

# THE **A**zalea

*Journal of the Azalea Society of America*



## *1999 Annual Meeting Issue*

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Post Office Box 34536  
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20827-0536

# President's Letter

William F. Bode — Covington, Louisiana

This September issue of **THE AZALEAN** has traditionally carried an overview of the latest Annual National Convention. So, tradition being served, this is my view.

If this message were to be used as a headline for a metropolitan newspaper, it would be written as **DAZZLING DECIDUOUS MELLOW MOBILE**.

Several Louisiana Chapter members had urged us to choose Mobile as a site for our national meeting, for the following reasons:

1. The concentration of propagation and development of azaleas in the Mobile metro area.

2. The introduction of the Encore series originated by Robert (Buddy) Lee, a longtime member of ASA. The Encore series is propagated and distributed by Flowerwood Nursery, which kindly invited us to visit their enormous plantation at Loxley, Alabama -- just across Mobile Bay.

The tours, logistically, were an old soldier's dream: the transportation

was on time and comfortable, and the food was served on time and was tasty. Those on the tours were received by our hosts as confreres and in some cases old friends. No bands or pom-pom girls -- just heartfelt "Hello how are ya, glad to see ya."

The speakers or presenters were not only knowledgeable, but also refreshing. None of the rehash of old material, ET CETERA! ET CETERA! The beauty of their slide presentations was topped only by onsite viewing of those cultivars in the various gardens and nursery areas. Dr. Aromi and Mr. Dodd presented material on the development of their cultivars, while Dr. Thornton's presentation was directed to the care of deciduous azaleas, particularly in the mid- and deep South.

The general business meeting was devoted to exploration as to how the new websites would function and what their value would be to ASA. L. Malcolm Clark's munificence in including the ASA in income from Clark/Chandler Limited Partnership is most welcome. Following this, the

principal speaker, Mr. Jim Berry of PDSI and a consultant to Flowerwood Nursery, was introduced. His topic was "Commercial Production of Azaleas," which was in reality the "nuts and bolts" of how to bring new azaleas to market. Of particular interest was his description of the battle with the buying public: azaleas don't have to be pink, white, or purple.

The two Board of Directors meetings were productive, with these matters being approved:

1. Use of telephone conference call(s) for board meetings other than at the annual meeting.
2. Establishment of a Research Committee, with Malcolm Clark as Chair.
3. Consideration of formation of a group to explore increased cooperation with the American Rhododendron Society.
4. Establishment of a liaison with Auburn University to help them in forming an azalea research garden.
5. A bittersweet item: Give the Exceptional Service Award to Dr. Robert and Belinda (Bee) Hobbs on their retirement from 10 years as editors of **THE AZALEAN**.

## On the Cover:

" 'CHRISTOPHER WREN' (syn. 'Goldball'): large flowers (chrome yellow, HCC 605), blotch yellowish orange, HCC 9). This is a seedling of the plant sold today [1958] as 'Altaclarensis' (syn. 'Aureum Grandiflorum') and is much superior." (REF: *The Azalea Book* by Frederic P. Lee, 1958, p. 176.) Does anyone have a source for this plant?  
Photo © Robert K. Barry

## Erratum

Captions for the *Rhododendron obtusum* photographs shown in the June issue of **THE AZALEAN** misidentified the plant material. The correct information, from Mr. Harold Greer, who supplied the slide material is:

Page 26, lower left corner is *R. 'Georg Arends'*  
Page 26, upper right is *R. kiusianum* var. *kiusianum* 'Hanejiro'  
Page 27 photograph is *R. kiusianum* 'Amoenum'

The erroneous attributions printed in the June issue were in no way due to oversights by either Mr. Greer or Mr. Voss.

The Editor

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**Editor**

Barbara Stump

**Advisory Editorial Board**

Donald H. Voss

Jane Newman

Robert W. Hobbs Ph.D.

**Advertising**

Niki Baker

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## Azalea Calendar

1999

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Sept. 25-26 | 1999 Fall Native Plant Sale, Reflection Riding Arboretum and Botanical Garden, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Contact: Margaret Frederick, Business Manager, 423-821-9582. Among other offerings will be Rosebay Rhododendron. |
| Nov. 13     | Trip to North Chickamauga Creek Gorge, Tennessee, to collect seed of native azaleas, sponsored by the Oconee Chapter.   |
| Nov. 14     | Trip to Cumberland Plateau to collect seed of native azalea, sponsored by the Oconee Chapter.   |

# 1999 Convention Overview

Barbara Stump — Nacogdoches, Texas

This view of the 1999 ASA Annual Convention in Mobile March 31-April 2, 1999, is that of a first-timer, and will simply highlight aspects I personally appreciated highly. The presenters' own articles follow this overview, and Secretary Ruth Bryan's minutes from the Annual Business Meeting follow in the Society News Section of this issue.

This convention was organized very well indeed by the Louisiana Chapter under the firm guidance of Maarten van der Giessen and Billy Lucas. As President Bode says, Mobile was chosen for the wealth of gardens and nurserymen in the area. It caused extra work for the Louisiana host chapter to host this long-distance, but they came through with flying colors. It is no easy matter to keep over 100 garden fanatics of any kind happy, entertained, and mix in new information all in three days, one of them rainy. But Maarten and Billy did this in spades. We all thank them and their team for the handsome job well done.

As noted by at-large ASA member (and New York Chapter ARS member) Marianne Feller's letter to me about the convention, fine food and the plant

auction were definitely high points. Also worth noting, is that about two-thirds of the attendees at the Mobile meeting were ARS members. Mrs. Feller was amazed at the local growing requirements for azaleas; the aim is to withstand 100 degrees with 98 percent humidity in July and August, and bloom more than twice a year! In my view, it was fascinating to see an ecosystem of American azalea enthusiasts represented: there were long-term charter members, serious collectors, new homeowners looking for help with new landscape options, amateur and professional hybridizers, and "drag-along" spouses (their term, not mine!), all mixing with area professional azalea growers.

The Radisson Admiral Semmes Hotel in downtown Mobile is a national historic landmark and within walking distance of many unique restaurants, cafes, and even a copy center. The rooms have been refurbished and our meeting rooms were very nice indeed.

As a "new kid on the block" at the convention I had no idea what to expect, but my horticulture and trade show experiences made me feel right at home when I

saw the plants for sale, the golf shirts and caps for sale, and the many welcoming faces. All by itself, the chance to actually see, and even better buy for yourself, specimens from leading-edge breeders and nurserymen was worth the very reasonable price of admission. Just to mention a few contributors to the plant sale and the auction: from Margie Jenkins' nursery, purple R. 'Koromo Shikibu' and the white variety; from Dodd & Dodd Nursery, the new R. 'Admiral Semmes' and others from their "Confederate Series" now being grown on for spring 2000 sales; and from Van der Giessen Nursery, mind-searing scarlet R. 'Red Pepper' and lovely yellow Aromi Hybrid, R. 'Canary Isles'; and, of course, Jim Berry brought Flowerwood's "Encore Series."

Wednesday's opening remarks by Buddy Lee from the Louisiana Chapter and Billy Lucas from Mobile provided the framework for the tours and presentations. The organizers had set up tours at the truly major growers and gardens in the area. The scope of their work is phenomenal: Flowerwood Nursery has branches in three states, with growing fields totaling 11,000 acres. Bobby



*Buddy Lee of the Louisiana Chapter welcomes members to the Mobile Convention.*

*Maarten van der Giessen in his evaluation blocks with Art and Diane Vance and Margie Jenkins.*

*[Our thanks to William C. Miller III who took all the convention photographs in digital format.]*



*Jerry Ladner (left), who handled convention registration, talks to Buddy Lee and Tom Dodd III (right) during Dodd & Dodd Nursery tour.*



*A sample from the Bellingrath stock blocks, an unknown but beautiful deciduous azalea.*



Green's Nursery is a second generation nursery with a premier camellia collection 60 years old. Dodd & Dodd Nursery specializes in both native azaleas and native plants. Blackwell's Florist Nursery covers 75 acres. Van der Giessen Nursery does wholesale propagation of 85 varieties of azaleas in containers to the tune of two million per year.

Wednesday night's overview by Billy Lucas of what our itinerary was to be was a great treat, since it let us know that we would be seeing new cultivars "up close and personal," in their nursery growing blocks. The big lesson of such visits is often how harsh are the realities of what commercial nurseries have to do to produce and market such beauty. Keeping thousands of plants alive, healthy, and blooming requires great investments and ingenuity. This was a consistent theme through the nursery tours, and in the opening talk by Tom Dodd III and the closing presentation by Jim Berry.

Billy reminded us that Mobile was known as "The Azalea City," especially in the 1940s and 1950s, when residents and tourists drove bumper-to-bumper enjoying full-grown, huge Formosas. The current resurgence of interest in azaleas is obviously welcome locally.

Because the Mobile area climate favors

native deciduous azalea growth, many of the nurseries we toured have developed, or are developing, new cultivars from the natives. The talk by Dr. Aromi discussed his efforts in this process. Similarly, work by Buddy Lee with evergreen azaleas has led to the multiple-season blooming Encore azaleas. In some way, all the presenters discussed efforts toward development of new cultivars.

Each day, we toured gardens and nurseries. They covered the gamut from an old woodland garden now being restored and the home and nursery (Magnolia Nursery) of Dr. John Allen Smith where we were treated to a reception, and the home garden of a working landscape architect and retail nursery owner, Bobby Green, to the beautifully landscaped and manicured public Bellingrath Gardens as well as their stock blocks of azaleas. Because of the early warm spring weather, we saw the very end of the Formosas and Indicas, but it was perfect time to see, and smell, *R. austrinum*. All the owners or operators of the various tour sites were very welcoming, even when faced with two bus-loads of enthusiasts.

Each evening, the presenters gave just the right amount of information to complement each day's outings. Most

gave out outlines or notes, so attendees can add this to their files. Dr. John Thornton gave us care and culture warnings, especially about the need for water testing.

Finally, the plant auction was a welcome diversion in the festivities, being something on the order of a feeding frenzy. Maarten van der Giessen has hidden his skills as a very clever auctioneer, but these made us all want to buy what we thought were the only specimens of, say, 'Red Pepper' when he then found a few more. It was great fun, and my husband and I got into the spirit. A word to the wise, as with any feeding frenzy, get to your plant with all deliberate speed. All the plants were wonderful, and the nurserymen and women were most generous bringing some five-gallon and bigger material.

So, read about the presentations and garden and nursery tours. The next convention is in Charleston, South Carolina, in March of 2000. I'm signing up as soon as the registration form appears in the December issue of **THE AZALEAN**. Buddy Lee is the convention organizer, so we know it will be a great one, just as this meeting in Mobile was. The ASA wants you to come along, too. Mark your calendars for March 22-24, 2000.



*Jim Berry in the propagation houses at PDSI discusses the criteria for selecting new cultivars.*



*Behind the scenes at Bellingrath Gardens: Billy Lucas showed us through their stock blocks.*



*In Dr. and Mrs. Smith's gardens: June Ladner, who helped with convention registration, walks with Dr. Larry Brown of Hammond, Louisiana, developer of the repeat-blooming, evergreen azalea 'Southern Summer Rose.'*

# Convention Speakers and Presentations

## Breeding and Propagating Native Azaleas

Tom Dodd III — Semmes, Louisiana

Mr. Dodd discussed his breeding program begun in the 1980s. He began the process by collecting open-pollinated *Rhododendron canescens* and *R. alabamense*. The initial aim was to select forms that had large flowers such as those of the Exbury Hybrids he had seen growing in cooler climates. Having tried the Exburys in the climate of Mobile, he realized that their genetic background did not protect them from the heat and moisture of the deep South. He then decided to cross some of the Exburys with *R. austrinum*, with the hope that he would get the vigor of the austrinum and the bloom color and size of the Exburys. The most successful cross was with *R. austrinum* and the Exbury 'Hotspur Yellow'. Around 2500 seedlings were germinated and watched for two years. After blooming, 250 of these were set aside and planted for further evaluation. Of these, 25 cultivars were selected for cuttings. Seven have been named and put into production. Others of the group are being evaluated.

Native azaleas are often hard to root. Dodd discovered that this was true with *R. alabamense* and *R. flammeum*. His father's belief that most of the red and orange types are more difficult to root and grow has held true.

Another problem with the native azaleas is that they can slightly shift hues from year to year. This may be due to differences in water, fertility, light or other variables.

For his new "Confederate Series," Dodd wanted plants that would smell as sweet as honeysuckle and grow as well as *R. austrinum*. This eliminated

many of the seedlings in the early stages as they were grown in the full Alabama sun, given no fungicide, and grown under the same conditions as the evergreen azaleas. Current results: *R. 'Stonewall Jackson'*, yellow-orange, with the largest blooms of the series, but difficult to root; 'Admiral Semmes', a heavily blooming yellow that is hardy into western Pennsylvania; 'Colonel Mosby', a nice dark pink; and 'Emma Sansom', a lighter shade of pink; 'Jeb Stuart', the latest bloomer with dark pink flowers; 'Robert E. Lee', orange ruffled; and 'N.B. Forrest', a dark ruffled orange.

Other crosses he has tried didn't produce the flower size of the Confederates, but produced other outstanding traits. *R. austrinum* x *R. calendulaceum* has a great fragrance, yellow color, and bloom size from the *R. calendulaceum*. *R. alabamense* x *R. canescens* produced small white flowers with the best fragrance of all the hybrids as well as being stoloniferous for area coverage.

Dodd's seedling production house contains 3,000 seedlings from many different plants. Tom will then select from those by the way they bloom in three to five years and produce them asexually.

The *R. calendulaceum* will not grow well in Mobile under production conditions. Most of the species from the middle to upper South struggle on the black ground cover but do better in shade. The tradeoff is more sun, more buds vs. less sun, less buds but better growth although more leggy. Most of the hybrids do best in shade in the South, partial shade in

Washington, D.C., and full sun in Martha's Vineyard.

*Tom Dodd III is a third generation nurseryman. He and his wife, Thayer, started their own business, Dodd & Dodd Nursery, in 1989. They specialize mostly in native plants. He has been on the Magnolia Society Board, the Holly Society Board, among other horticultural society service groups. He graduated from the Citadel in 1966, and he served two tours in Viet Nam.*

### A Note on Revision of Azalea Nomenclature

*R. viscosum* is a very variable species with a widespread distribution in the eastern U.S. and extending into eastern Texas. As treated by K. Kron in the Edinburgh revision of *Pentanthera*, *R. viscosum* includes *R. oblongifolium*, *R. serrulatum*, *R. coryi*, and varieties and forms previously recognized as *R. viscosum* var. *glaucum*, *R. var. tomentosum*, *R. var. hispidum*, *R. var. nitidum*, *R. var. aemulans*, *R. var. montanum*, *R. var. f. rubescens*, *R. var. f. roseum*, *R. var. f. coeruleascens*, and *R. var. f. rhodantha*.

Reference: Kron, K.A. (1993) "A Revision of *Rhododendron* Section *Pentanthera*." *Edinburgh Journal of Botany*. 50 (3): 249-364.

[My thanks to Mr. Voss for this information. In the articles included in this issue of **THE AZALEAN**, the authors' original usage has been retained in most cases in the interests of truth to their presentations. Ed.]

# Aromi Hybrids

Dr. Gene Aromi — Mobile, Alabama

To begin, I would like to give credit to those who have helped with our project. I say ours because the Aromi Hybrids are as much a product of my wife Jane's efforts as they are of my own. First on our thank you list is Dr. John Giordano, who for a long time has been a partner in this enterprise. His enthusiasm and his knowledge of plants have been invaluable. I would also like to recognize Dr. John Allen Smith of Magnolia Nursery, the late James Thompson of Orchard Nursery, and Linda Erdman of Carolina Nurseries for their assistance.

I cannot leave this subject without giving credit to our creator who provided all of the plant material whose beauty is a reflection of His glory. Hybridizers are perhaps a step or two above the bees, and like the bees are hardly responsible for the hybrid's beauty.

Jane and I cannot claim technical expertise, since neither of us elected a course in botany during the many years we spent as university students. We stumbled into this hobby when we built a house here in Mobile in 1966. We ordered some Exbury Hybrids from the old Wayside Gardens of Mentor, Ohio. These plants bloomed and died shortly thereafter. We wondered why. In researching the Exburys we discovered that their parentage reflected the native azaleas of the north and west of the United States as well as *R. molle* and *R. japonicum* of the Orient. We questioned if these Exburys were crossed with the natives of the southern part of our country would the resulting hybrids thrive here in the Gulf Coast region? We started with *R. austrinum*, *R. canescens* and *R. viscosum* var. *serrulatum* found in Mobile County. Later we included *R. alabamense*, *R.*

*arborescens*, *R. viscosum*, *R. atlanticum*, *R. bakeri*, *R. prunifolium* and *R. oblongifolium*. After 30 years and 1096 crosses later, we feel the answer to our question is yes.

Breeding and selecting what became the Aromi Hybrids began in 1969 with evergreen azaleas and in 1971 with deciduous azaleas. After seven years the first selections were made. The first deciduous cross was a Rothschild Supreme Hybrid seedling, obtained from Wayside Gardens of Mentor, Ohio, with a pure yellow *R. austrinum*. Fifty plants were raised from this cross. Four were named: 'Pathfinder', 'Frontier Gold', 'Forty-niner', and 'Fool's Folly'. All of these were red-orange variations with large trusses and excellent fragrance. 'Fool's Folly' was then crossed with a Gus Elmer Hybrid of 'George Reynolds' and *R. austrinum*. One plant from the resulting batch was named: 'Centerpiece', a large white with a strong yellow blotch.

Other favorites include 'Red Chameleon', a red fading to damask rose; 'Red Pepper' [featured at the plant sale and blooming in full glory at the Van der Giessen Nursery]; 'Topsy Tangerine'; 'Jane's Gold'; and 'Peach Glow'. 'King's Treasure' features big flowers, while 'Lacecap' has very flat trusses. 'Sunrise' is a very rich yellow and orange with outstanding fragrance. 'Summer Snowflake' is a cross of *R. oblongifolium*, *R. prunifolium*, *R. viscosum* var. *serrulatum* and *R. arborescens*.

In the evergreen category, 'Red Ribbons' is a hose-in-hose semi-double developed from a cross of 'Giant Ruffles' and 'Pride of Prichard'. 'Micheale Lux', a large pink hose-in-hose, is a cross of 'Red Ribbons' and 'Elsie Lee'. 'Pink Petticoat', a hose-in-

hose double, is a cross of 'Elsie Lee' and 'Pride of Prichard'.

Some of the Exburys used as parents were 'Golden Sunset', 'George Reynolds', 'White Swan', 'Gallipoli', 'Oxydol' and 'Knighthood'. Ilms used were 'Rufus', 'Primrose', 'Tintoretto', and 'Red Letter'.

To develop red blooms, 'Forty-niner' was crossed with 'Tintoretto' and produced 'Frontier Red'. 'Rufus', obtained from Wells in North Carolina, was crossed with a hybrid of *R. viscosum* var. *serrulatum*, *R. prunifolium*, and *R. arborescens* to produce a pink, but the result was a billowy yellow, 'Glory Be'. One truss of this early bloomer had 54 flowers in it. A similar result occurred when 'Frontier Red' was crossed with a hybrid of 'Cecile' and 'Balls of Fire', producing a shimmering gold 'Pirate's Booty'.

Most of the Aromi Hybrids are suitable for specimen plants. The original 50 deciduous plants are now well-rounded bushes 15 feet in height and still blooming after 28 years in Gulf Coast heat and humidity.

As for availability of these hybrids, there are several sources. Van der Giessen Nursery carries some of the Aromi Hybrids. Carolina Nurseries and Magnolia Nursery have the largest number. Fairweather Gardens has a large selection, including 'Pink Carousel' and 'High Tide'. So does Lazy K in the Atlanta area. Strange to say, Aromi Hybrids are not available at retail nurseries in Mobile.

*Dr. Eugene Aromi is a retired Professor of Education from the University of South Alabama. Marilyn Jane Aromi is a retired elementary school teacher from the Mobile Public Schools.*

# Breeding Southern Azaleas and Rhododendrons

Dr. John T. Thornton — Franklinton, Louisiana

As a practicing veterinarian, I became interested in rhododendrons and azaleas because most are poisonous to livestock. I have been breeding azaleas and rhododendrons since 1973. B.Y. Morrison showed my friends Mel and Ruby Williams, then of Angie, Louisiana, how to make the crosses. Mr. Morrison suggested that *R. austrinum* by the Exbury Hybrid azaleas would be a promising combination.

At Pushepetappa Gardens, my partner Loyd Cotton and I have a 10-acre planting of several hundred rhododendrons, and evergreen and deciduous azaleas. The rhododendrons are mostly *R. hyperythrum* and *R. arboreum* hybrids. The deciduous azaleas include the southern natives and a large number of *R. austrinum* x Exbury Hybrids.

We have a collection of evergreen azaleas including the Southern Indicas, the Kurumes, 150 Glenn Dale varieties from Perry Corkern, the Robin Hills, Encore group seedlings, *R. oldhamii* hybrid varieties from Dr. Larry Brown. We also have a collection of rare shrubs from Margie Jenkins of Jenkins Farm and Nursery.

## Azalea Cultivars

Our best *R. austrinum* - Exbury Hybrid is from Mel and Ruby Williams. It is a cross of a red *R. austrinum* x 'Gibraltar' or vice versa. We call it 'Mel's Super'. It is brilliant orange and literally glows. We hope to have it tissue-cultured.

We have a cross of *R. calendulaceum* x *R. flammeum* which is an early orange. We call it 'Cherokee'.

We have a rose pink azalea also from Mel Williams which we call

'Mel's Rose'. It has a yellow blotch and is extremely fragrant. It is from Mel's last crosses and might have *R. prinophyllum* (*roseum*) as one parent.

We have a lavender pink *R. canescens* which we call 'Cedar Creek'. It originated in southeastern Mississippi and was found growing among *R. austrinum*.

## Heat-Tolerant Rhododendrons

*R. hyperythrum* has proved to be an excellent parent for heat-tolerant rhododendrons. *R. arboreum* hybrids usually grow well for us. *R. ponticum* has been a good parent. However, its hybrids usually flower late, and the flowers often suffer in the heat.



'Cherokee', a cross of *R. calendulaceum* x *R. flammeum*.

[See the inside of the wrapper for Dr. Thornton's descriptive list of 17 azaleas that have good potential for breeding lines.]

## Further Reading Suggested by the Author

Thornton, John T. December 1988. "Breeding Azaleas for the Gulf South." *THE AZALEAN*. 10 (4).

\_\_\_\_\_. June 1988. "Growing Deciduous Azaleas in Southeastern Louisiana." *THE AZALEAN*. 10 (2): 34.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1991. "Breeding Rhododendrons for the Gulf South," *American Rhododendron Society Journal*. 44 (1).

\_\_\_\_\_. 1989. "Growing Rhododendrons for the Gulf South," *ARS Journal*. 200 (4).

Dr. John T. Thornton, with partner Loyd Cotton, owns and operates Pushepetappa Gardens in Franklinton, where he hybridizes and sells to the public. He has been a practicing veterinarian for 40 years, and an azalea and rhododendron gardener for 30 years.

'Mel's Rose', a very fragrant rose pink, one of Mel Williams' crosses, with possibly *R. prinophyllum* (*roseum*) as one parent.



[These photographs and the *R. canescens* photograph on p. 60 by Phyllis Cotton.]

# Getting New Azaleas Into the Retail Trade

Jim Berry — Loxley, Alabama

[Jim Berry was the featured speaker after the Friday night banquet. He discussed the development process and pitfalls of production and marketing of new introductions, including the still new "Encore Series." As an added bonus, he also showed slides of Japanese Kurume azaleas taken by a Japanese breeder.]

My primary love is evergreen azaleas, and like the ASA members, I love a great plant. My second love is deciduous azaleas. But there is a very narrow window for making deciduous azalea cuttings, and selections are very difficult. When I entered the business, I had noble dreams of beautification of the world and presenting the world with environmentally responsible plants that needed no spraying. This talk presents the commercial perspective of the ups and downs of the evergreen azalea business.

In 1940 Kiyone Nursery, the largest wholesale nursery in Mobile County, had been built by a Japanese man who returned to Japan. The owner had 66 cultivars of azaleas. When he left the business, his former workers spawned the evergreen azalea business in the area. I came to Flowerwood Nursery in 1980; in 1981 they had 48 cultivars. The most popular were 'Christmas Joy', 'Hershey Red', the Formosas such as 'Pride of Mobile' and the larger-flowering Satsuki. 'Gumpo Pink' and 'Gumpo White' were the two biggest sellers. From west and east coast nurseries we bought 57 cultivars, mainly the later blooming ones such as 'Amagasa', 'Girard Hot Shot', 'Watchet', 'Red Slippers', 'Magic Lily', and 'Gulf Ray' from the Mississippi Experiment Station. From 1990-1996 we watched material in Baltimore garden centers. If the plants bloomed in mid-summer, and were varieties

not produced in the South already, we wanted them. We bought 96 cultivars, including 'Betty Anne Voss', 'Everest', and 'Pleasant White'. We tried the Satsuki, Robin Hill, and Girard groups for 15 years with limited success. Since 1980 we have tried 180 new cultivars; only ten to 12 have stuck. Examples are 'Amagasa', 'Watchet', 'Higasa', 'Robin Hill Wendy', 'Nancy of Robinhill', and 'Dorothy Rees'.

Meanwhile, the evergreen azalea was rapidly reaching commodity status in the retail nursery industry. I've really tried to raise public awareness about azaleas with longer bloom periods. However, the dream of bloom from March to June is still not true. And it seems that what some people accept in March, they get "tired of" in May and June.

Following David Letterman's lead, here are 11 reasons why my dream has not come true:

11. Landscapers always plant the wrong color shades to please one of the homeowners.
10. There is increasing color from annuals and perennials later in the season.
9. Lacebugs are increasing in numbers.
8. Azaleas need extra care for the first year or two to become established.
7. The demand for low prices causes growers to produce lower quality plants with less chance of survival.
6. Many growers are very efficient and specialize, therefore it is difficult for the diversified growers to compete.
5. Consumers always look for the cheapest azaleas, but many cannot distinguish between price and quality.

4. Retailers love to advertise the cheapest azaleas to sell overpriced fertilizers to their customers.
3. Retailers look to azaleas to "announce spring" and so won't acknowledge or sell to the advantage of flowering for 90 more days.
2. Azaleas are dated with an expiration date, that is their bloom date, which drives the price down, and retailers know the later they buy from the growers, the cheaper they can buy them.
1. The most easily produced azaleas are often over-produced.

These factors have led growers to cut standard azalea production by 40 percent, since there has been an 80 percent drop in sales in the past five years. The bottom line seems to say there's no money to be made in producing azaleas.

As for growing conditions in the Mobile area, the climate is warm but not hot, and the water quality is good. Nurserymen can improve their cultivars. Van der Giessen Nursery has.

Now for the background on the "Encore Series" azaleas, based on *R. oldhamii* breeds. I met Buddy Lee, who created these breeds, at a Louisiana Association of Nurserymen meeting. He had some *R. chapmanii* seeds. Two years later he had developed 40 different hybrid crosses, some blooming in spring or summer or fall. He has 7,000-8,000 azaleas in his back yard. Germination from the seeds over a 10-year period was 30,000 liners to get to the 7,000 hybrids. We signed an agreement with Buddy Lee to purchase 50 percent of his crop each year and to evaluate their commercial potential. Buddy is a partner with rights to intellectual

property of the Encore Azalea Hybrids.

So then began the "beauty contest" for those 7,000. From a commercial perspective, we selected 100 hybrids, using the criteria of ease of propagation, disease resistance, interesting color, and good looking flowers. From 1994 to 1996 the plants moved from 1 gallon to three gallons, and 30 selections were ultimately made. PDSI staff and customers were very interested in 300 clones in all. But a 13-degree freeze in 1996 caused a number to split or die. The survivors made selection easier. Finally, six varieties were introduced in 1997 as the "Encore Autumn Series." Two-year studies by the University of Georgia evaluated tissue cold hardiness, producing a 15-page research analysis. Some other clones have been shipped to Florida nurseries to evaluate both cold and heat hardiness. These are the future "Southern Series" azaleas.

To sell azaleas at \$10 each in a market that expects to buy low, some serious marketing is needed. The first target market was metropolitan Atlanta, and Jim Thornton from the ASA helped. Through spring sales, donated plants were placed in public gardens two to three years before the Encores hit the retail nurseries. This approach was good public relations and allowed the plants to get to good size when the media got the public interested. Follow-up marketing included press releases to the Garden Writers Association, direct advertising in *Southern Living* and on radio, specially designed point-of-purchase tags, banners, and upgraded packaging with a logo label and a green container. The label was to act like a dress label, and the photo tag helped in product identification.

## Notes on Japanese Slides Taken at Tokyo Botanic Garden

The weather is similar to Jacksonville, Florida, so there are hedges of azaleas, very precisely trimmed, and tuberous begonias and hydrangeas grow wild. The Japanese are very horticulturally savvy; even industrial chemical plants are well-landscaped. Yakushima is a small island and a national treasure. Very big *Stewartias* grow in the mountains there, and this is the native area for *Satsuki* and *Indicum* azaleas. *Pieris japonica* was growing in an alpine bog. Many other ornamental species are native to this island, including the *Cryptomeria japonica* (Japanese Cedar). Some half a dozen specimens are 3,000 to 8,000 years old.

My guide was Dr. Yamaguchi, a breeder who collected seed for the *R. indicum* and *Satsuki* azaleas.

The Japanese have a great appreciation for gardens. Nature is the inspiration for the combination of rock, water, and plants. A current rage is English cottage gardening. A staple of all gardens is trimming, everything, including manicuring a hedge with tiny scissors.

*Jim Berry manages Plant Development Services, Inc. (PDSI), a division of Flowerwood Nursery. He is also the International President of the International Plant Propagators Society, a past president of the Alabama and South Alabama Nurserymen's Association. He has been in the nursery business for 19 years.*

## More New Hybrids

ASA members Lisa and Jeff Beasley, owners of Transplant Nursery in Lavonia, Georgia, recently introduced eight new native hybrids at the Southern Nurseryman's Show in Atlanta, July 31 - August 2. Their exhibit won "best in show" in a field of 1500 exhibitors. Their new "Maid in the Shade Series," features delicate pastel cultivars that bloom in the shade and are fragrant. Several exhibit the same strong *R. austrinum* or *R. canescens* parentage the Mobile area nurserymen have been using in their cultivar development process:

- 'Camilla's Blush' - *R. canescens*
- 'Kelsey's Flame' - *R. calendulaceum*
- 'Lavender Girl' - *R. periclymenoides*
- 'Lisa's Gold' - *R. austrinum*
- 'My Mary' - (*R. atlanticum* x *R. periclymenoides*) x *R. austrinum*
- 'Nacoochee Princess' - *R. atlanticum* x *R. periclymenoides*
- 'Rosy Cheeks' - *R. atlanticum* x *R. periclymenoides*
- 'Summer Lyric' - *R. prunifolium* x *R. arborescens*

Contact the Beasleys at Transplant Nursery, Inc. (706-356-8947) for more information.

Purchase by mail order through Blue Creek Nursery, Cleveland, Georgia (706-865-2849), or WeDu Nurseries, Marion, North Carolina (828-738-8300).

Members, get great information and renew your membership at the Society's developmental website:

**[www2.azaleas.org](http://www2.azaleas.org)**

[See page 59 for details.]

To share information or ask questions of azalea enthusiasts online subscribe to the ASA maillist (also known as the listserv). Send an empty e-mail to:

**[azaleas-subscribe@azaleas.org](mailto:azaleas-subscribe@azaleas.org)**

# Azalea Gardens

## Mobile Area Garden and Nursery Tours

### Van der Giessen Nursery

This is a fine nursery and was a welcome break for lunch. The nursery is primarily a wholesaler and tends to sell liner stock. A plant-lover's delight, we were given free rein to just circulate among his one-gallons in his test area where he evaluates marketability of new plants in partial shade with an eastern exposure. He has 1200 varieties of azaleas under evaluation at this time. Here are some that really struck a chord with me. Others probably have their own lists. Where known, the breeder is listed with the cultivar name.

- 'Neptune' (Holly Springs) -- a 3-inch purple single flower
- 'Amaretto' (Holly Springs) -- a salmon flower, similar to 'Watchet'
- 'Kermesina Rose' (Kurume) -- purple with white stripes
- 'Robin Hill Elsa' -- white with purple stripes
- 'Paprika' (Glenn Dale) -- similar to 'Cinderella', but white with red

stripes

- 'Helen Rogers' (Schroeder) -- double, dark purple
- 'Lucile K' (from Freida Hill) -- red with white edge to petal
- 'Tama No Hada' (Satsuki) -- big flower, soft pink, variable
- 'Mizu-no-yamabuki' (Satsuki) -- tiny white flowers on multi-branched plant
- 'Margaret Hyatt' (Schroeder) -- double purple, with petaloid stamens
- Species *R. scabrum* -- red flowers
- Species *R. sataense* -- small purple flowers, very floriferous
- 'First Love' (Holly Springs) -- double overlapping purple flowers
- 'Purple Splendor' (Gable) -- large (3-inch) hose-in-hose flowers
- 'Primitive Beauty' -- white spider azalea, from Tom Dodd
- 'Charles Loomis' rhododendron
- 'Taylor Made' (Tom Dodd, Jr.) -- orange bud, yellow corolla
- 'Robert Pryor' -- very yellow if very acid soil
- 'Cha-Cha' (Gold Cup) -- hose-in-

hose red with a pink edge, gold cup

- 'Vespers' (Glenn Dale) -- white with purple flecks
- 'Wakaebisu' (Satsuki) -- salmon
- Aromi hybrids: 'Red Pepper' -- scarlet red, 'Lavender Lass'

### Friday Night - Plant Auction

The nurserymen and women were very generous with plants for the auction. Margie Jenkins even hauled large specimens of *Itea* 'Sarah's Eve', *Viburnum obovatum* (Walter's Viburnum) and leucothoe in from Louisiana. Magnolia Nursery contributed a *Halesia tetramagniflora*, a huge Silver Bell. Aromi Hybrids 'Canary Isles' and 'Cherub's Blush', and young plants of all six "Encores" went flying across the table to happy new owners. Jim Campbell of the Louisiana Chapter gave two of his lovely drawings, which netted hefty sums. And one lucky person purchased a first edition of H.H. Humes' *Azalea Book* for a very bargain price. What an opportunity to add to your special collections.

### Flowerwood Nursery and Plant Development Services, Inc.

The sight of fields and fields of azaleas growing in full sun on black plastic was nothing short of amazing. At Flowerwood we ate box lunches next to packing sheds where orders for customers were assembled before transport. They sell a full range of woody shrubs and some perennials.

At PDSI Jim Berry gave us a personal tour of the facilities, pointing out the selection criteria for each azalea group now under propagation. They are trying for more white and bicolors. Most cultivars need to meet standards for cold hardiness, heat tolerance, insect or disease resistance, and ease of propagation.

Nine groups of evergreen or deciduous azaleas are being evaluated for commercial marketing potential.

1. The "Encore Series," based on *R. oldhamii* hybrids, includes 34 prospective selections. Here they are also looking for multi-season flower production and flower duration as well as abundance. Nearly 1 million plants are in production now from July to frost; they will repeat the process next spring.
2. Holly Springs Azaleas. Thirty hybrid selections, many named cultivars, represent almost a complete collection of those developed by Col. Vines of Florida.

3. Earl Sommerville Azaleas, species selections made over many years by Mr. Sommerville.

4. Buddy Lee "Quarterback Series" Twenty-five hybrid crosses made by Buddy Lee using native azalea stock, *R. austrinum* and *R. canescens*, with a quarter of the genetics coming from the Exbury Hybrids. Here the selection goal is large flowers and heat tolerance.

5. Indica Hybrid Series. Thirty-two hybrids also developed by Buddy Lee, being selected for large, different color flowers.

6. Australian Azaleas. Ten selections from the "Carnival Series" may also

have multi-season flowering.

7. Native Azalea Species Azaleas. Four hybrid groups include clones from *R. austrinum*, *R. canescens*, and *R. flammeum*.

8. "Huang Series." The results of the only azalea breeding program in China were released to Washington State and then to the Dallas Arboretum. Three Chinese azalea varieties used as the predominant parentage: 'Yunnan Jia-tao', 'Wu Bao Lu Zho', and 'Yung Gui tei'. An additional selection criterion with this group is unusual foliage.

9. Marshy Point Collection. Despite the name, the collection of 47 cultivars includes material originated at Marshy Point in Maryland, with some Schroeder and Carla Hybrids. Since all are in commercial production in Maryland, PDSI is testing these for southern adaptability. They have been hardy north to Washington, DC, and south to Atlanta.

Several issues are involved in evaluation for commercial marketability. Not the least are: What makes a plant cold-hardy rather than cold-sensitive? How much does genetic material affect plant performance, and how much is nutritional?

### Root Gardens

Root Gardens is a large older garden being reclaimed by Tom and Becky Root. It was built by a Mr. Clarke to include a large collection of azaleas and older camellias by the 1960s. Several factors left it in disrepair by the late 1970s: the death of Mr. Clarke and two major hurricanes, Frederick in 1979 and Georges in 1998. Gately, the Roots have been clearing and cleaning up the devastation and want it to again be the tour destination it once was.

Designed primarily as a winter garden, we were amazed to find so many mature camellias still blooming in April. The sight of 400-500 camellias was astounding. Becky Root, a former teacher, led our tour group

through the meandering grass pathways pointing out rare natives. Knowing we were plant people, she got us to participate by having various people find the correct labels from bags she'd given us. Kind of a nice variation on the "sign garden" concept in many botanical gardens. The mirror pond was home to bog plants such as Pickerel Weed and rare *Saracenia flava*. Southern Indica 'Gulf Pride' was in fragrant bloom along the trail, as were *Camellia japonica* 'Glen 40' with its scarlet peony blooms, and the very wiry Devil's Walking Stick, *Aralia spinosa*. Many magnolias had survived the winds to continue to shelter the shade lovers, such as *R. canescens* and tender *Ardisia crenulata* 'Christmas Berry'. *Kalmia latifolia* was a surprise to see in bloom so far south. Deer Blueberry, *Vaccinium stamineum*, and Sparkleberry, *V. arboreum*, were right at home under the pines by the pond.

Among the Winged Sumac, *Rhus copallina*, and the Sweet Olive, *Osmanthus americanus*, and Red Buckeyes, *Aesculus pavia*, were many foil-covered camellia grafts. The Roots are continuing the work that Clarke began and are very forthcoming with help to others. When I asked for help identifying key late-blooming camellias for our garden project in Nacogdoches, Becky Root not only gave me her name and address for further questions, but also gave me a list of 30, hand-written on the bus on the way to Bobby Green's garden. This will be a garden to visit again and again, especially for those who enjoy a stroll in the woods.

### Bellingrath Gardens

This tour combined both the public display areas of this immense garden and a visit behind the scenes of the azalea stock blocks. Billy Lucas used to work with these very plants, so he was our first "master of ceremonies" for this tour. Imagine many Society members peeking into five-gallon pots looking for elusive plant labels. This became standard oper-

ating procedure at the other nursery tours to come. It reminded me of birders adding to their life lists, but that is all part of being a serious azaleophile.

Moving on into the 65 acres of beautifully maintained and brilliantly blooming public gardens built around the estate of Walter and Bessie Bellingrath was like entering a paradise. Over 200,000 azaleas in waves and layers, literally like sinuous hedges along the trails and in the Azalea Garden are indeed breathtaking, even if the Formosas and Indicas were nearly finished blooming. Many of the design features take advantage of the mirroring effect of the long central pond, which lies below high sweeps of azaleas. There was not time enough to really see all of the gardens, even for the most fleet of foot, so we dispersed like children in a candy shop. Some enjoyed the antiques and Boehm porcelain collection, also major treasures on the site. I spent a leisurely 45 minutes absorbing the Japanese Garden, which was about as perfect a combination of sculptured hills, varied pathway materials, and specimen plantings as I could ever have imagined. A few of my favorite azaleas seen as we sped back to our buses were: Glenn Dale 'Zulu', a very big and deep purple bloom; *R. kiusianum* var. *amoenum*, with deep purple flowers and tiny leaves; 'Bondstreet' whose rose blooms had scarlet throats; 'Delos', a Glenn Dale whose double pink pointed petals reminded me of a flowering almond; 'Caprice' with salmon and white flowers similar in form to 'Watchet'; 'Glamour' whose glossy evergreen foliage is a great foil for the pink flowers, and 'Antique' with purple streaks on white flowers.

### Green's Nursery

The last stop of a full day of touring was still a delight. Mr. Bobby Green's retail nursery has several charming display gardens on a scale that a homeowner with a typical resi-

dential lot could actually install and maintain. Favorites here were both purple and white standard wisteria trees, in bloom; a small grove of Bald Cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, encircling a patio area; and an apricot-flowered Japanese Flowering Quince, *Chaenomeles* 'Cameo'. Several of our number had a chance to buy some plants or garden ornaments, which delighted them, judging by the looks on their faces.

Strolling with Mr. Green into his home garden tucked behind the nursery shows how much a person can do with talent and plant selection.

Much work has gone into making the garden a collection of fine specimens, yet all within a restful series of curvilinear pathways. This was our first experience with seeing the *R. austrinum* and *R. canescens* up close enough to smell their heady fragrance. What a joy to walk by them in season. The Camellia Walk shows the results of his work with rare camellias with George Wright of Wintergardens Nursery. Add in a new perennial border area, and you have one fine garden for visitors.

#### Dodd & Dodd Nursery

The real highlight of this tour was seeing the two bus-loads of azaleaphiles browsing among the stock blocks. Many of the native azaleas would not be at their peak for two more weeks, according to Tom Dodd, III. But that didn't stop us from milling among them, peering at the buds, and drooling to get some.

The "Confederate Series" of deciduous azalea hybrids includes some very striking material, as shown in the photographs in the pre-convention overview in the December 1998 issue of **THE AZALEAN**. Six varieties will cover a large part of the deciduous spectrum, from the very red of 'Jeff Davis', red-orange of 'Stonewall Jackson', and rose with a yellow blotch of 'Jeb Stuart.'

The nursery also sells woody ornamentals, shipping across the south, even into the Houston area.

#### Blackwell Florist Nursery

Blackwell's is a family-owned and operated nursery dedicated to growing florist azaleas, using production techniques and schedules to produce year-round crops. Odd to think of azaleas being propagated so reliably and in such quantities, but it is true. We saw the initial steps of tiny cuttings being stuck by the thousands in several propagation houses, then walked by many many more houses showing the plants in the various stages.

A highlight for some was the first-time, apparently, view of a potting machine in action. Reminded me of the same kind of excitement generated by new tractors at a state fair. In any event, to do the numbers of one-gallon blooming azaleas Blackwell's does and ships, such mechanization is essential.

#### Home Gardens of Dr. and Mrs. John Allen Smith and Magnolia Nursery

What a lovely site for a nursery with enormous seeming display gardens. Those of us on the tour who did not know this was also a home were ecstatic. The Smiths were so welcoming to let us have lemonade and cookies on their shady patio, overlooking their lake, and see the ASA Plant Auction specimens up close and personally. The collections of native azaleas in full bloom and fragrance, towering over our heads as we walked through the woods was a treat. As we saw earlier at the Greens' garden, these specimen plants are definitely a presence to be reckoned with in the landscape. At maturity in the Smiths' garden, they must be nearly 15 feet tall. The majority of the collection was *R. austrinum*, *R. canescens*, including one with a very pink throat and yellow blotch; and *R. flammeum* 'Light Pride', a pink variety.

Magnolia Nursery is also justly famous for its wide range of ornamental plants. Just walking in down the drive is a lesson in woody plant varieties. Their collection of Japanese maples is astounding. A favorite noted from this area was *Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Otome Rakura' because of its rich purple-red foliage, and *A. p. d.* 'Mac Kujako' for its unusually palmately dissected leaflets. Planted in the verges of the woods along this nursery block of maples were *Viburnum* 'Snoball', *R.* 'Hardy Gardenia', and 'Kehr's White Rosebud'. *Camellia* 'Holly Bright' was still blooming in April, with bright red blooms and holly-shaped leaves. Hidden in a very wooded bed between the lake and the house was a very surprising sight, especially for the northerners on the tour: A deep rich red rhododendron was also still in bloom, *R. barbatum*. What a sight.

Other azaleas of note in the gardens: From the Aromi Hybrids: 'Cherub's Blush' a deciduous pink, and 'Canary Isles' with a long yellow tubular flower, with a red exterior. 'Varna Dot' was an apricot with a salmon corolla and a red tube. *R.* 'Babiani' was a bright orange flower with reddish tips to the petals. *R. hyperythrum* was also represented, in 'Charles Loomis', a cross with *R. roseum*. The result is a compact five-by-eight-foot specimen, available from Flowerwood Nursery.

#### Mobile Botanical Gardens

Mobile Botanic Gardens covers 45 acres, but is only 20 years old. They are negotiating for 40 more acres of long-leaf pine land for growing azalea and camellia collections. The azalea trail is a work in progress. Many large native azaleas were in bloom. There was a remarkable stand of pitcher plants near the building. [Comments by Bill Miller, Ed.]

**The Society is saddened to report that Dr. Smith passed away this summer. See In Memory, p. 60.**

# Projects of the Society

The Board of Directors, meeting April 2, 1999, were presented with three projects which have potential to increase the academic and research base for the Society. While no actual funding was allocated to support these projects, the Board voted to give these projects "full support in every way" through members sharing knowledge, insight, plant materials, and sources. Two of the projects are relatively new to the Society: The Auburn University Azalea Evaluation Center, discussed below, and the Stephen F. Austin State University Azalea Garden discussed in the June 1999 issue of **THE AZALEAN**. The third project, the Azalea Collections of the U.S. National Arboretum, is well-known to members. A status report on this last project will be featured in the December issue of **THE AZALEAN**. Members who wish to help any of these projects, especially in the areas of new plant introductions to be tested can contact the following:

Dr. Gary Keever, Auburn University, 334-844-3037 or gkeever@acesag.auburn.edu

Dr. David Creech, SFA Mast Arboretum, 409-468-4343 or dcreech@sfasu.edu

Dr. Thomas S. Elias, Director of the US National Arboretum, 202-245-4539

If members have other projects which deserve Society support or further our goals, please contact the Research Committee Chairman, Malcolm Clark, at 910-692-3935. His responsibilities include being the primary interface with organizations such as colleges and universities, botanical gardens, and arboreta which seek the support of the ASA and are furthering causes which correspond with the goals and objectives of our Society.

## Azalea Cultivar Evaluation Center

Dr. Gary Keever  
Auburn University  
Auburn, Alabama

Due to the traditional importance of azaleas to the South and the declining market for and price of standard azaleas, growers in south Alabama have voiced concerns about the long-term health of this major crop and have sought help in its revitalization. As part of their work in Auburn University's Department of Horticulture and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES), Dr. Gary Keever and Dr. Charles Gilliam have plans for a full-scale azalea evaluation effort. The overall goal of this project is to identify and promote superior azalea selections.

Cuttings of cultivars representing specific hybrid groups will be collected from nurserymen and other sources and propagated by John Olive, superintendent of the Ornamental Horticulture Substation in Mobile. Plants will be repotted in Spring 2000 and grown for one year under production conditions. During this period, plants will be evaluated for rooting, growth rate and growth habit, plant quality and flowering. Following production, plants will be field-planted at the Piedmont Substation in Camp Hill, Alabama, 15 miles north of Auburn. The substation lies in the southern range of Zone 7b, a little cooler than Mobile's Zone 8b, but similar to Birmingham, Atlanta, and Charlotte. The site for evaluation is currently 15 acres with the potential for expansion. Raised, irrigated beds have been prepared beneath a pine canopy and a deer fence installed.

Project leaders have surveyed nurserymen and identified standard azaleas grown in the area, categoriz-

ing them by color and size. Their results seem to indicate there is nothing special about the 25-30 standard cultivars, except that the buying public knows them, and sadly, most seem to be buying them by color.

Being done by a research institution, this project will not just be a showplace, but a data source. A key goal of the project is to produce reliable, statistically analyzed information for publications and for future use in research and teaching in Auburn's Department of Horticulture and elsewhere. Cultivars will be organized by groups for evaluation and replicated with 8-12 plants each in the landscape. A final component of the evaluation is to promote selections showing improvements during the trials through a marketing program similar to those in several other states.

In this mainly information-gathering phase, Dr. Keever asked for information about appropriate cultivars, priorities for evaluation, and contacts for potential sources. An advisory committee of southern Alabama nurserymen has been set up, including many people familiar to ASA: Maarten van der Giessen (Van der Giessen Nursery), Bill Turk (Martin's Nursery), Grady Holt (Tom Dodd Nurseries), Russell Blackwell (Blackwell Nurseries), and John Olive (Auburn's Ornamental Horticulture Substation, Mobile). They would like to establish a liaison with the ASA to assist in identifying hybrid groups with a strong potential to contribute to the overall goals of the project, and in locating sources of cuttings and individuals, nurseries, or institutions willing to collect and ship 20-25 cuttings each of selected cultivars.

Update from July 1999. Dr. Keever has obtained cuttings from four main hybrid groups: Robin Hills, Huangs, Holly Springs, and Back Acres. The project will add more hybrids in the future and is focusing on evergreen material initially. The big surprise about the project is how much effort and time is involved in going out to collect, then tag, preserve, and ship the cuttings. [Many ASA members probably agree, from their own experiences.] The project leaders are most appreciative of the tremendous support they have received from Maarten van der Giessen and Charles and Wanda Hanners.

Action from the ASA Board: ASA approved providing any and all support and advice about clonal lines. Anyone with cutting rights can ship cuttings to the substation. The long-term goals of the project mean that there will be research to publish in **THE AZALEAN**, and that the best performing cultivars will be promoted in the trade.

*Dr. Keever has been a teacher of landscape design and researcher at Auburn University for 17 years. Research has focused on plant growth regulation of woody and herbaceous landscape plants, and plant evaluations. Dr. Gilliam teaches nursery management and focuses his research on weed control, water and waste management, and plant evaluations. Both publish regularly in the **Journal of Environmental Horticulture**.*

## **Other Project Updates**

### **SFA Mast Arboretum Announces The Ruby Mize Azalea Garden**

On July 27, 1999, the Stephen F. Austin State University Board of Regents approved renaming the SFA Azalea Garden in honor of Ruby Mize, a long-time resident of Nacogdoches and a keen gardener. Mrs. Dorothy Wisely, of Indianapolis, Indiana, Mrs. Mize's daughter, has

set up a substantial endowment that will sustain growth and development of the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden. She also ensured the health of the second phase of development by giving the SFA Mast Arboretum funds this summer to cover installation of over 2500 feet of irrigation piping and risers. This immediate gift prepares the ground for the Arboretum to build the remaining Native Azalea Trail beds and a Teaching and Evaluation area along the western side of the garden. Both areas will be planted this fall. A public dedication of the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden will be held during its second blooming season, March of 2000.

### **US National Arboretum Washington, DC**

The Henry Mitchell Cultivar Walk was dedicated on May 5, 1999. H. Mitchell was a celebrated garden writer for the *Washington Post*, who passed away in 1993. He wrote a delightful book called *The Essential Earthman*. Funds were raised in 1994 in his memory to place much needed signage into the Azalea Collection. Curator Barbara Bullock has been working to this end since November, 1998. Now six interpretive signs in the garden explain the six largest hybrid groups in the gardens: Glenn Dales, Satsuki, North Tisbury's, Kurumes, Robin Hills, and Kiusianum selections. Eleven sand-blasted redwood signs, with "Mitchell Walk," a carved azalea flower, and an arrow direct visitors through the garden. One large interpretive sign, with a photo of a Glenn Dale azalea, defines the concept of "cultivar group."

The dedication, held in the Frederic P. Lee Garden, was a wonderful affair, attended by 70 friends and family members of Mr. Mitchell. The weather was perfect, after a long, dry, cool spring, and so the azalea blooms were at their peak.

## **A Special THANK YOU**

### **From North Beach, Maryland**

Bee and I (as associate editor and editor) wish to express our thanks to all of those special people, without whom **THE AZALEAN** would not have been of the quality it achieved over the past ten years.

Thank you Don Voss and Jane Newman who read, in the early stages of production, nearly every issue that we edited from January 1989 until March 1999. George Switzer did the same for the first seven years that we were involved. They provided horticultural insight and corrections, as well as spelling, grammatical, and style suggestions without which **THE AZALEAN** would have been much different. They often found problems that we never would have found before going to press. These talented and helpful people even came up with articles when we were in desperate need of them.

We also want to thank Bill Miller. Bill had the last chance at reading each issue before it went to press. Bill was always willing to come up with many articles when we were short for an issue. Bill was always a source of encouragement as well as a sounding board for ideas and problem resolution. The late Dick West also wrote several articles for us at the last minute to fill an issue.

Our printer, Tom Phillips, of Hour Printer in Silver Spring, Maryland, also deserves our thanks. He really did take special pains to make it right, and worked many hours with us, particularly to achieve the proper color balance for the color photographs that appeared in **THE AZALEAN**. He also worked with us to find ways to save costs for the Society and to save time for us as we became not only editors and publishers, but typists and layout experts as well.

We thank them all, as we thank all of the members who supported us with articles, photographs, helpful suggestions, and above all encouragement.

Bob and Bee Hobbs

## Banquet Business Meeting

Radisson Admiral Semmes, Mobile, Alabama  
April 2, 1999

Robert (Buddy) Lee opened the evening and thanked the Mobile area, Maarten van der Giessen and the Louisiana Chapter.

Bob Stelloh (Treasurer) spoke of the e-mail list and the Internet, with our address as azaleas.org. Bob also said that he would like to receive dues by e-mail, and credit card.

After dinner, Buddy Lee introduced Maarten van der Giessen to auction several donated plants and art work. The sale was very successful.

Buddy then introduced the speaker Jim Berry, Plant Development Services Inc., Consultant for Flowerwood Nurseries. He spoke on "Commercial Production of Azaleas" stressing the education of the public from red, pink, and white azaleas to the refinement and betterment of the azalea.

Jim Thornton opened the business meeting speaking of the first introduction of the Encore Azaleas. He mentioned that he wrote articles for "Georgia Know How" magazine, which established the good relationships with Pike, Flowerwood, and Van der Giessen nurseries.

Jim congratulated the hosts -- tours and lunches. He presented the annual prize for the 'Best Article Award,' printed in **THE AZALEAN** this past year, to Dr. August Kehr for "Memory of Fred Galle." Jim announced a new discount program for dues paid early, multi-year, and e-mail will soon be implemented. The Board of Directors approved funding Bob Stelloh, Don Hyatt, Art Vance, and Barbara Stump

for the development and future of a more-detailed azalea website. Jim stated that this organization should help the wholesale nurseries and retail outlets in the promotion of the new azaleas. The Board of Directors has established a Research Committee with Malcolm Clark as Chairman.

Jim presented a "Certificate of Recognition" to Barbara Bullock for her tireless work and dedication to the Azalea and Rhododendron Gardens at the National Arboretum. Barbara responded with thanks and an invitation to the Arboretum. An "Exceptional Service Award" will be given to Bee and Bob Hobbs for their many years of devotion to **THE AZALEAN**. Jim announced an endowment program with "Clark/Chandler Limited Partnership." Jim requested the chapter presidents make a personal call and remind non-renewal members of dues, saying that most people just overlook or forget. The ASA has openings for a Secretary and an Awards Chairman.

Jim Thornton then introduced the incoming President, Bill Bode. Bill thanked all who voted for him. He thanked the Mobile area, the Louisiana Chapter, the convention crew, especially Jerry and June Ladner (of registration) and Jim Thornton for their excellent contributions. Bill stated that we need to move forward and recruit new members. As yet, there is no sponsoring chapter for next year. Bill then adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ruth Bryan, Secretary



Billy Lucas describes the venues for the garden and nursery tours.



Outgoing President Jim Thornton presents Certificate of Recognition to Barbara Bullock, Curator of the U.S. National Arboretum's Azalea and Rhododendron Collections.



Incoming President Bill Bode encourages members to support the Society and recruit new members.



Maarten Van der Giessen auctions off one of two of Jim Campbell's donated artworks. This was Azalea 'Autumn Rouge' which appeared on the cover of the December 1998 issue of **THE AZALEAN**, with Malcolm Clark kindly displaying the work.

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# Chapter News

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## Ben Morrison Chapter

Joan Sweeney, *Newsletter Editor & Joe Miller, President*

Garden tour of mid- to late-blooming azaleas: The Chapter members are from a five-county geographic area. This year the tour concentrated on gardens in the northern region; next year it will be southern area gardens. Gardens visited May 15 were those of Bob and Bee Hobbs in North Beach, Maryland; London Town Gardens in Edgewater, and in Gambrills, the neighboring gardens of Shirley Grant and Carol Segree, as well as the garden of Rosa and Bob McWhorter.

Current membership is 25 paid members out of 47 on the mailing list. Dale Flowers, the Chapter Secretary, is contacting members who have not paid to assess their level of continued interest.

Deac Moore called for volunteers to help the local Calvert County Public Schools plan and plant an area adjacent to the new Saint Leonard Elementary School. Nuran Miller is also helping organize this effort. The site is on a north slope with no shade, and the school does not want any trees planted. The Hobbses indicated this does not seem a good site for azaleas, and that others beside Ben Morrison Chapter should be involved. A second organizational meeting will be held in the fall.

Joe Miller contributed a report on the annual cutting picnic held July 11, hosted by him and his wife Nuran. After a demonstration of a small workable drip irrigation system by Bob McWhorter, plants and cuttings were exchanged.

## Dallas Chapter

Roby Odom, *President*

The Dallas Arboretum was the site for the annual chapter cutting party June 26. The header on their newsletter showed why this was such a great site: "The Dallas Arboretum has over 2,000 varieties of azaleas. Surely you can make room in your yard for a least one more of these!" Odom suggested this procedure: Start in individual 3-inch pots with moistened azalea potting mixture. Dip cuttings in 10-percent bleach solution (to kill fungus), then in rooting hormone, then stick in medium. Label variety, and stick pots in a tray placed in strong but indirect light. Cover the tray with clear plastic. Usually takes one month. Do not over-water as this can promote fungus.

Another tip: Share the Wealth. When taking cuttings of a favorite azalea of yours, why not take a few extra. These can be rooted and grown on...What better way to promote the beauty and elegance of azaleas than with a gift of these exceptional plants to friends and neighbors.

## Northern Virginia Chapter

Frances Louer, *Corresponding Secretary*

July 11, the annual azalea cutting exchange was held, and on August 8, the annual plant auction was held at Green Springs Gardens Park. The Chapter organizes the cuttings alphabetically on tables, then members can pick at random. President Dan Krabill's column in the newsletter asked members to prepare "wish lists" ahead of the cutting exchange and send them to him via e-mail or by telephoning him. This increases the chances that members will get something they really want. Also, he reported his best success with rooting cuttings came from cuttings from

plants that had been rained on or watered for several hours before the cuttings were taken. He noted the use of the Society's azaleas maillist for sharing similar information and encouraged members to participate.

Their article, "Taking Cuttings for Propagation -- Some Guidance" is a short overview on the topic, and one that may appear in next June's issue of **THE AZALEAN** as members prepare for cutting picnics across the country.

## Oconee Chapter

Frank L. Bryan, *Newsletter Editor*

June 12 was the Chapter's cutting and swap meeting at Dewey Moon's home in Monroe, Georgia. June 27, members took a field trip to North Chickamauga Creek Gorge, Tennessee to see *R. arborescens*, *R. viscosum*, *R. perichlymenoides*, *R. cumberlandense*, *R. maximum*, *R. catawbiense*, interspecifics, and native plants including eastern magnolias and *Stewartia ovata* and *S. o. var. grandiflora*. Joe Schild, ASA Vice-President, guided the tour. See his article in December 1998 **AZALEAN** for details of such a ramble. It was a hands-on opportunity as well, since members took cuttings and did some hand pollination. Schild then welcomed the members to his mountain garden and nursery.

Several other field trips are sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the ARS, with Joe Schild acting as a contact. June 19-20 members were invited to visit Wayah Bald, North Carolina, to see *R. flammeum* (Flame Azaleas) and Copper Bald, to see interspecific azaleas. A possible return trip to North Chickamauga Creek Gorge was planned for July 3, with a third trip November 13 to collect seed.

More tips on cuttings: Best to take cuttings 3-4 inches in length. Three to five cuttings can be placed in individual plastic bags. Collect cuttings in the morning. Be sure to mark color, and variety or hybrid group, if known. Wish lists were published in the June 2 newsletter issue.

May 16, 85-year-old Allison Fuqua demonstrated how to pollinate azaleas to produce new hybrids and how to propagate by softwood cuttings, and members helped her celebrate her birthday. [Article to be reprinted in *THE AZALEAN* next issue, Ed.]

By the way, the Oconee Chapter namesake is the Oconee native azalea, *R. flammeum*. These eight-foot tall shrubs can be spectacular along the roadsides, and occur in small clusters or scattered sporadically along trails by the water's edge at Stone Mountain Park. Flower color ranges from red, red-orange, orange with a yellow lobe, yellow, pink, pink with yellow lobes, on to other intermediate hues. Flowers can be up to 1-1/2 inches across, and bloomed into the last two weeks of April this year.

**Richmond Chapter**  
**Frank Digney, President**

Spring chapter activity was a wholesale only day at a local nursery. A fall meeting is being organized. Members are very anxious to join hands with the local American Rhododendron Society, since they have lost members who have switched. Participation with other societies at another nursery did not bring any new members, even though applications were handed out.

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## NEW MEMBERS

### AT-LARGE MEMBERS

Erminio Cardi, MD  
633 Budlong Rd.  
Cranston, RI 02920-6070

Alice and Edgar Lezcano  
1124 Pearson Rd.  
Milton, FL 32583-9138

Stanley Bethiel  
P.O. Box 637  
Hot Springs, SD 57747

Redlands Nursery Pty LTD  
Edward J. Bunker  
Redland Bay  
QLD 4165, Australia  
+61732067611

### BROOKSIDE GARDENS CHAPTER

Barbara G. Shidler  
Box 527, 4515 Strathmore Ave.  
Garrett Park, MD 20896  
301-946-6569

Deborah Jaquiss  
13804 Wagon Way  
Silver Spring, MD 20906

### BEN MORRISON CHAPTER

Michael & Lynn Caddy  
24660 Paradise Lane  
Hollywood, MD 20636-2874  
301-373-2411

### OCONEE CHAPTER

Don Bloodworth & Barbara Milton  
295 Dillard Ct.NW  
Lilburn, GA 30047-5909

Doug Reynolds  
P.O. Box 267  
Oxford, GA 30054-0267  
770-786-5790  
E-mail: tea-time@worldnet.att.net

Ida Mae Seneker  
725 S. Germantown Cr.  
Chattanooga, TN 37412  
423-622-3561

## Remembering the Founding Members

Our many thanks to our 11 founding members who had a clear vision of a national azalea society and without whom we would not be what we are today:

*William L. Clagett*  
*Emile Deckert*  
*Nathan C. Fitts*  
*George W. Harding*  
*Warren and Judy Groomes*  
*Alice Holland*  
*Bob Mallet*  
*W.H. Parsons*  
*Thais Spencer*  
*Frank B. White, Jr.*

To review the story of how the Azalea Society of America began, see Alice Holland's article in the 20th Anniversary issue of *THE AZALEAN*, December 1997. "How it all Began." 19 (4): 64-65.

# Reduce Your Dues? Here's How.

Bob Stelloh — Hendersonville, North Carolina

While our annual rate of \$25 for a regular membership is already a pretty good deal, now there are some ways to make it even better--both for you and for the Society! They all have to do with postage and interest. First, if you send your name and address and anything that has changed since the Roster was printed to:

Bob Stelloh, Treasurer  
Azalea Society of America  
585 Ransier Drive  
Hendersonville, NC 28739

by October 15th, send \$1 less than the normal dues amount. That saves us the envelope and postage to send your annual dues notice, and we get a few months interest on your money. We think that's worth a \$1 thank you.

The dues rates are unchanged for 2000.

Regular .....	\$25
Contributing .....	\$50
Sustaining .....	\$100
Endowment .....	\$200
Life .....	\$500

To save even more, take a discount of \$1 for each year you pay in advance, up to a maximum of \$5 per year. Thus, when you renew for multiple years, pay \$25 for the first year, \$24 for the second year, \$23 for the third year, \$22 for the fourth year, \$21 for the fifth year, and \$20 for every year after that. And do it by October 15th to also earn the "early bird" \$1 discount. If you do this at the website, we will compute the correct amount of dues to pay for the choices you make. Paying in advance saves the postage for both you and the Society, you get the \$1 discounts in place of the interest on your money, and we earn the interest on your money instead. Another good deal for everybody!

Paying in advance also locks in payment for those years at the current dues rate. While the Board of Directors can raise the dues at any time, the dues you pay in advance at the current rate will always be taken as full payment for those years, regardless of any future dues increase.

## Renewing Online

If you have access to the Internet, you can renew online. Don't be put off by this long explanation--like so many things, it is a lot easier to do than to describe.

First point your browser to

<http://www2.azaleas.org>

which is the address of your new, still-under-development Azalea Society website. Once there, click on Sign In and enter your e-mail address and password\*\* to let us know you're a member. Then click on Renewal, which shows an application form filled in with your information. Change it as necessary, and choose the type of membership you would like. Then click Verify to show a summary page of the information. When it is correct, click Finish, and we will send you an e-mail with that information. Please print that e-mail and mail us a copy, with the dues amount it shows, to the address it shows. Remember, if you do this by October 15, take off that \$1 discount.

While we are working on handling online payment by credit card, it may not be ready for this year's dues. If we can take credit cards, we will post that on the website. If such a notice is not posted, just print the page, and mail it with the dues amount it shows.

Finally, we will send out dues renewal notices by e-mail to every member who has sent us their e-mail address. We will do this in early October, in time for you to respond by October 15th and take advantage of the "early bird" discount.

\*\*No password, or forgot or want to change yours? Click Submit after entering your e-mail address and we will send you an e-mail with a confirmation code. Read your mail (without closing your website browser) and note that code. Then go back to the website, enter that code to confirm that you can get e-mail at that address you gave us, and enter a new password of your choice. The next time you visit, your e-mail address and password will tell us you are a member.

## Current Membership Statistics

Art Vance —  
New Bern, North Carolina

As of the end of July, ASA membership is 665, only 92.5 percent of last year's total membership of 719. The trend has been downward since 1996, when we had 802 members. In the past decade the highest membership level was 940 members in 1993.

Chapters that are growing are Oconee and Tri-State, but growth is still modest. Highest losses are in the Northern Virginia, and Richmond, Virginia, chapters. At large membership is down 8.6 percent.

Encourage your friends who are members to renew and recruit new ones. [*Art Vance is Membership Database Chairman for ASA, Ed.*]

## Membership Information Online

For the benefit of subscribers to the azalea listserv who are not members of the ASA, membership information is available at three sites:

1. [www.azaleas.org](http://www.azaleas.org)  
(the official website of the ASA)
2. [www.plantweb.com/azaleasociety](http://www.plantweb.com/azaleasociety)  
(the official website of the Louisiana chapter)
3. [www.theazaleaworks.com](http://www.theazaleaworks.com)  
(Bill Miller's website with unofficial information about the ASA)

Recruit your computer-friendly friends to join the Azalea Society of America. With the plant descriptions database being developed and more people sharing azalea information online, this is a great time to become a member.

# In Memory

**FRANK B. WHITE, JR.**  
Bob Hobbs  
North Beach, Maryland

Frank White, friend of the azalea and the Azalea Society of America, died at the age of 83 on August 3, 1999. He was a founding member of the Society, and had served as its Vice President and Chairman of the original Board of Governors. Frank also served as the President of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. He was a member of the Ben Morrison Chapter of the ASA.

He grew up in Lanham, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, DC, and worked for the Maryland State Police, the DC Metropolitan Police, the US Department of Agriculture, and The University of Maryland where he was in charge of greenhouses. He served with the Marine Corps in World War II where he was an advance observer in the attack on Iwo Jima and participated in three other campaigns in the Pacific. He retired from the Interstate Commerce Commission as a transportation inspector in order to be able to pursue his interest in azaleas full time.

About 1960, he and his wife Jean (Jean and Frank had grown up together in Lanham) started an azalea business in Lanham, Maryland. Their nursery was known as Azalea Acres Farm, "Propagators of Rare and Unusual Azaleas, Rhododendron and Daffodils." Their home and Azalea Acres Farm are located on land that was part of the farm on which Frank grew up. The nursery was started from azaleas that Jean and Frank had started from cuttings and grown on at their home nearby

in Lanham. This was at a time when azaleas were relatively unknown in the Washington area. At one time Azalea Acres Farm had one of the largest collections of azaleas on the East Coast.

Frank was a strong supporter of his community, especially the Washington Bible College which adjoined Azalea Acres Farm. He was the first Commander of the Bryan-Toole American Legion Post 172 in Lanham, Maryland.

Frank was well known by Washington area azalea lovers. Many obtained their first azalea plants from Azalea Acres. Frank freely provided instructions on the propagation and culture of azaleas and donated to plant sales of the local Washington area chapters.

Frank began working with azaleas when he was 13 years old and started a part-time job with Ben Morrison at Glenn Dale. His love affair with azaleas began shortly thereafter, and continued until his death.

[An article, "Meet An Azaleophile: Frank White" by Jane Newman was published in the June 1997 issue of **THE AZALEAN**. 19(2): 24-27. Material from that article has been used in this article. Expressions of sympathy may be made to the Ben Morrison Chapter, c/o Carol Flowers, 7195 Henson Landing Road, Welcome, MD 20693, Ed.]



*R. canescens 'Crain's Creek', with the species' characteristic pink tubular flowers in clusters, grown by Dr. John Thornton. Huge specimens of similar R. canescens and R. austrinum graced the gardens of Dr. and Mrs. Smith during the Society's visit to Mobile. Such are the memories surrounding truly generous plantsmen such as Dr. Smith and Frank White, Jr.*

## Dr. John Allen Smith

Dr. John Allen Smith of Magnolia Nursery in Chunchula, Alabama, passed away after a sudden illness, Monday, July 12. Dr. Smith was well-respected in the horticultural world for his extensive work with hollies, magnolias, and international and native American plants. He is survived by his wife Francis and three daughters. [Notice supplied by Maarten van der Giessen. A full article will appear in the December issue, Ed.]



*Japanese Garden at Bellingrath Gardens: Subtlety and art given form by wonderful plantings and careful design.*