ. A businessman; azalea enthusiast for 16 years, with about 500 varieties including collections of Back Acres, Gables, Robin Hills, Kurumes and Satsukis; member American Rhododendron Society for 11 years, president of New Jersey chapter for two years.

George Harding, Germantown, MD. Retired chief of horticulture and maintenance for National Capital Parks, National Park Service; a founder of the Society; has propagated azaleas since 1924 and has had an azalea nursery since 1929; his collection exceeds 1,200 azalea and 300 rhododendron cultivars; a current member of the Board of Governors.

Mrs. Alice Holland, Silver Spring, MD. Home economist; a founder of the Society; current member of the Board of Governors and Secretary of the Society; has been collecting azaleas for the past 18 years; has 350 varieties.

Frank White, Lanham, MD. Azalea nurserymen with one of the largest collections on the east coast; a founder of the Society; current member of the Board of Governors; past president of the Potomac Valley Chapter, ARS.

Society members are invited to make further nominations for consideration at the time of election. Under terms of the Society's bylaws each such nomination must be supported by 20 member signatures and the concurrence of the nominee.

An Encyclopedia Of Satsuki Azaleas

The rumor that somewhere in this world there is a sumptuously-illustrated edition of a definitive work on Satsuki azaleas sent enthusiast Jo Ann Ricchiuti to sleuthing in the publishing world. Here is her own account of what she found:

After searching for six months I have found a source for the set of three volumes which together comprise an encyclopedia of Satsuki azaleas. Each volume consists of 240 pages, with two pages devoted to each variety, including color photographs of actual leaf size, a branch of foliage, actual flower size, and the entire plant in bloom.

Unfortunately from our point of view the Encyclopedia is written in Japanese. A translation is available for the names of all plants but not for the descriptions. However, the names can be tied to the description in Lee's The Azalea Book.

An Encyclopedia of Satsuki Azaleas (continued)

The set retails at the Sakura Oriental Book Shop for \$100. However, I have worked out with the owner an arrangement that if we have 20 orders he will give us a 20% discount. Thus the three-volume encyclopedia plus a copy of the translation of the names of the cultivars would cost \$80, plus \$5 tax. About two months would be needed for delivery.

The Book Shop has ordered a sample set which should be available for review by the time this is published. Telephone me, Jo Ann Ricchiuti, or telephone the Sakura Oriental Book Shop directly, (202) 428-0605, if you want to see the sample set, which I urge you to do. The volumes are very impressive. I have been nothing available in this country that comes close to comparison.

At this time, I'm trying to determine how many people are interested. If you are, please contact Jo Ann Ricchiuti, 3 Western View Place, Mt. Airy, MD 21771 (telephone: 301-831-7561).

Availability Of the Royal Horticultural Society

Colour Chart

RHS color indicators, such as you have seen in the article in this issue about the Robin Hill azaleas, are meaningless without the Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart. Yet with the chart the description of color can be as precise as any yet devised, distinguishing between the myriad of pinks (salmon through rose), reds (scarlet through crimson) and purples (lavender through mauve) and all their confusing subtle hues. Short of the Royal Horticultural Society itself (Vincent Square, London, SW1P 2PE, England) the only source we know for the Colour Chart is Edwin K. Parker, Route 5, Box 35, Astoria, Oregon 97103. Mr. Parker is national (US) registrar for new cultivars of Rhododendrons--a process that requires the use of the RHS Chart. It costs \$15.

REMINDER

1980 Dues are Due