

VOLUME 22

NUMBER 4

WINTER 2000

THE **A** *zalea*

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



Gifts from Tray Mountain

Azalea Diversity — Back to the Future

Azalea Hybridizing

Evaluation of Azaleas in America

Building a New Public Garden

Azaleophile Salute —

Sue & George Switzer



Post Office Box 34536
West Bethesda, Maryland
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President's Letter

William F. Bode — Covington, Louisiana

Fellow Members,

This message will probably reach you in the year 2001. Thus, despite all the sooth-saying, nay-saying fliberty-gibs, we actually survived "Y2K" and are entering the 21st Century.

I would like to be able to greet each one of you and wish you the happiest of holidays and to those of you who are religious, a blessed season.

Looking forward to the New Year, I would ask all of you to continue the effort to expand the membership. We have finally stopped the downward slide in numbers and have actually shown a gain, small indeed, but a gain.

Most of us, I'm sure, are sick to death of politics, but we have another election to face. The spring issue of **THE AZALEAN** will contain the slate of candidates for Society offices for 2001-

2003. I do not know who they will be as of this writing, but I know the members of the nominating committee, so I am certain of the excellence of those nominated.

A last but not least chore for all of you is the selection of the best article published in 2000 in **THE AZALEAN**. I have been so disappointed in the past at the low response to this request for those who work hard, be they a novice or master, to bring articles of value to all of the Society. At the 2000 annual convention, over 70% of those attending expressed their choice at the meeting, backed up by responses tallied from online votes; what a compliment to the two authors so chosen. I urge you to do a kindness to this year's authors and express your opinion.

Happy New Year!

Sharing Gems of Photography



The electronic age is helping us access information so much more readily than many of us could have thought possible. In trying to obtain images to illustrate the articles in this issue, your editor had to go a little far afield. Our authors were busy enough creating the text and did not supply slides or that now-magical digital image, the jpeg file. So, knowing that ASA member Don Hyatt has been hard at work his own very informative website, which does a beautiful job of describing and illustrating native azaleas, among other things, I asked him by e-mail if he might have some images we could use for this issue.

Within minutes he had not only answered yes, but gave me a wealth of

images and information, pulled from his website (see below*). I selected a form of *R. prunifolium* and a hybrid of *R. austrinum* to use. Now, not only do we have Don to thank for these images, but we also need to thank the Species Study Group of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the ARS because members of that chapter originally took the slides. Finally, we should thank George K. McLellan for giving Don permission to post the information on his website, since Mr. McLellan arranged the numbered slides into a program he presented at the East Coast Regional Conference of the ARS in November 1999.

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of all these people.

Barbara S. Stump, Your Editor

www.tjhsst.edu/~dhyatt/gardencenter.html

Azalea Society of America

The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation and appreciation of azaleas Subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

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On the Cover:

Rhododendron prunifolium, the Plumleaf Azalea, is one of the latest native azaleas to bloom. The orange to vivid red flowers open in late summer and measure 1.5 to nearly 2 inches across. Flower buds for the next season are usually formed before the current season's blossoms open.

First collected by R.M. Harper in 1913, *R. prunifolium* has a very small natural distribution in southwestern Georgia and eastern Alabama. There are a number of nurseries that carry this excellent native azalea since it propagates readily by seeds or cuttings. Plants should be grown with afternoon shade to prolong the flowers during hot summer months. This native azalea was given national notice with the development of Callaway Gardens, as it was the focus of a conservation and propagation program by Fred Galle (see article by Hank Bruno). Photo courtesy of Don Hyatt through his website.

Correction

Don Voss asks for the correction to his article, "How Azaleas Came to Our Gardens", THE AZALEAN. 22(3): 57, column 3: The reference to the Pontic region should include "the western Caucasus," not the eastern, as shown.

Azalea Calendar

ASA Annual 2001 Convention June 14-17, 2001

ASA Convention and Annual Meeting, Asheville, North Carolina. See registration form on the inside of the wrapper for this issue. For additional information or comments, please contact either Bob Stelloh at 1-828-697-9959, bstelloh@aol.com, or Ed Collins at 1-828-697-9228, azaleaed@brinet.com. Remember, you can get regularly updated information online by going to www.azaleas.org and then clicking on '2001 Convention' for the latest update and to print out a copy of a registration form.

ASA-ARS Joint Convention in 2002 April 17-22, 2002, Atlanta, Georgia

Work is already underway on a joint convention of the ASA and the American Rhododendron Society. Jim Thornton is coordinating for the ASA, and Earl Sommerville is coordinating for the local ARS chapter, the Azaleas Chapter. Contacts for information: Jim Thornton, 1-770-483-1593; jot@worldnet.att.net; Earl Sommerville, 1-404-428-3226, earlsommerville@mindspring.com. Convention website: <http://arsazalea.tripod.com>.

Philadelphia Flower Show March 4 - March 11, 2001

Held at Philadelphia Convention Center, 12th & Arch Streets. Theme this year is "Great Gardeners of the World", including gardens of Penelope Hobhouse, Jefferson's Monticello, as well as a collaborative design by Penn State University, University of Delaware, and Temple University. Over 10 acres of exhibits. Proceeds benefit the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's programs, including Philadelphia Green, a program supporting public landscapes and community spaces. Contact: www.Theflowershow.com.

Gifts from Tray Mountain

Jeff Beasley — Lavonia, Georgia

I am going to talk to you tonight about one of my favorite spots on earth. It is such a special and unusual place with its gathering of many forms of plants and flowers, particularly native azaleas!

Tray Mountain is in the northeast Georgia Mountains and is the home of at least four of the native azalea species found in the United States. As you wind up a narrow Forest Service road in mid-June you will pass under huge *Rhododendron maximum* trees. They hang from the sides of the mountain and are covered with beautiful large white blooms.

As you continue to travel upward along a narrow winding road full of bumps and boulders, you will find all sorts of wildflowers. You will finally reach the prolific groups of *R. minus*, with their blooms of different shadings of pink and white. Then, and finally then, you will arrive at the level where the native deciduous azaleas begin. This is an awe-inspiring sight as you see the many and varied colors which cover the sides and valleys of this mountainous area. The pristine air and the clear blue sky with white clouds floating above create a scene of perfect peace. This wonderful feeling of tranquility lasts until you start focusing on the many and varied plants with their different blooms.

First of all, one finds *R. calendulaceum*, a tall vigorous plant that may have blooms of orange, pink, or "hopefully" red; the yellow form is the first to bloom and does not seem to overlap the previous colors. One we call 'Dawn At The River' has a combination of yellow, gold, and red—all on the same bloom. Then you will find *R. cumberlandense*. These medium-size growing plants have blooms that are lustrous and glowing and have recurved petals with a porcelain-like quality. These plants seem to grow in groups or clusters. You will then see



R. austrium 'Millie Mac' a selection of the native Florida Azalea made by the Beasleys at Transplant Nursery and part of their "Maid in the Shade" Series. (Photo from Don Hyatt's website.)

R. arborescens, which is a large and imposing plant. One may find it in an area next to a mountain stream or perhaps hanging from the side of a waterfall, with its blooms cascading next to the falling water. The fragrance is delightful. Its common name is the Sweet Azalea. There is also a group of extremely low growing *R. viscosum* almost on the very top of the mountain. [Perhaps these are stunted by the high elevation and dry conditions there?] These plants have a mix of different and delicate colors. I believe the combination of these four species which bloom at the same time is responsible for the many and varied forms one finds in this spectacular area. Bumblebees have helped Nature create a far greater variety of blooms than man is capable of.

Now we come home to Transplant Nursery. We have many of the forms noted above. This was possible through Forest Service permission to dig plants and to take cuttings. Sometimes 100 cuttings would yield five or six viable plants, so it was not an easy process. We do have most of the native deciduous species that grow along the East Coast.

I will show you slides of the various kinds. The first is *R. alabamense*, a low-growing plant that has delicate white blooms with a yellow blotch and an enticing, spicy scent. Next is

R. atlanticum, which is stoloniferous and has blooms ranging from white to pink. The fragrance is all enveloping and will permeate your garden. These plants range up and down the Atlantic seaboard and can create a carpet of pink along the sides of highway rights of way that have been mowed. Many crosses have been made using this, and wonderful forms have been developed. The Choptank River Hybrids, introduced by Mrs. Polly Hill, are a perfect example.

R. austrinum is known as the Florida Azalea and is another early bloomer. It grows to a height of six to eight feet and is covered with beautiful clear yellow blooms. This particular form is known as 'Clyde Rushin' and is a lovely soft yellow with a delightful fragrance. Although it is native to Florida, it will grow and prosper in the North.

R. periclymenoides is also an early bloomer. It greets the world before its leaves emerge. This accounts for the old name of *R. nudiflorum*. Very descriptive! These blooms are mainly a pale lavender, but several different forms have been found. Dr. John Bell's dark lavender find is one of the finest.

R. canescens is native to the Piedmont area in which I live. These blossoms of pink mean "Spring has sprung!" One can still find natural stands of these plants on undisturbed land—which is becoming rarer and rarer! The blooms are generally pink, delicate, and graceful.

R. vaseyi is also a harbinger of spring! These plants with their funnel-shaped pink flowers are a welcome addition to the blooming season. This species and *R. canadense* have not been found to cross with any of the other species, so plants from seeds are probably the true species, as the two grow far apart in nature.

R. flammeum is found naturally in middle Georgia. This creates a breathtaking sight as you observe these bright orange, gold, or red bright-colored trusses in bloom. These are literally the size and shape of a baseball.

These complete their bloom by mid-April in our section of the country. These are extremely difficult to propagate.

Next comes *R. calendulaceum*. As 18th century botanist William Bartram came around a bend in the trail and saw a mountainside covered with these, he commented, "It seemed the mountainside was aflame with fire." The common name Flame has been describing the beauty of these tetraploids ever since. Many different forms with bright and appealing colors have been found.

R. cumberlandense, formerly known as *R. bakeri*, blooms alongside *R. calendulaceum*. A fond memory is that of Dr. Wilford Baker of Emory University, at the age of 90 plus, skipping to the podium and enthusiastically describing his joy and excitement as he told of finding this particular group of June-blooming plants on a high mountain plateau, and his pleasure at having this beautiful species named for him. A garden was developed at Emory University in his honor using these special treasures as its focal point.

R. viscosum is the next to bloom. It is a large plant and has spicy-scented white blooms in July. It is known as the Sticky Azalea. If you handle it for any period of time, your fingers will quite literally stick together. This plant grows in the swamps of south Georgia and will tolerate more moisture-laden soil than the others.

Late summer bloom comes from *R. prunifolium*. Callaway Gardens was created by Mr. Callaway in order to preserve this particular rare species, which he found growing in that area. The plants can emerge as large vigorous specimens, which have bright, brilliant flowers that cover the greenery with shades of either red or orange. It is a joy to see in late July and sometimes all the way through August.

R. serrulatum [now considered a variety of *R. viscosum*, ed.] is not an attention-getting flower, but the charm

exists because this beautiful plant covered with white star-like blossoms shows forth in the last days of summer, thus creating an oasis of quiet charm in the late summer heat.

As we conclude this talk, I want to tell you about our latest project at Transplant Nursery. About five years ago, we decided to place a group of native azaleas into a tissue culture lab. Our goal was to make available a representative sample of each species in the landscape and retail trade. For years we had been trying to propagate native azaleas from cuttings. After much thought, we came to the conclusion that in order to properly market this group of plants we had to put a name to a face.

In August of 1999, we introduced the "Maid in the Shade" group of native azaleas at the Southern Nurseryman's Show (SNA) in Atlanta, Georgia. At the present time we have ten native azaleas in this group. It has been amazing to watch the response this program has received. All plants come with a full color tag that gives cultural information, planting instructions, and plant identification. Full color bench signs plus hanging dangles are available to aid in the sale of the plants.

Jeff Beasley was born and raised in Lavonia, Georgia. He is married to the former Lisa Carson and considers his "best crosses" to be his daughters, Camilla and Kelsey. After he graduated from North Georgia Technical School, he assumed the responsibility of running Transplant Nursery, Inc., during his father's illness. Since then, he has developed the nursery into a vigorous and growing enterprise, which serves the Southeast and many other sections of the nation with specialty plants. Jeff is a member of the Southern Nurserymen's Association, the Georgia Green Industry Association, the Southern Appalachian Growers Association, the Athens Growers Association, and the North Carolina Association of Nurserymen. He is on the advisory committee for The Environmental Horticulture program for North Georgia Technical Institute. He is also a volunteer fireman, which he dearly loves.

Azalea Diversity — Back to the Future

Hank Bruno — Pine Mountain, Georgia

The loss of species diversity on this planet is a major concern of conservation biologists and botanists. Along with habitat restoration, efforts to propagate and preserve maximum genetic diversity are the basis for recovery of endangered species. Once lost, an extinct species will never return. One can dismiss this as a regrettable but natural process that has been part of life since it first appeared. But the human influence on evolutionary proceedings has become a major causal factor, often the thing that determines the survival or extinction of a species. One of the most gratifying parts of my work at Callaway Gardens is the intervention on behalf of a few endangered plants through the Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance. Garden founders Cason and Virginia Callaway began this conservation ethic with the propagation of the then endangered *Rhododendron prunifolium* or Plumleaf Azalea. In 1946, the Garden Club of America recognized the planting of twenty thousand azalea seedlings with the presentation of the Frances K. Hutcheson Award. When the gardens opened to the public six years later the Plumleaf Azalea was chosen as the floral emblem and signature plant.

Human influence on Darwin's "descent with modification" is most obvious in the horticultural world of azalea hybridizing. Often created in designed breeding programs or selected from random out-crossings, thousands of varieties live or die by people's infatuation or indifference. The domestication of azaleas, though complex, is a relatively modern story, not even a blink in geologic time. The gardeners of China and Japan may have been making selections from the wild for nearly 2,000 years, and they began recording their efforts at the end of the 17th century. Plants made their way to Europe from the Orient and North America in the 18th century and were given scientific names by

Linnaeus in the genus *Azalea*. The next 100 years saw active manipulation of azaleas in England, France, Germany and Belgium. Trade carried plants and seeds around the world, and exotic azaleas, named and renamed, were widely distributed. The 20th century saw new introductions from China and Japan by plant explorers and large scale breeding projects such as the one in Glenn Dale, Maryland, conducted by B.Y. Morrison. Along with government- and university-sponsored trials there were innumerable commercial nurseries and hobbyists creating "new" azaleas. Botanists worked and reworked the nomenclature agreeing that all should be classified under the genus *Rhododendron*. Our eastern deciduous azaleas had long been neglected due to the lack of demand and the degree of difficulty in vegetative propagation. The application of tissue culture techniques and a growing public interest in native plants will soon do for "wild honeysuckle" what years of hybridizing have done for exotic azaleas. Now, at the dawn of a new century, it is time to examine azalea diversity in the hope of preserving the best of the past and setting goals for the future.

It is not my intention to champion individual varieties or hybrid groups. I will not lament the disappearance of certain selections nor advocate new lines of hybridization. I would like to share a few observations from our efforts to maintain an aging collection and the design and construction of a new azalea garden at Callaway. It has been my good fortune to garden with, as one co-worker phrased it, about the largest box of crayons the horticulture world can offer. I am humbled by the fact that the plants were assembled, and in some cases created, by Mr. Fred Galle. Rejuvenation pruning, transplanting, and propagation from a large collection offers many choices. Protecting these plants from drought, the destructive winds of storms, lace

bugs, and petal blight keeps my staff busy year round. The attempts to identify unlabeled plants are restricted to the spring blooming season, which is also the time of greatest visitation for a public garden. This process was interrupted by a fire, which consumed the Callaway horticulture offices in 1997, destroying maps, records and herbarium specimens as well as our label-making machines. Fortunately I had a working copy of the maps and plant records in another location, and we have since replaced the label-making equipment. The death of Mr. Galle on July 26, 1998, is a loss for which there is no compensation.

Still there are many valuable lessons to be learned from the garden and writings of Mr. Galle. Of the literally thousands of native azalea seedlings that he and his staff produced, he chose to name and register only five. He would not want us to waste good names on less than superior plants. An article in *American Nurseryman* by Harrison Flint titled "Standards of Excellence" (Dec. 15, 1994) provides a synopsis of guidelines for plant evaluation to avoid "introductions that contribute little to diversity." High standards and comparison to the best existing cultivars are critical to avoid "proliferation of unworthy genetic material." This is not to say that Fred composted all of the rejected seedlings, or what Frederic Lee would refer to as the "mongrel progenies of deciduous azaleas." The fact that a plant did not warrant a name did not exclude it from the garden. Likewise, if the name or parentage was lost, a plant might be banished to the woodlands or the edge of a golf course. The day may come when geneticists can decipher the lineage of those mongrels, and their unique inheritance may confer some as yet unnoticed adaptability. Still, if one is involved in breeding for specific traits, the importance of record keeping cannot be overstated. Permanent labels are also

critical to the long-term success of collections management. With new computer software it is possible to keep records and maps updated to provide valuable information to future generations of horticulturists. As our experience with near disaster has proven, back-up copies of all work needs to be housed in at least two locations.

The construction of the Callaway Brothers Azalea Bowl (opened March 1999) provided numerous object lessons in azalea selection, production, and culture. Propagation from the existing collection required verification of hybrid names and considerable effort to maintain proper identification of a multi-year contract-grown crop. Numerous inventories were produced to track the 6,000 cuttings of some 175 cultivars taken over four years. The advancing age of some of the parent material made successful rooting difficult. Some of the varieties are not easily distinguished, and offered little toward the goal of a diversified color scheme. In designing color combinations, flowers were collected and tagged, then brought to match on a table with a planting plan. There were numerous points of view about how plants should be arranged for maximum effect, as might be expected in an artistic exercise. Once the design is complete, it is best to turn over the

planting and maintenance duties to those guided by the left hemisphere of the brain. It was Sydney Edison in *A Patchwork Garden* who said: "Gardeners and designers will never, I fear, be in accord about plants."

For those who have not seen the movie, *Back to the Future* involves Michael J. Fox getting in the nutty professor's time machine and going back one generation to when his own parents were teenagers. Through a series of misadventures he interferes with their budding relationship and thereby jeopardizes his own future existence. Azalea growers are constantly in the time machine of horticulture. We go back to the varieties known in ancient China to select parents for future crosses. A survey of the wholesale nursery catalogs will reveal that we cannot depend on them, either, to preserve genetic diversity. Name recognition and economic realities will necessarily limit the varieties offered. As mentioned above, micropropagation techniques may soon overcome commercial limitations with native azaleas, but it may be at the expense of diversity.

It is up to the members of this Society to take action that will ensure our safe arrival when we get back to the future. First, exercise good judgment

in breeding to make certain that the "azaleas you name and introduce are really different, superior and represent an advance over those already in hand." (Galle, 1987:347-348) Second, take cuttings of your five favorite plants, label them well, and pass them along to fellow gardeners to provide vigorous stock for the future. Collections can become moribund in a single human generation. Finally, keep and distribute records of what you are growing. At this time it is not possible to know when a variety is near extinction. They may not all be worth saving, but some are bound to be parents of future generations of beauty.

Hank Bruno earned undergraduate degrees in Botany and Anthropology from Duke University in 1976. Following Peace Corps service in Guatemala and two years of archeological fieldwork in the southeastern United States he entered graduate school at Texas A&M University. Working full-time as a Landscape Maintenance Supervisor, he received his M.A. in 1988 with research in Ethnobotany. He has worked at Callaway Gardens since October 1991, where as the Trails Manager, he cares for 150 acres of wildflowers and woody ornamental plant collections.

Azalea Hybridizing

Fred and Jean Minch — Puyallup, Washington

Our home and garden is located in the Puyallup Valley of Washington State. This valley is between Seattle and Tacoma in the shadow of Mount Rainier. From our garden we have a view of Mount Rainier off to the left and what is left of Mount St. Helens to the south. Puyallup Valley used to be famous for the vast acreage of daffodils and other bulbs. There is a Daffodil Festival each spring; however, the acreage has all but disappeared to be covered with industry.

One of our favorite azaleas that we hybridized is *Rhododendron* 'Puyallup

Centennial'. This one starts out with buds of green and yellow, opens and develops through many shades of yellow with some shades of green and pink, and finishes off to a light yellow. It is one of our doubles and there are so many florets it forms a large round ball. Multicolor and large trusses are common in most of our azalea crosses. The 'Puyallup Centennial' was put into production by the Briggs Nursery, and we then donated it to Puyallup for a fund raiser during the celebration of the city's 100th year anniversary. When we visit the East

Coast we are always fascinated that most of those areas have been settled for 300 or more years and we are just marking 100 years in Washington State.

When we hybridize azaleas we have several goals in mind. Of course the color is probably foremost. Most of our azaleas tend to go through many stages of color, so we can only identify them by the most prominent. Most common are the yellow, orange, white, and pink. Red is rare and there are very few really good ones. We are

working on this color to try to produce some new ones in the future.

There has been a considerable amount of mildew in both the azaleas and rhododendrons, and this is another thing we keep in mind. A lot of the foliage is very luscious and has a beautiful shine. This has led to problems when entered in flower shows that forbid putting anything on the leaves to make them shine. However, ours do it naturally. As a rule, the deciduous azaleas like it cold in the winter and hot in the summer. Rhododendrons are a different story, so we expose all of our seedlings to the elements. If they don't survive our winters, we want to eliminate them. We do protect them in the winter to a certain degree with sprigs of fir branches, and one of our problems is to protect them from the little critters that love to pluck out the tags and little plants. Screen and scarecrows help with this problem.

Watering is done with a misting type of sprinkler. The sprinklers we use are a low-volume type that puts out a fine mist that is similar to a soft spring rain. It keeps the little seedlings moist but not heavily watered like a Rain Bird type. Having them on for a few minutes every morning it is sufficient, and the results are most rewarding.

The pollinating starts every spring just as soon as the flowers start to open. If there is pollen on a favorite and not enough others in bloom, we save it in little capsules in the refrigerator until we are ready to use it. After the cross is made, we form a cover out of a piece of foil and apply it to the pistil to be sure the wind or perhaps some insect does not try to help us out. The stem is then marked with a tag to show the cross, and hopefully the seed starts to form. It is fall before the seed is ready to be picked. We pick it before it cracks very far open to be sure it doesn't get contaminated.

It is a winter chore to open the seeds and dry them for storage. We use a series of screens to clean out all the dirt

and chaff so we end up with very clean healthy seeds. If the chaff is left with the seeds it will cause a fungus when they are sprouting. Our dining room table usually disappears for several months under the little piles of seeds that are drying. The quantity we clean is evident by the collection of the hulls that will fill a good size grocery bag.

The next step is the planting of the seeds, about the first of February. We use a medium of bark and pumice. Our trailer is filled with bark that we have sifted through a 1/2-inch screen. We then sift it again through a 1/4-inch screen and add three 5-gallon buckets of pumice to the 3/4 yard of bark. Cedar boxes that are approximately 12" by 16" and 4" deep are first filled with a layer of the large pieces of bark that we have sifted out, and then a layer of the finer bark that has been mixed with the pumice is on top. These are put into the greenhouse on [heating] cables and sprayed with a fine mist until they are moist clear through. They are then sprayed with a solution of Benlate, Captan, and Triple 20 (1 T. each per gallon of water) to prevent damp-off. The seeds are spread on top and start to sprout in approximately 15 to 20 days.

When the seeds have their third or fourth leaf they are ready to be transplanted. A bamboo stick is used to separate and plant them. A bamboo stick that is pointed at about a 60-degree angle helps to separate the little roots and push them into the soil with little or no damage. These are transplanted into the same size cedar boxes filled with the same mixture as the seeds, except a small amount of Osmocote is added. The flats are then lined out under the fir trees until they are large enough to ship.

Most of our plants are only identified by number. We feel they have to prove themselves before they are named or put on the market.

Fred and Jean Minch have made their home on a hillside with three acres of deciduous azaleas and rhododendrons overlooking the Puyallup Valley in Washington State for over 50 years. Puyallup is located in a valley between Seattle and Tacoma. Fred's main involvement is hybridizing, and Jean enjoys photographing. Together they do all the weeding, watering, and running of a very active azalea and rhododendron seed and seedling business. Fred is currently serving as a District Director for the American Rhododendron Society and is Jean's able assistant in her information and mailing business.



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Evaluation of Azaleas in America

Maarten van der Giessen — Semmes, Alabama

So, how did we get here? Statistically we're a group of retired gardeners with a passion for a plant sold in Wal-Mart every spring for 99 cents. Every spring. And every spring we see the same old thing: azaleas pink, red, white, (and occasionally) purple, \$10.00 a dozen. I mean, that's it, isn't it? It's kind of like falling in love with a commodity, say... sweet potatoes. Sure, there's a website, but nobody admits going there.

So how did we get here, we lovers of sweet potatoes? I'll tell you. At least I'll confess how I got here, and implicitly accuse you, and from there we'll get on to the core of this article. Because, you see, I believe how you got here is exactly the same thing as how we evaluate. Each and every person reading this particular periodical at this particular time is guilty of the same unspeakable vice. We looked, and we were amazed. So we looked some more. And pretty soon we got wrapped up into the whole sweet potato spectrum of azalea, rhododendron, Ericaceae, and worse. We ended up with a hundred-odd bushes that we insisted on petting, and feeding, and (for the most carried away of us) measuring on a cyclical basis. We kept voluminous notes, cataloged slides, and every spring dragged our unsuspecting but admittedly nervous neighbors into our gardens to show them our prizes, our passion, our discovery. Sure enough, one in a hundred got infected. He made the primal error, the Pandorian error; he looked. And that's our starting point.

We, as individuals and as a group are committed to a concept of beauty. We've passed the threshold of Kurume and Indica and have developed an aesthetic for the beautiful. Further, we are as a group committed to the concept that the beautiful resides, in myriad permutations, in our azaleas. This, to the casual observer, makes us very, very strange. It also

gives us darn few options. We can't take our azaleas, grow a beard and live in a loft in Greenwich Village of New York. There's not enough light, it's too cold, and poets hate anything requiring that much attention. And we get real tired of the neighbors calling us names. So we seek solace, and we seek company. From Gable to Glenn Dale, and onward to Girard, Gartrell, and Greenwood, we've sought to share our experiences. We've collected, compared, hybridized, hybridized, and hybridized. I dare say there's not an ASA member that can't roll off a list of his or her favorite ten, 20, or 30 hybrids. We've studied, learned, and finessed the aesthetic. Still, every spring, we're taken aback by how much more there is to know. And that brings me at long last to my point. That is how I got here, and that is how you got here.

Last spring, right before I spoke on evaluating azaleas at the Charleston convention, a N.C. State student stopped me and thrust a paper in my hand: "Consumer Perceptions of Plant Quality." Later that evening I digested it, and sure enough, the author had a section on criteria for evaluation of azaleas. According to their focus group of "serious amateur to occasional weekend gardeners," the primary characteristics for azalea evaluation were: fullness, symmetry, and foliage quality. They did note that azaleas sell better when they have flowers. They ran these criteria through an introductory statistical regime and discovered that, lo and behold, the average American wants a symmetric, green, squatty azalea. With flowers. This I swear.

We have something in our hearts and in our minds that the average American cannot comprehend when we say "azalea". And I do not blame the average American. Azaleas are incredibly new plants to us. Realize that the western civilization has lived with

the rose since the dawn of recorded time. Now think that Wilson essentially introduced the Kurume to America in the 1920s. Realize that there isn't a single Satsuki dictionary available in the English language today. Think that, if not for the fortuitous position of B.Y. Morrison, most of us would still never have experienced the incredible diversity that is the azalea. Now, only now, should we think about evaluation of azaleas. Evaluation for us should be a function of education. For me evaluation was a chance walk through Dr. John Giordano's garden in Chunchula, Alabama, and again at the ASA convention in Dallas talking to Pete Vines about hybridizing, and again meeting Freida Hill in Pavo, Georgia. I've been evaluating every spring since then, and I see no end. So what about evaluation?

What are the proper criteria? My neighbor Bill "Boots" Finch pinned me down this way, "I suspect gardeners do have a much higher criterion for azaleas. They may have a hard time conceptualizing what it is they do and don't like (just as the average person has a hard time expressing what it is that they don't like about bad writing or bad music), but that's where you come in." So be it. In a nutshell, here's how I go about choosing new azaleas. I've adopted a personal preference that if the flower isn't as attractive up close as in a mass, then I'm not interested in having it in my garden. Our garden spaces are too small and precious to waste on anything as tedious as 'Snow' or 'Hinodegiri'. I look for enough variability that the flowers look like small paintings in my hand, yet do not present a washed out or mottled appearance from 20 feet away. Mrs. Margie Jenkins showed me how to look for the sepals and tell if an azalea is going to hold onto its spent blooms, looking like the living dead far longer than it was ever beautiful (Simple: no sepals, no thanks). I look

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Building a New Public Garden — The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden from the Ground Up

Barbara Stump — Nacogdoches, Texas

It is a great honor to speak to the Society about a very new public azalea garden after we have seen such venerable treasures as Magnolia Plantation and Middleton Place. What a heritage we have in these beautiful gardens. I come from Nacogdoches, the oldest town in Texas, founded in 1779. Old for Texas, but these Charleston gardens were being protected by second and third generations of families and retainers by then. Building an eight-acre public azalea garden in the late 20th century at a state university takes a very different scale of effort. This is the story of how my personal enthusiasm for azaleas got me involved in the project of a lifetime. Along the way, this graduate student has learned many valuable life lessons.



R. 'Nuccio's Break O' Day' is a sport of R. 'California Dawn', a Belgian Indian, marketed by Nuccio's Nurseries, Inc. Behind that lovely salmon bloom with its very warm center color and red blotch is the fiery red of Huang 2-7-51. [More information on the Huang hybrids is coming in the next issue of *THE AZALEAN*.] Both were purchased for the garden after seeing them on a 1999 ASA convention tour of PDSI in Loxley, Alabama. (Photo by author.)

Lesson number one: **Building a garden that lasts must be an exercise in community involvement.** The garden would not have even begun if it had not been a goal of a fifth-generation family from Nacogdoches who encouraged Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) to improve the view presented by the eastern side of campus.

It would not have been developed and carried out without the vision of Dr. David L. Creech, the Director of the SFA Mast Arboretum. He gave his total commitment to the project, he provided the day-by-day labor of graduate students such as J.C. Andersen and me and numerous work-study students, and he could get us resources we needed. It would not have been accomplished in less than three years on our small budget without the constant support of equipment and materiel from SFA's Physical Plant and especially the Grounds and Transportation Department. We owe a big debt of gratitude to over 100 volunteers who planted nearly 2,000 plants December 5, 1998, during a mass planting day that let the public see first hand what was going on. It continues to be a focus of community interest through the efforts of our local Convention and Visitors Bureau, which is promoting it as a main feature during three weekends of events organized around a brand new Nacogdoches Azalea Trail for 2001. But the community involved in this project goes way beyond our town of 30,000 in deep east Texas, two-and-a-half hours north of Houston.

Which leads me directly to lesson number two: **Share credit freely and whenever possible.** Speaking at the 2000 convention gives me the chance to say a very public thank you to the Azalea Society of America. I came to you for information and I came back with so much more! Our project could not have been done without the very tangible and persistent support of a number of ASA members. These nurserymen and women have made sure that our azalea collections contain premier cultivars and superbly healthy plants. Special thanks for advice on plant selection and donations of plants go to members Margie Jenkins, Maarten van der Giessen, Pope's Aza-

lea Farm in Canton, Texas, and brand new member George Johnson. Purchased plants came from nurseries also very familiar to ASA: Woodlanders in Aiken, South Carolina; Dodd & Dodd, Semmes, Alabama; PDSI in Loxley, Alabama; Heronswood in Washington State; and Transplant Nursery in Lavonia, Georgia. **There is no way we could have built the wonderful displays we now have without these people.**



R. 'Disco Dancer', another very attractive spider-like bloom, with glossy evergreen foliage, donated to the garden as part of a large group of varied hybrids by van der Giessen Nursery, Semmes, Alabama. Both Photo 1 and 2 represent the SFA Mast Arboretum's effort to begin a new hybrid evaluation program, made possible through our association with the ASA. (Photo by author.)

The help I have gotten from the ASA has been as thorough an education in the real-life network of azaleaphiles as any of my horticulture coursework at SFA. There is no substitute for a talk with a nursery owner who has grown azaleas for years, and it was invaluable to actually look at large numbers of plants in bloom to see how they could combine with others already waiting to go into my plan.

I'll get around to lesson number three later. Back to the program: Once I knew I would be charged with the "site analysis and design" of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, I decided I needed to see some similar gardens. So my husband Mike and I set off on a trip across the South. We visited the



After seeing a mature specimen of *R. 'Koromo Shikibu'* at the LSU Agriculture Experiment Station outside Hammond, Louisiana, there was no doubt that this wonderful lavender spider azalea should be a "signature plant" for the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.
(Photo by William C. Miller III.)

nearly wild trails of the "Azalea Canyons" of Newton, Texas, where *Rhododendron canescens* grows to 20 feet tall on old Forest Service land. Then we stopped at the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station at Hammond, where Roy Constantin and Bill Bode both gave me a warm reception, a tour, names of nurseries I should contact, and loads of encouragement.

Both were excited about this new azalea garden project and introduced me to camellias grown by SFA horticulture graduate Hody Wilson, who had run the Hammond station for 30 years. As SFA's horticulture program directly benefits from assistantships donated in his name by his family, this conversation gave me the impetus to develop a Hody Wilson camellia collection in our garden. Meanwhile, Roy and Bill introduced me to that wonderful purple spider azalea, *R. 'Koromo Shikibu'*. When I discovered it should grow beautifully in our Zone 8b climate, I knew just where to put it...all along the 700-foot frontage of the garden, right along University Drive, a main street through town, to make an "SFA-purple" statement announcing to all that this garden was going to be a knock-out.

Next, Mike and I drove on to Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia. There, Hank Bruno was kind enough to show me around the Callaway Brothers Azalea Bowl dur-

ing construction. This visit really let me know what I was in for. Not that our project has the same scale or funding, but it told me the facts of life in big public gardens. I got to see first-hand real-life construction, big earth-moving equipment, tree felling, and the feeling of destruction that is involved in garden making. It took the project out of the realm of a pleasant daydream and made me face a number of real factors with which I have become all too familiar in the last two years.

For example, how do you decide where and how to place garden beds? Or, where should trails be? When I came on board in December 1997 the forest was partially cleared, waiting for someone to set a course. With a reasonable set of observational skills, a digital terrain model done by a professional surveyor to show where the water would likely pond, a giant helping of hopefully artistic intuition, and a good shot of chutzpa, I started staking beds. Once you have beds, you have trails. Very easy to think about and visualize on paper. Very, very time-consuming to finish. The work has taken full-time technician Matt Welch the last six months, involving laying red clay sand for a base for the trails, covering them with crushed limestone, rolling them, laying culverts under them in the very wet areas, and trenching next to them for drainage. So, we now have over a mile of trails, and all of this after begging and cajoling friends of the project for regular deliveries of costly sand and limestone.

The next big construction issue was the irrigation system; again we had more trenching, laying, filling. As often happens, with the best will in the world, I still had trails that covered key survey monuments and trails that received too much precious irrigation watering. The low spots seemed to take a "back burner" status until I started talking in public about our trails as APZs (amphibian propagation zones)! While toads are very good

for keeping down garden pests, we don't need tadpoles in the trails or sedges next to the azaleas.

Speaking of irrigation, we have plenty. Even though we have an average of 48 inches of rainfall a year, our summers are typically very dry. Since we are in the American Horticulture Society's Heat Zone 9 (USDA Zone 8b), with 120-150 days over 86°F, we have to irrigate, especially to establish new plants. Based on a basic nursery block system, every inch of the garden is covered by rows of 4-foot risers with 60-foot 180-degree metal heads. This accounts for the wet trails, but is by far the most economical to install with borrowed ditch-witches, and part-time help. All this sounds appropriate and sufficient, yet I now know what the term "rain shadow" means. That is when a pesky tree—read that as wonderful patriarch pine—gets between the irrigation spray and the artfully contrived planting. The point is, plants die in rain shadows. To drain off extra water, we have installed many 10- and 12-inch culverts. A constant chore in the garden is moving plants to more appropriate places, just as is directing flow into the culverts and away from potentially waterlogged roots. All this drainage work also helps us drain off water from the seasonal flooding that seems to hit us about every two years. Our last one, January 28, 1998, which washed four feet of water over the tops of newly planted azaleas for about four hours, sent about 250 plants from the north end of the garden to the south end. And now I have an appreciation of "first aid" and "triage" when plants must be dug back out of debris and mud, put right side up again, and replanted.

Next came absolutely the most fun part of the project, planning the plantings. Which brings me to lesson number three: **Learn from the experts, both historic and current.** I won't bore you with all the landscape designers I have been reading for inspiration. That is the stuff of my thesis. But I must acknowledge design elements

based on work by three landscape designers. First, and most obvious in our big display beds, is the dramatic color combinations in large rhythmic areas as used by Brazilian Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994). Next, the public-garden circulation planning and intent of designing public gardens for use by large groups of people, as practiced by Frederick Law Olmstead, Sr. (1822-1903). Finally, the Council Ring meeting place idea came to me along with a philosophy that garden designs should have long-term time horizons from Jens Jensen (1860-1951).

The fact that I had large numbers of Southern Indicas, Kurumes, and Satsuki to work with helped with the color work. Since SFA's school colors are purple and white, with red as an accent color, I put these colors together as often as possible. I placed the largest color masses on the eastern side of the garden, which is highly visible from University Drive. The more unique individual specimens and collections of three for evaluation are tucked in the back, in more protected beds. If it hadn't been for **Maarten van der Giessen**, we would not have any numbered Gartrell hybrids. If it hadn't been for **Dodd & Dodd**, we would not have any "Confederate General" deciduous hybrids. If it hadn't been for **Margie Jenkins**, we would not have any *R.* 'Primitive Beauty', the wonderful Satsuki *R.* 'Chinzan', or the large numbers we have of *R.* 'Koromo Shikibu'. If it hadn't been for **Jim Berry** at **PDSI**, we would not have the new Chinese Huang series specimens. And, if I had not attended last year's ASA convention in Mobile, I would not know enough to search out Aromi hybrids from **Carolina Nurseries**. This is how I have been able to unite the past with the present through this project. And finally, I am very happy to have some of **Transplant Nursery's** "Maid in the Shade Series" native azalea selections as a central feature of the new Native Azalea Trail within the garden.

In its 15-year development, the hallmark of the SFA Mast Arboretum has

always been diversity of plant material. Even though the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden is primarily filled with plants from three major groups — azaleas, camellias, and 180 different cultivars of Japanese maples—there are multitudes of other material. A few examples are 30 cultivars of the Japanese Plum Yew, *Cephalotaxus*, which is the only evergreen yew we can grow reliably in our Zone 8b summer heat. Dr. Creech's collection has come from sources such as Duke Gardens, University of Georgia's Dr. Mike Dirr, and even Brooklyn Botanic Garden. The last few years the very ornamental Chinese Witch-Hazel has become the rage, so we have 18 *Loropetalum* cultivars in an evaluation hedge with every variation on purple or white in foliage or blooms. While Box is not commonly planted in the heat of the South, we have over 40 specimens on trial of *Buxus sempervirens*. Our truly unique trees range from *Emmenopterys henryi* from J.C. Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina; *Cotinus obovatus*, the American Smoke Tree; to *Pterostyrax psilophylla*, called the Ep-aulette Tree. To provide a light-flowered foil for all the azaleas amid the native Loblolly Pine shade, we have many deciduous magnolias, including the yellow Magnolia 'Elizabeth,' and Chinese Fringe Trees, *Chionanthus retusus*.

All totaled we have 7,800 plants representing over 300 different taxa. In order to complete my Master's thesis, I will be tracking all this activity in an Excel spreadsheet of plant names and showing, somehow, all the plants and locations on a series of layers within a large map, using AutoCAD®2000 software. Having built the garden, this last hurdle seems the least I can do to document the effort for future generations. We are also in the midst of writing text for smart-looking signs for each of the 33 beds, made possible through a grant from a local firm, International Paper Company. Next comes training docents for tours. How one ensures the long-term survival of a public garden would be another

whole paper, but we have several factors in our favor at SFA. The Dorothy Wisely Azalea Garden Endowment guarantees us annual funds for development and purchasing new plants. And, the local community is squarely behind us and watches our every step.

It has meant a great deal to me to participate in this project. There are so many reasons people want to build or help support gardens. When all is said and done, this garden shows the Azalea Society of America's educational mission at work. So many of you have gone out of your way to help a rookie such as me learn such important lessons about how a garden grows from an idea to being a place of beauty and inspiration for others. I must repeat myself; I could not have done this without you. Thank you most sincerely.

Barbara Stump has been editor of THE AZALEAN since the June issue of 1999. She is a graduate student in Horticulture at Stephen F. Austin State University, with graduation planned for May 2001. She has been interested in azaleas since she lived in Corvallis, Oregon in the late 1970s, volunteered at Mercer Arboretum and Botanic Gardens north of Houston for six years, and has been a technical writer and an English teacher.

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www.sfasu.edu/AG/Arboretum

Azaleaphile Salute

Sue and George Switzer

Bob and Bee Hobbs — North Beach, Maryland

Sue and George Switzer developed their intense interest in azaleas (and they do have an intense interest in azaleas) after coming to the Washington, DC, area about 1947. Their interest grew from the desire to landscape a home and a summer cottage, and from their friendship with azalea aficionados, both hobbyists and professional. Some readers may remember the visit to the Switzers' home in Calvert County, Maryland, as part of the 1992 Convention of the Azalea Society of America.

George and Sue were born in northern California in the town of Petaluma, near San Francisco. George studied mineralogy at the University of California Berkeley, and was awarded a PhD in Mineralogy from Harvard University in 1942. Of course, as part of earning that degree, his field work had been carried out in northern California, and a summer assistantship had him at Stanford University in Palo Alto for a summer. During that time he became well acquainted with and married Sue, whom he had known, but not well, while they were growing up. Of course, this was the post-Depression era, so in order to support a new wife, George became an instructor at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, while he was finishing his PhD at Harvard. Upon leaving Yale and for the duration of WWII, George and Sue lived in Chicago where George worked at Majestic Radio, making quartz crystals for frequency control of military radios. After the end of the war, George and Sue (and by this time two children) moved to the Washington, DC, area where George began to work for the United States Geological Survey, and in 1948 for the Smithsonian Institution where he served as Curator of Mineralogy and was Department of Mineral Sciences chairman until his retirement in 1975.

Many readers may be familiar with some of George's work at the Smithsonian—he was the driving force behind the fabulous gem display that attracted so many people to the Smithsonian from 1958 to the early 1990s.

The Switzers acquired a home for their family in Bethesda, Maryland, among many homes landscaped with azaleas, and later acquired a summer cottage at Scientists Cliffs, a community and a site of geologic interest in Calvert County in southern Maryland. Now, a slight digression. —The cliffs contain deposits of fossils from the Miocene era, and are an excellent record of the life that existed in the Chesapeake Bay 15 million years ago. In addition, there were many locations on top of the cliffs, well back from the edge, that were good sites for summer cottages and cabins. In 1952, Sue and George acquired such a cottage.

Among the other scientists who had summer places at Scientists Cliffs were Henry E. Allanson and Eugene Hollowell, who were at the Plant Introduction Station in Glenn Dale, Maryland, the site of the development of the Glenn Dale azaleas and who were friends of Ben Morrison. And, because they also lived in Takoma Park, Maryland, the Switzers were also neighbors of Ben Morrison. Allanson was the Director of the Plant Introduction Station of the US Department of Agriculture. Add to that the fact that a colleague of George's at the Smithsonian was a lover of azaleas. How could the Switzers not become azalea lovers?

Sue and George began to propagate cuttings from their various "azalea friends" in order to landscape their properties in Bethesda and Scientists Cliffs. They also began to buy bare-root field-grown plants from Tingle's

Nursery on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The metamorphosis was complete—azaleas were in their blood.

In the early 1970s George and Sue started to build a permanent residence on a 30-acre wooded property near the Scientists Cliffs community, in anticipation of George's retirement. The 30 acres was reduced to 16 due to the acquisition of a major right-of-way by the Baltimore Gas and Electric Power Company for power transmission from the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant. The 16 acres are ideal for azalea collecting and growing: a rolling second-growth eastern hardwood forest (probably first cut in Colonial times), with sandy loam soil. In other words, lots of high shade from oak trees, good well drained soil, and lots of native azaleas. For the Switzers' own description of their property see **THE AZALEAN**, September 1992, p. 56.

While George was pursuing his career, Sue was raising the family of three children and gardening. George and Sue both admit that of the two, she is the real gardener. Sue has also been a leader in the Calvert County Garden Club for 24 years, and is one of Calvert County's better-known gardeners. She started a nursery, Cavalier Nursery, so as to be able to provide many azaleas, and other plants, to local gardeners without violating laws with regard to plant inspections, etc.

Their favorite activities with azaleas are collecting various azalea hybrids, and subsequently enjoying their garden and sharing cuttings with anyone who is interested in acquiring them. Their three acres of azaleas have contained as many as 1,000 varieties and 20,000 plants in the ground. Their focus has been on collecting Glenn Dale hybrids, although, as is obvious from the numbers of varieties that they have had, many other plants from other

hybrid groups are in their collection. They have, for example, about 60 or more Eden Hybrids. In 1991 they granted an easement on their property to the Maryland Environmental Trust in order to assure the long-term preservation of the property.

At the 1992 ASA convention, they introduced a new azalea variety *Rhododendron* 'Nannie Angell', named in honor of Sue's mother. It was selected by the Switzers in 1965 and registered in 1992 by Sue Switzer. *R.* 'Nannie Angell' has petals similar to *R.* 'Koromo Shikibu', but the petals are white. It was described in **THE AZALEAN**, September 1992, p. 57.

Three particularly interesting features of their azalea collection are the "Sweet Pea" azaleas, the Belstvilles, and the Belstville dwarfs. The "Sweet Pea" azaleas are a collection of hybrids that were unnamed by Morrison, having a range of pink to lavender colors (light to pastel shades). Mr. Allanson had obtained cuttings of this collection before the Glenn Dale hybridization project of Ben Morrison was terminated. These plants, rather large now, occupy a prominent place in the Switzers' garden. Hollowell also planted a complete collection of the Belstvilles (about 47) and Belstville dwarfs (about 19), in the Flippo Gravatt Memorial Garden in the Scientists Cliffs community. Society members visited this site as one of the functions of the 1992 Convention. Unfortunately, this shade-free site is less than desirable for azaleas; sadly the plants are dwindling. However, Sue and George have had luck propagating most of the Belstvilles and Belstville dwarfs. The Belstville dwarf collection is described by George Switzer in **THE AZALEAN** September 1992, p. 63.

The Switzers have a love of travel. During George's career, much of their travel was related to mineralogy, but there was time to visit azalea gardens also. George actually carried the Hope

Diamond in his pocket from Washington to Paris, including an unexpected stop in Philadelphia. Since George's retirement they have continued to travel worldwide. A photograph that was taken during a trip to Australia and New Zealand appeared on the cover of **THE AZALEAN**, June 1994.

The Switzers have been active in the Azalea Society of America and the Ben Morrison Chapter. For several years the chapter held its annual cutting picnics at the Switzers. Members first met for a business meeting, shared good food, and descended on the azalea garden with clippers and plastic bags to take cuttings. If one didn't bring their own clippers and plastic bags,



George and Sue Switzer at their home with one of their favorite azaleas. (Photo by Bee Hobbs.)

George and Sue provided them. Virtually any azalea was fair game for those attending. Many of us in the southern Maryland area started our own azalea gardens from plants grown from cuttings from the Switzers. Bee and I obtained some of our original cuttings, the day after the annual cutting picnic when we arrived at their door with our "covered-dish" in hand, fully expecting to be part of the picnic. Thanks to the gracious hospitality of Sue and George, we were able to obtain all of the cuttings that we cared to deal with, even though we

had interrupted their quiet Sunday afternoon during which they had expected to relax after the Saturday picnic!

Sue and George have both served as President of the Ben Morrison Chapter, and George has served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Azalea Society of America. In December 1999, the Ben Morrison Chapter presented both Sue and George Switzer with Certificates of Recognition of Exceptional Contributions to the Ben Morrison Chapter.

George was the assistant editor of **THE AZALEAN** from 1989 through 1998, writing several articles and providing color photographs for covers of **THE AZALEAN** during that period:

- "A Simple Structure for Overwintering Containers", March 1989, p. 12.
- Cover photograph (the first color printing to appear in **THE AZALEAN**) "Satsuki 'Tatsumino-Hikari'", March 1990.
- "Franklinia—A Companion Plant", March 1990, p. 8
- Cover Photograph "Satsuki 'Amagasa'", June 1990.
- "The Flowering World of Chinese Wilson", with Sue Switzer, December 1990, p 20.
- "Scientists Cliffs and the Belstville Azaleas", September 1992, p. 63.
- Cover Photograph "'Nannie Angell'" September 1992.
- Cover Photograph "Ilam Hybrid, Christchurch, New Zealand" June 1994.

Bob Hobbs and his wife Belinda are former editors of THE AZALEAN. Bob and Bee have an azalea garden at their home in North Beach, Maryland. Bob was President of the Azalea Society of America in 1988 and 1989. They are honored to have known and to have been friends with Sue and George Switzer for nearly 20 years. Most of their azalea plants started from cuttings obtained from the Switzers.

Chapter News

Ben Morrison Chapter

Joan Sweeney—Newsletter Editor

The fall meeting was held Sunday, October 8, 2000, at the Fairview Library in Calvert County, Maryland. H. Edward Reiley was the guest speaker, presenting a program on late-blooming azaleas and elepidote rhododendrons. As a service to the membership, the newsletter offered to get answers to questions about this topic for members who were unable to attend the October 8 meeting, if they would write the question to one of the chapter officers. Ed Reiley generously agreed to donate his speaker's fee to the ASA—Ben Morrison Chapter. Mr. Reiley's two publications on this topic include:

- Reiley, H. Edward and Carroll L. Shry, Jr. 2000. *Introductory Horticulture*. Albany, NY: Delmar Thomson Learning.
- Reiley, H. Edward. 1992. *Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas*. Portland, OR: Timber Press.

Chapter business topics were wide-ranging. Joe Miller reported that there are 34 paid ASA members in the Ben Morrison chapter, according to the May 2000 Roster, with six associate members from other chapters. The chapter newsletter, "The Azalea Alert", is mailed to 56 persons or organizations. A special request was made in the September issue to forward members' e-mail addresses to Joe Miller (at pccsm@olg.com), so these can be added to the chapter mailing list.

The chapter considered surveying the membership with the goal of helping plan and schedule future programs. Barbara Bullock, Curator of Azaleas and the U.S. National Arboretum, has agreed to be a speaker at one of these meetings.

ASA member Don Hyatt invited Ben Morrison chapter members to attend the fall banquet of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society October 29, 2:00-5:00

p.m. at Dave and Buster's Restaurant in White Flint Mall in Rockville, Maryland.

The December meeting was held Sunday, December 10, 2000 at Bob and Rosa McWhorter's home in Gambrills, Maryland.

Dallas Chapter

Eleanor Maclay of the Dallas Chapter sent in the current officer list so we can update our May 2000 rosters. Officers are: President, Roby Odom; Vice-President, Eugene P. Westlake; Treasurer, Eleanor Maclay; Secretary, D. Scott Weddington.

Brookside Gardens Chapter

Milton Learner helped gather information and assistance to recognize the passing of Jean Cox for this issue. Bee Hobbs reports that he is making arrangements to try to get and repair a fountain from Jean Cox's yard and some rocks to put into the George Harding Garden as a memorial to Jean's work there.

Northern Virginia Chapter

Dan Krabill—McLean, Virginia

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Philip Louer—Newsletter Editor

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President Krabill provided this meeting notice on the azalea mail-list site and invited all interested people to attend, whether Society members or not: The Northern Virginia Chapter of the Azalea Society of America met on Sunday afternoon, November 12, at 1:30 p.m. at the George Mason Regional Library, in Annandale, Virginia. By posting the meeting notice on the Internet and asking for suggestions as to content and questions ahead of time, the program could be tailored to particular interests of the audience.

Malcolm Clark, former President of the ASA, spoke on his primary interest, hybridizing. He also runs a nursery, Chandler Gardens, on land adjacent to his home in Southern Pines, North Carolina. Malcolm described his breeding program, showed what he has been doing, and provided examples. His slides were primarily of flowers that bloomed for the first time this year. He also showed slides of a few long-available plants, not his own, that he uses in his breeding program. Dan Krabill has several of Malcolm's hybrids. Two he particularly likes are 'Elan' and 'Forlane'.

Malcolm describes his breeding interest as developing plants with early to mid-season Satsuki-class flowers. He is seeking variegated flowers entirely, which he defines as flowers with stripes or borders or both. He is in the third generation of his breeding program. That is, the parents of his new hybrids are his own hybrids, generally his second-generation hybrids. He is farther along in achieving his objectives with pinks, oranges, and reds than with purples, upon which he is still working.

During the September 10 meeting hosted by Dave and Sharon Raden, members visited their outstanding azalea garden and attended the annual plant auction. The business meeting covered topics such as gifts in memory of Majorie Taylor, the joint meeting of rhododendron and azalea enthusiasts at White Flint Mall, and the joint effort of Don Hyatt and Phil Louer to load past issues of **THE AZALEAN** into the azalea website to increase their availability to the public. A new written request system will be tried with the chapter's library books, to try to keep better track of who has what items. A complete list of the library's holdings will be published in the next issue of "The Azalea Clipper."

To memorialize Marjorie Taylor, chapter member and Society member since the 1970s, Don Hyatt has ob-

tained a specimen of *R. 'Marj T'* from Ben Morrison chapter member Carol Segree. He planted it in mid-November in the ASA George Harding Garden in the National Display Garden area at River Farm Plantation near Mount Vernon. He also planted a *R. prunifolium* from his own garden, which will go nicely with it.

Chapter officer elections were held at the November 12 meeting. Results are: President, David Nanney; Vice-President, Barry Sperling; Treasurer, Leslie Nanney; and Secretary, Lee McElvain.

Oconee Chapter

Frank Bryan, Newsletter Editor
steveriver@aol.com

Two programs were presented at the November 12 meeting: "Springtime in the Fall—Highlights of the ASA Convention in Charleston—A Slide Program," was presented with commentary by Frank Bryan, Joe Coleman, and Jim Thornton. "Get Ready for Winter—Construction of a Cold Frame," was accompanied by demonstrations and comments by Allison Fuqua. The business meeting covered the next steps in the process of revision of the

"Growing Azaleas" slide series cooperatively produced with the Rockdale Cooperative Extension Service (CES) Office in Conyers. After seeing CES agent Dr. Gary Wade demonstrate what can be done with a Power Point presentation format, such as viewing four slides at a time with one theme, the review group noted that the slide script would need further revisions. More slides are needed; all will be returned after scanning for the slide show. Internet images can even be incorporated. The next step is to have the new set of slides and script reviewed by the CES, then to get either an Oconee chapter member or a hired student to work with the CES computer and software to scan and incorporate the slides and prepare the graphics. CES does not have the staff to do these latter steps.

Seven new members joined as of November 2000. One hundred application forms were sent out, and five new members have joined, four for Oconee and one at-large.

The Chapter is especially pleased to welcome its members from the Rockdale House for Men, a residential treatment facility, which was founded in 1974 by a group of

Conyers, GA citizens to help men combat drug and alcohol addiction. While program funding comes from state grants-in-aid, local government, the City of Conyers, and local civic groups and private citizens, the residents in the program grow and sell plants for additional support. They have a small greenhouse where they grow annuals and hanging baskets. Jim Thornton presented a talk about growing azaleas to the hospital staff recently. The Oconee chapter is helping them grow azaleas to include in their sales. The Chapter would like your help, too, whether it's money, in-kind (plants, such as cuttings, liners, or larger plants), or time. Oconee chapter president Mike McNeal provided 2,000 plants (the Hester Collection plants). Ben Reid is providing consultation. The address for the Rockdale House for Men is 1060 Scott Street, Conyers, GA 770-483-3984, Rockdalehousemen@prodigy.net. For more information, contact Jim Thornton, 770-483-1583, or JOT@att.net.

The newsletter contained a three-page article, "pH and Its Impact on Soils and Azalea Growth," which will be reprinted in **THE AZALEAN** in the near future.

Joint Rhododendron and Azalea Society "Sunday Supper" Meeting at Dave & Buster's Restaurant, White Flint Mall

Phil Louer reported in "The Azalea Clipper" on the joint meeting of the rhododendron and azalea enthusiasts held October 29th. Nine members of the Northern Virginia Chapter attended, as well as people from a number of other chapters.

Don Hyatt hosted a well-received 15-question quiz on rhododendron and azalea questions, in the format of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire." Winners got first

choice to purchase plants after the meeting. The final verdict was that this was both an entertaining and informative way to distill experience and knowledge of growers. Dr. Joe Coleman from Atlanta, Georgia, then spoke about plans for the upcoming joint ARS and ASA Convention to be held in Atlanta, April 17-21, 2002. Room rates will be \$79 per night. The convention planners are now selecting gardens to visit. As samples, Dr. Coleman showed slides of Earl and

Verdie Sommerville's garden on the lower slope of Kennesaw Mountain, featuring many deciduous and evergreen azaleas, rhododendrons, with a small stream flowing through it. Coleman's slides of his own four-acre garden, nestled among large pine trees, showed many mature plants. He is a noted collector and hybridizer. He and wife Donna also have many Japanese maples, viburnums, hosta, daylilies, and wildflowers.

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Evaluation of Azaleas - continued

for a plant that maintains attractive growth habits that complement its foliage. I look for characteristics that are not well represented in the nursery industry (i.e. out of season bloomers have become all the rage).

After picking out a group of distinctive azaleas that I really like, I walk my unsuspecting subject through my test garden. I talk about what a rotten business the azalea market is, how much pot prices have skyrocketed, and then I wait for him to get bored and start looking at the flowers. Eventually, perhaps out of desperation, he'll stop somewhere and say "Wow, where did you get this one?" That gets the plant a point. If enough people stop at the same plant, that plant goes into production (unless I really don't

like that one, in which case it has to get a lot of points). It's popular these days to call it "marketing", but in truth it's the same old game: dragging the neighbors through the garden.

I've found that the general public prefers strong colors, tending toward the blue end of red. They like huge flowers, or something floriferous enough to make a strong statement. They love novelty so long as it falls within the acceptable range of expectations. For example *Rhododendron* 'Koromo Shikibu' never fails to draw comments while *R. linearifolium* gets treated like a teenager with a safety pin in his nose...But what it all boils down to is this: evaluation is experience, and only experience. And in the end? After all the hype, after all the green, squatty, symmetric azaleas...

there are few pleasures greater for me than seeing that 100th neighbor open his eyes, and begin to evaluate.

Maarten van der Giessen is the vice-president of van der Giessen Nursery, Inc. in Mobile, Alabama, a wholesale grower of azalea and woody ornamental liners and containers since 1990. A current ASA board member, Maarten was chairman of the 1999 ASA convention committee in Mobile, Alabama, and regularly emceed the annual ASA plant auctions. He is a past president of the South Alabama Nurserymen's Association and an active member of the International Plant Propagator's Society. Maarten and his father, Peter, have been working on azalea evaluations at their nursery since 1994 to provide new and exciting selections to the industry.

In Memory *Jean L. Cox*

1931-2000

One of the Azalea Society's best friends Jean Cox passed away on November 25, 2000. Born in Massachusetts April 12, 1931, Jean was a retired FBI computer analyst. The things Jean loved most in this world were bowling, anything having to do with Scotland (especially Scotty dogs), and azaleas. She would always have treats for your dogs if she were coming for a visit. With azaleas, she was as generous as she could be, always giving away plants, transporting plants, and propagating new plants to give away. She was also a member of a professional society for retired FBI workers and a member of the Scottish Trust. She volunteered for the National Arboretum's azalea restoration project from June 1991 through spring of 1997. Working from the beginning of the George Harding Memorial Garden project in the fall of 1992 until the fall of 1999, she became one of the "steadfast eight" volunteers there. And as I understand, she also helped out for George Harding himself at his home. She supported the Special Olympics, Friends of the National Arboretum, and the Brooklyn Botanical Garden through donations.

To say that the Azalea Society of America was Jean's family is an understatement. Joining the ASA around 1984, Jean belonged to numerous chapters (Northern Virginia, Brookside Gardens, and as an associate of Ben Morrison) as well as belonging to the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. She ran the ASA Bookstore since 1993. Jean was always looking for more azaleas to propagate in her "cloche," which was how she referred to that

small tent-like structure where she made many, many azaleas from cuttings. She was a gifted artist as could be seen in the photos from the 1992 ASA convention hosted by the Ben Morrison Chapter (see cover photograph for the September 1992 issue of **THE AZALEAN**). Jean hand-painted several T-shirts with colorful azaleas personally selected for the person owning the T-shirt. She was a gifted cross-stitcher; many of Jean's favorite people own beautifully framed masterpieces. (Mine is of an azalea.)

Jean was well known here at the National Arboretum, for her lively conversations on everything from politics to her love of dogs. When she began as a volunteer here, the Azalea Collections were almost in ruins. They were so covered in vines and there was so much dead wood, no one would have believed that she, along with four other volunteers, would be able to revive the azaleas again in just another five years. Jean was a driving force in keeping my team motivated and undaunted during the huge project that loomed ahead. Jean came through the hottest days of summer and the coldest, frostiest days of winter. She taught my other volunteers more about azaleas than I ever could. I know this was the same effort she put into the work at the George Harding Garden at River Farm, in Alexandria, Virginia.

She was a friend. I could call her any time, day or night,

knowing that she'd be up late at her cross-stitching or reading a book. We went on numerous adventures together, including a canoe trip on the Potomac River and visiting gardens. She was my roommate at several conventions. She would always bring the Glen Fiddich Scotch, chilled, and decorated plaid napkins. Many of you have shared similar experiences with her. I know she would want to say good-bye to so many of you, like Margie Jenkins and Bill McDavitt. She will be missed.

*Written by Barbara Bullock—
Washington, DC*



Taken at the 1993 ASA Plant Sale held at the US National Arboretum, this photo captures Jean Cox in action, as she greets "Lucky", a dog owned by fellow USNA volunteer Frank Despit. (Photo by Barbara Bullock.)

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