

Northern Virginia Chapter

A Chapter meeting took place on April 19, 1998, at the Green Spring Farm Park Administration Building. Joe Klimavicz, our Chapter President, presented the program. Joe has had "hybridizing fever" since the late 1980s. Each year he makes five to ten crosses, and raises 500-1,000 seedlings that he moves out of his basement into cold frames for the growing season.

Joe is always glad to share what did and what did not work. He has many experiences to talk about, and can name specific examples that have produced beautiful flowers. He showed many slides of his work, and he had some sample seedlings available for attendees to take home. For those of you who have considered hybridizing but have not caught the fever, here is your opportunity to jump on the bandwagon.

This meeting was less than two weeks away from the National Convention to be held here at Tysons Corners. The business part of the meeting was devoted to finalizing plans for activities and participation of members in hosting this convention. The attendees were urged to support the Chapter in this undertaking.

There were refreshments and door prizes as usual. There was also a plant exchange.

There was a potting party after the meeting. The plan to acquire "liner" azaleas for favors at the convention banquet fell through. Joe Klimavicz has offered seedlings from his hybridizing experiments for favors. These are now crowded in trays, and need to be put into small pots. Bring gloves, small pots, and help pot these seedlings after our Chapter meeting on the 19th.

At the February 22, 1998 meeting the speaker was Steve Cockerham, Manager of Betty's Azalea Ranch on Lee Highway between Fairfax and Centreville in Virginia. He grew up on the ranch working with his mother, "Betty", so he has extensive experiences to relate in growing azaleas.

For fertilizing, he recommends *Agriform* cubes for both potted and planted plants during the growing season. It is slow release, and should be placed just under the mulch around plants in the ground.

He talked about weed control. They have several products which he recommends for application in the fall, spring and summer. These are products that remain in the weed's roots, and do not leach into the ground to damage desirable plants. He suggests the use of *Wilt Proof* mixed in the spray to ensure it sticks to the leaves.

In regard to a question about the dogwood vulnerability, he recommends that the trees be fertilized well. All in all, there were a lot of questions and Steve was very forthcoming on giving informative answers. Of course, the products he recommends can be obtained at the Ranch!

Phil Louer

Oconee Chapter

Jim Thornton called the meeting to order on behalf of Earl Hester. He thanked Earl for his guidance the past two years. Jim then introduced our

new Chapter President Mike McNeal. Ruth Bryan then presented the speaker Richard Clapp. Dick showed slides and talked about the Asticou Garden and Heritage Plantation and its Dexter rhododendrons.

After a brief refreshment intermission, a business meeting was held during which future trips, flower shows and meeting sites were discussed. The April meeting was at the Beasley's Nursery. A flower show for late blooming azaleas was contemplated for May. This was discussed at the forthcoming business meeting. Please call Mike McNeal for further details. The cutting party was held at Hester's Nursery, June 20.

Ruth Bryan, Secretary

Outgoing/Incoming

First, we want to thank Earl Hester for being our president for the last two years. Though it's an hour drive, each way, he came to just about all the meetings, even when he didn't quite feel up to it. Both Dorothy and Earl are a little under the weather right now, so let's keep them in our thoughts and prayers.

Mike McNeal stepped forward to become our new president and we didn't have to twist his arm! Mike, a long time member and azalea collector, is retired from Southern Bell and is now owner, chief cook and bottle washer of McNeal's Greenhouses in Conyers. He and his wife, Sylvia, grow bedding plants, hanging basket arrangements and other plants just about all year round. Mike has a lot of ideas and should be an asset as president of our chapter. We look forward to his leadership.

A day at the Hesters. At our last meeting, we agreed to go down to Dorothy and Earl's Azaleas-To-Go Nursery in Fayetteville, GA. to help pot-up some flats of azalea cuttings. (Both Dot and Earl are not moving around too swiftly nowadays, and after all, you can only leave cuttings

in six packs so long.) Anyway, a crack team of azalea potters (Tom Anderson, Ruth and Frank Bryan, Gail and Chan Schmalz and I) was formed, and on April 2 off we went.

We potted about 2,000 azaleas, and we didn't even make a dent. Maybe, hopefully, at our April meeting, we can get up another team and at our cuttings swap, in June, which is going to be at the Hesters anyway, we could go early and stay a little later and do more potting. They would appreciate the help. Think about it!

If you bought the new Encore azaleas last fall, let me know how they fared during the last cold (18 degree F) spell. Three of mine, 'Rouge', 'Embers' and 'Amethyst', got hit pretty hard.

Jim Thornton, Public Relations and Membership

Members' News

Jim Thornton has been on the tour circuit lately, having a great time and hopefully bringing in some new members. Recently, he was invited to speak at both the Rockdale and Newton County Extension Offices to talk about azaleas. The presentation was a slide presentation of various azaleas and gardens. He has been invited back to talk about how to propagate azaleas in June.

If any of you have an occasion to speak or participate in these types of activities, please let us know so we can blow your horn! Besides, we need to let groups know we're available, and we need the visibility.

We just heard that Ben Reid is recovering from open heart surgery...five by-passes. He is doing great and Jim Thornton told him that we look forward to seeing his smiling face at meetings again.

We now have an azalea to name in honor of Ralph Bullard. It's a seedling grown by at-large member of the

ASA and member of the ARS, Earl Sommerville. Earl has promised to take cuttings for us and the local ARS Chapter this summer. We look forward to getting these plants and start sharing. (Don't forget to register that plant with Jay Murray!)

Transplant Nursery, the site of the next meeting, has a web site (http://transplant-nursery.com.trans_main.ntml). It consists of their catalog of bloom time, native azaleas, rhododendron, evergreen azaleas, camellias, and companion plants.

Azalea Society of America **Minutes of the Business Meeting** Tysons Corner, McLean, Virginia May 2, 1998

The evening started with a social hour and after a delicious dinner, Harry Weiskittel gave the keynote talk about the Marshy Point Nursery and his hybridizing hobby. After a five-minute break, Joe Klimavicz resumed the proceedings and thanked all the garden hosts and chapter workers for their marvelous work. (Secretary's note: many marveled at the planning around D.C. traffic.) He then turned the meeting over to the President, Jim Thornton, for the business meeting. Jim congratulated Joe, his team and the Northern Virginia Chapter for a job well done.

Bob Hobbs announced that there was a tie for the award for best article in **THE AZALEAN** for 1997. The winners were Alice Holland for "How It All Began" and Dr. Kathleen Kron for "Identifying the Native Azaleas".

Bill McIntosh has resigned as the Society Secretary and will be greatly missed. Ruth Bryan was introduced as the new secretary. Art Vance will maintain the Society's data base and the slide library. Charles Owen has stepped down as a director and Maarten van der Giessen has joined the board of directors in Doctor Owen's place. A biography of Maarten follows these minutes.

Bob and Belinda Hobbs are retiring as editor and associate editor of **THE AZALEAN** after ten years of invaluable service. The big job of finding a new editor is in progress. An editorial staff will be formed to work with chapters to solicit articles for **THE AZALEAN**.

Jim stated that the Society needs membership, new direction and new image. Jim also announced a new corporate relationship with Pursell Industries, Inc. makers of STA-GREEN® fertilizer and by doing so can help towards the new direction and new image for the ASA. A recruiting committee has been formed to entice younger adults to become members. Vice President Bill Bode will chair. Joe Klimavicz, Bill Lucas and John Migas will serve as advisers. A welcome package will be re-vamped and sent to chapters to assist in these goals.

There is to be a one-time sale of complete sets of back issues of **THE AZALEAN**. Order forms will appear in a future issue of **THE AZALEAN**.

Maarten van der Giessen gave highlights of the forthcoming Azalea Society Convention to be held in Mobile, AL, April 1-4, 1999.

Ruth Bryan, ASA Secretary

Maarten van der Giessen

Maarten van der Giessen attended Memphis State University from 1976-78, and majored in Chemistry at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, AL from 1979-1984. He worked for Cottage Hill Nursery; Container division in Mobile, AL as Propagation, Production, and finally Assistant Manager from 1985 to 1990. In 1990 he left Cottage Hill to start van der Giessen Nursery, Inc. in Semmes, AL with his father, Peter, where he is currently Vice-President and manager.

Van der Giessen Nursery is a seven-acre greenhouse operation producing a wide range of ornamental liners for