

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