
Azalea Gardens

Auburn University Azalea Evaluation — An Update

Dr. Gary Keever — Auburn, Alabama

In the September 1999 issue of **THE AZALEAN**, a new cultivar evaluation project at Auburn University was profiled. At that time cuttings of cultivars of Robin Hill, Huang, Holly Springs, and Back Acres azaleas obtained from Maarten van der Giessen and Wanda and Charles Hanners had been propagated. Rooted cuttings were overwintered at the Ornamental Substation in Mobile and were repotted into gallon pots in spring 2000. Plants will be grown under full-sun nursery conditions until January 2001 at which time most plants of each cultivar will be planted in irrigated, raised beds in central Alabama. The remaining plants of each cultivar will be grown a second spring at the substation to evaluate flowering, growth habit, and leaf characteristics under nursery conditions.

We currently have a full set of Robin Hill, 80 Huang, 57 Holly Springs, and 32 Back Acres cultivars in production and would like to expand our collection. If Society members have rooted

cuttings or liners of cultivars not in the evaluation, we would love to obtain some. Ideally, 12 plants of each are needed and could be mailed to:

Ornamental Horticulture
Substation
411 North McGregor Ave.
Mobile, AL 36689-0276

Un-rooted cuttings (20-24 each) are also appreciated, but will be slower to introduce into the evaluation. Plants should be well watered before securely packing and shipping on a Monday or Tuesday to ensure arrival before the weekend. Un-rooted cuttings should be collected early in the day, wrapped in moist paper towels and placed in plastic bags.

As a part of this ongoing evaluation, we plan to add at least one new group of plants yearly. In 2000, we decided to work with the Satsuki. After numerous calls and conversations to arrange collecting trips, we decided to buy plants of about 190 cultivars from

Nuccio's Nurseries, Altadena, California. We will soon propagate from these to have sufficient numbers to evaluate. As in 1999, we are also relying on the generous donation of time and cuttings from Charles and Wanda Hanners and Maarten van der Giessen, without whom our evaluation would be much less complete.

Research at the Mobile Ornamental Horticulture Substation primarily supports the commercial container nursery industry. For more information on what the azalea evaluation project needs, call Mr. John Olive, superintendent of the Ornamental Horticulture Substation in Mobile, Alabama, at 334-342-2366.

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. John Olive is a plant pathologist by training and has been in Mobile for 11 years.

Ben Morrison Chapter Supports Development of a Native Azalea Garden at London Town

Bob Hobbs — North Beach, Maryland

The Ben Morrison Chapter has made a donation of \$500 to the London Town Gardens to support the development of a native azalea garden. London Town Gardens is located within the once-thriving port of London on the South River near Annapolis, Maryland. London was established in 1683, and by 1730 was a major tobacco exporting center and the site of the southern terminus for the South River Ferry to Annapolis. By the late 18th century, however, London had, for all practical purposes disappeared, except for the Ferry Master's House, a large brick mansion. Anne Arundel County acquired

the property in the 1820s, and converted the mansion into an almshouse, which it remained until 1965. At that time, one group of volunteers began to restore the mansion (which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1973), and another group worked to create a beautiful woodland garden. Today, the Historic London Town and Gardens is jointly maintained by Anne Arundel County, the London Town Foundation, and London Town Volunteers.

The garden consists of "gardens within gardens", and includes the Hosta Garden; the Azalea Glade; a

Colonial Kitchen Garden, a garden of plants with medicinal value; and several others. The plant collections include one of the most extensive selections of magnolias on the East Coast, an array of tree peonies, and 10,000 daffodils. The visitor's center meeting room has been the site of Ben Morrison Chapter azalea shows and sales in past years, and has been the site of the Ben Morrison Chapter winter meeting in 1999 and 2000. The Ben Morrison Chapter also provides a subscription to **THE AZALEAN** to London Town Gardens.

continued on page 64

This year, London Town Gardens has added a garden of native azaleas with monetary support from the Ben Morrison Chapter. The garden — supported by a partnership comprised of friends and family of a longtime London Town volunteer, Joan Heineck— has been planned by London Town Director of Horticultural Programs, Mollie Rideout, who also planted it May 26. So far the native azalea species *R. calendulaceum*, *R. atlanticum*, *R. vaseyi*, *R. periclymenoides*, *R. viscosum*, and *R. prinophyllum* have been planted. Companion plants include *R. maximum*, *Aesculus parviflora* (bottlebrush buckeye) and native plants that were originally on the site of the new garden.

Historic London Town and Gardens is open Monday-Saturday 10-4 and Sunday 12-4. Admission is charged unless one becomes a member.



The photograph above shows Ben Morrison chapter representative Bob Hobbs symbolically presenting a plant to London Town Director Dr. Gregg Stiverson and Mollie Ridout. [Photograph by J. Henso, courtesy of the Annapolis Evening Capital newspaper.]



Jim Thornton reads a special commendation to Bob and Bee Hobbs, thanking them on behalf of the Society for their ten years of superb editing of *THE AZALEAN*.



After a year of rooting and growing on cuttings, the Auburn University Azalea Evaluation Project is off to a great start as a research facility. [Photo courtesy of John Olive.]



At Mepkin Abbey, this lovely stairway between South Carolina palmettos leads to a path across a finger of the old rice-growing pools and on up to a hillside of azaleas and camellias.



As seen here at Magnolia Plantation, water was used to great effect to reflect the color of azaleas grown right to the edges of rivers or swamps in all the great South Carolina gardens we visited.