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# CONVENTION OVERVIEW

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**Robert W. Hobbs**

*North Beach, Maryland*

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The 1998 convention, hosted by the Northern Virginia Chapter in McLean, Virginia, was smoothly organized and informative, focusing on hybridizing by local amateur and professional azalea enthusiasts. The date for the convention was chosen based on historical information on the peak bloom time for azaleas in the area. However, as so often happens, history is a good teacher, but history does not control the details of the advent of spring, so many azalea blooms were past their peak. However, there were more than enough azaleas to see, including lots of old familiar varieties and lots of new plants resulting from various hybridizing efforts. About 110 Society members attended. The fact that tours of local gardens were punctuated by showers and thunder storms did little to "dampen" the enthusiasm of attendees.

Evening talks included a round table discussion on hybridizing (remarks by George Ring are summarized on page 52 of this issue), a talk by Sandra McDonald on her hybridizing program and her named hybrids (article by Sandra McDonald on page 49), and a talk on finding stands of native azaleas by George McLellan (article on page 53).

Our garden tour on Friday started with the Azalea Society of America's George Harding Memorial Azalea Garden at the America Horticultural Society's River Farm. The George Harding Memorial Garden is filled with plants contributed by Society members and carefully planned, planted and cared for by members of the Ben Morrison, Brookside Gardens and Northern Virginia Chapters. On this rainy Friday morning, the garden was very impressive.

Next we visited the Japanese style azalea garden of Anita Frazer. Anita and her late husband, Art, were active in the founding of the Society. Then on to the garden of Dave and Sharon Raden where we enjoyed lunch amid many mature azaleas. After lunch we visited the estate of Margaret White, whose 13 acres of rhododendrons and azaleas is a horticultural showplace. Last, we visited the compact garden of hybridizer Bob Stewart. Bob's one-acre hillside garden is packed with plants in the ground, plants in containers, and many seedlings, which are the product of his hybridizing efforts, awaiting to be selected.

On Saturday we visited the garden of Joe Klimavicz, where both seedlings and blooming azalea plants were evidence of his enthusiasm (and his family's enthusiasm) for hybridizing. After visiting the finely cared-for Beck garden, we drove to the countryside of Haymarket, Virginia, to the five-acre garden of Phil and Frances Louer, where lunch was served. The Louers have over 2,000 varieties of azaleas interplanted with other foliage and flowering plants. After lunch we visited the manicured garden of Don Hyatt where we could

see the mature plants of azaleas and rhododendron that Don has introduced as a result of his hybridizing activities. The garden tours ended with a drive across the Potomac River to the Beaudry garden.

The Convention was completed with the traditional banquet, keynote speaker and annual business meeting. The minutes of the business meeting were printed in the June issue of **THE AZALEAN**. □



*Attendees Enjoy Frazer Garden*



*Left to right; Mrs. Bill Bode, Society Vice President Bill Bode, and Society President Jim Thornton*

*Photographs by the Author*

**Thanks to the Northern Virginia Chapter  
for organizing the convention**