

VOLUME 23

NUMBER 3

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THE **A**zalea

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



Asheville Convention Issue

The Best of the Best —
In Search of Native Azaleas

East Meets West —
The Deciduous Azaleas

Celebrating Native Azaleas —
2001 Convention Photo Album

Azalea Seedling Selection Process



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President's Letter

Joseph E. Schild, Jr. — Hixson, Tennessee

Friends,

With the 2001 convention in Asheville, North Carolina, behind us, but still much in mind for its great programs and tours, we look to new and exciting adventures. In my remarks to the members in Asheville, I noted the importance of bringing in new members through mentoring and just being a friend.

Our Society is growing through each of us answering azalea questions from our neighbors and being a friend in the garden. Often a gift plant to a neighbor is treasured for many years; long after other purchased azaleas may have passed on, that gift and the giver are recalled with pleasure. What if we had included an application to the ASA with the azalea? Remember, autumn is the time to plant azaleas and cultivate friendships in the process.

The 2002 Convention in Atlanta will be upon us before we may even think of it; therefore, it is important that our azaleas and members be well represented during the joint ARS/ASA Convention. I am looking forward to meeting old friends and making new ones at that occasion, as I am sure you all are.

With warm regards and looking to a bright future, I remain your friend.

Upcoming Conventions

2002: April 17-21, in Atlanta. The convention will be jointly hosted by the Azaleas Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and the Oconee Chapter of the ASA. Volunteers are needed to help with registration and other convention duties. Please contact Jim Thornton to offer your services at 770-483-1593 or jot@worldnet.att.net. Earl Sommerville is the ARS contact: 770-428-3226 or earlsommerville@mindspring.com. A large collection of plants will be for sale at the convention. More details and registration forms will be in the Winter 2001 issue of **THE AZALEAN**. The convention information website is: www.arsazalea.tripod.com or you can go to any search engine and type in ARS/ASA and it will link you to this website and the ASA website.

2003: Convention location is under review by the Society's board of directors. More information will be published in **THE AZALEAN** as it becomes available.

2004: The Ben Morrison chapter is planning the 2004 ASA convention. Carol Segree is chairwoman of the planning committee for this big event. Contact her at 301-261-6215. As a highlight, chapter member Gray Carter has offered to propagate R. 'Ben Morrison' plants for sale at that convention.

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:

One of the beautiful azaleas featured in Don Hyatt's keynote speech June 16, 2001, was this native hybrid he and others who make the pilgrimage to Gregory Bald have christened *Rhododendron* "Gregory Salmon Balls." It is so named because the round trusses of salmon flowers reminded them of balls of poached salmon. If this variety is ever registered they might change it to R. 'Gregory Salmon.' [Photo by Don Hyatt]

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Hats Off to the Asheville Organizers!

[Congratulations to all who selected the Asheville site for the convention June 14-17, 2001! This goes both for the organizing committee, Bob Stelloh, Ed Collins, John Brown and the members of the new Vaseyi Chapter in North Carolina. John contributed the following about the facilities at UNCA, which were apparently nearly perfect for our meeting, Ed.]

A quiet and serene oasis, protected on one side by the Asheville Botanical Garden and on the other by William's Rhododendron Nursery, set the stage for 142 azaleaphiles to congregate in a relaxed, informal atmosphere. The campus of the University of North Carolina-Asheville is located within minutes of the heart of downtown, close to the Interstate system and three major highways and yet, is completely isolated from the bustle of this active mountain city. The campus is well landscaped; specimens are labeled and spaced for both the casual observer and the interested viewers. Several attendees were able to enjoy a quiet hour wandering around "The Quad" identifying plants and making wish lists.

We found the staff and administrative personal to be, without exception, helpful, courteous, and well prepared to perform their various functions. No

request went unfilled as we tried to prepare for a party of 142 friends.

The interest shown in our well-being went far beyond the usual. The dining hall staff, in particular, showed a lot of interest in the plant sale and auction. Rumor has it that one of the prized *R. eastmanii* specimens passed through the auction into the hands of a well-known member of the Society and then directly to a member of the dining hall staff. It is further rumored that the deal was cooked up across the Honor Bar during social hour. Maybe, he will appreciate his acquisition enough to join the Society.

The business meeting of the Society was held in the Dining Hall, as were all of the Convention meetings. We could have handled twice the number of guests in the comfortable, spacious well-equipped facility.

Convention Keynote Speech

Best of the Best: In Search of Native Azaleas

Donald W. Hyatt — McLean, Virginia

Introduction

The late Fred Galle has left us a great legacy. Through publications including his monumental work *Azaleas* [3] and preservation efforts at Callaway Gardens, he did so much to educate us about our native azalea heritage. Although Fred had wide horticultural interests and renowned expertise in many areas, I suspect that the native azaleas were his first love. After many years of hybridizing and collecting azaleas of all sorts, I have turned to the natives as my primary interest too. Professionally, I have been a public school teacher for the past 32 years, spending much of my time educating the next generation of mathematicians and computer scientists. However, I think we all need to become teachers. It is not enough for us to grow native azaleas in our gardens or enjoy these lovely species in the wild. We have an obligation to educate the public about these wonderful plants. The native azaleas and the habitats in which they grow must be preserved for generations to come, and it is our responsibility to help champion that cause.

For the past seven years I have been on a quest to identify some of the finest forms of our native azaleas. This

has been my search for the “Best of the Best.” There are many spectacular forms still out there in the wild, and some of them are growing in spectacular settings, too. Unfortunately, real estate development has been encroaching on many of these habitats; and, even in preserved sites, there are other threats to the native azaleas. There is an urgent need to protect the genetic diversity that still exists, and I hope we can all join together in this endeavor.

Appreciating the Antiquity of Our Native Azaleas

Most people immediately recognize historical sights in Egypt and Rome, and they universally acknowledge that mankind must preserve the old buildings and artifacts left from these ancient civilizations. However, few people see anything more than a pretty orange flower when they admire a plant like the Flame Azalea in bloom. Even fewer people have an appreciation for the antiquity of these plants, our native azalea species. The mountains in the eastern United States are among the oldest ranges on the earth, and the variety of native azaleas that grow there are certainly not

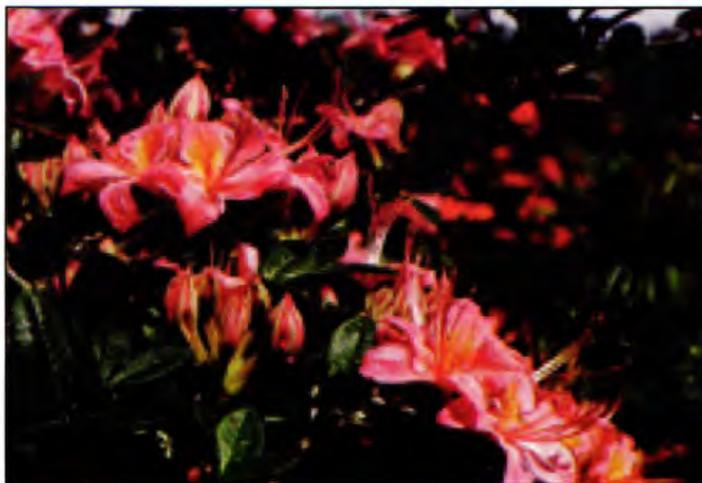
recent arrivals either. Indeed, our native azaleas are artifacts far older than any outward accomplishments of mankind.

At first, it may seem surprising that many of the azalea species from around the world are so closely related. Azaleas like



Don Hyatt keynote speaker presented a way of organizing the natives into three color groups, showed many slides of unusual hybrids in situ, and encouraged the Society to educate the young in conservation of these valued natural resources. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

Rhododendron luteum from the Caucasus, *R. molle* from China, *R. japonicum* from Japan, and even our West Coast species, *R. occidentale*, are very closely allied with many of our eastern natives. Yes, our native azaleas are very similar genetically to species from distant lands separated by thousands of miles, arid deserts, and vast oceans. These plants have not recently traveled to such remote loca-



From Gregory Bald in North Carolina, this is one of Don's favorites, *R. "Gregory Candy Stripe."* The name comes from the striking white striping on the pink buds. [Photo by Don Hyatt.]



R. luteum is an oriental species from the Caucasus Mountains that is closely allied with our native species.

[Photo by Don Hyatt.]

tions by themselves, and they were probably not carried around the world by admiring cave men. Instead, they have been quietly growing in our forests, slowly evolving in local habitats while the rest of the earth has changed about them.

The late David Leach noted that fossil records in North America and Europe show that certain species in the genus *Rhododendron* have existed essentially unchanged for at least 50 million years [8]. I suspect that precursors of our native azaleas were probably blooming on "Pangaea," the hypothetical landmass that millions of years ago split apart to form the continents we know today. Similarly, many of the favorite trees and wildflowers we find in our eastern woodlands (dogwoods, magnolias, trilliums, arisaemas, etc.) have counterparts in these same far places of the world. Like our native azaleas, they have survived earthquakes and asteroids, dinosaurs and ice ages, but they are facing their most critical test right now, the effects of mankind. We must be certain that these plants can survive the severe disruption to their habitats that humans have wrought in just 200 years.

Identifying the Natives

There are 15 native azalea species here in the Eastern United States. Dr. Kathleen Kron has developed an excellent method to help identify the natives by separating them into three color categories: white, pink, and orange [7]. She points out other distinguishing characteristics so that one can easily differentiate among the many species. Using her approach with additional information from Galle [3, 4] and Davidian [2], I have tried to develop a website where people can learn to identify the East Coast native azaleas [6]. I am grateful to George McLellan, members of the Middle Atlantic Chapter American Rhododendron Society Species Study Group, Mike Creel, and others for providing slides of native azalea populations in the wild that I have not vis-

ited personally. It has allowed me to make a much more thorough presentation.

The White Group

The "White Group" contains *R. alabamense*, *R. atlanticum*, *R. arborescens*, *R. viscosum* (which now includes *R. oblongifolium* and *R. serrulatum*), and our newest species, *R. eastmanii*. The azaleas in this group are not necessarily pure white since there may be forms that are shades of light pink. All of the species in the White Group are delightfully fragrant, which adds to their appeal as great garden plants.

If I were to select my favorite from this group, it would be *R. arborescens* because of its pristine white flowers with striking red stamens, and its powerful heliotrope fragrance that perfumes the entire yard. There is an excellent selection of *R. arborescens* by Clarence Towe called *R. 'White Lightning.'* It has huge white flowers with distinctive red stamens, a yellow blotch, and that delicious fragrance so characteristic of the species. Some believe that *R. 'White Lightning'* is a natural hybrid of *R. arborescens* with *R. cumberlandense*, but whether hybrid or species, this variety is surely one of the best of the best, a superior plant in any garden. There are some wonderful stands of *R. arborescens* at the top of Wayah Bald in North Carolina and along many waterways in the East, including the Cheat River in West Virginia. *R. arborescens* usually grows near moist areas, but one is usually aware that the plant is nearby long before seeing the blooms because of that wonderful fragrance.

The Pink Group

In the "Pink Group", there are five species: *R. canescens*, *R. periclymenoides* (formerly known as *R. nudiflorum*), *R. prinophyllum* (formerly known as *R. roseum*), *R. canadense*, and *R. vaseyi*. The first two are often difficult to tell apart, but one distinguishing characteristic is that *R. canescens* usually has

sticky glandular hairs on the back of the floral tube, whereas *R. periclymenoides* usually has plain fuzzy hairs without the sticky glands. Both species have long flower tubes and are fragrant. There are a number of excellent forms of *canescens* being offered in the trade now, including the pale pink *R. 'Camilla's Blush'* and *R. 'Varnadoe's Pink'* with its red tubes and pink flowers.

R. prinophyllum is usually darker pink than the previous two species. It has a shorter flower tube and a distinctive cinnamon spice fragrance. One of the finest native stands is at Dolly Sods Wilderness Area in West Virginia where the entire top of the mountain turns rose pink in early June. This region was virgin forest prior to 1770, but then severe logging by lumber companies devastated much of West Virginia near the turn of the 20th century. By 1920, severe forest fires had ravaged the area [1]. The fires were so fierce in places that even the soil burned. Peaty soils built up by centuries of organic litter burned all the way down to bare rock such as that now seen exposed on Dolly Sods. This region is slowly recovering, and the *R. prinophyllum* that is reclaiming the mountaintop is a sight to behold.

All of our East Coast native azaleas have exactly five stamens except for *R. canadense* and *R. vaseyi*. These two species are not closely related to the other natives and are not known to cross. However, they may be more closely allied with certain Asian species such as *R. albrechtii* and *R. pentaphyllum* from Japan or even *R. schlippenbachii* from Korea, since these all have 10 stamens and also show similarities in flower form.

R. canadense is generally a more northern plant, preferring cooler temperatures than we can provide in our southern gardens. Its upper three petals are fused into a separate lip, and it has 10 stamens. At one time *R. canadense* was considered to be in a

separate genus, *Rhodora*.

R. vaseyi, on the other hand, seems to be a very adaptable plant, even though its original range was only four counties in the mountains of North Carolina at elevations from 3,000 to 5,000 feet. *R. vaseyi* usually has six or seven stamens and comes in shades of deep pink to white. There is a superior pure white form called *R. 'White Find'* that is readily available in the trade. Along the Blue Ridge Parkway in the Pisgah National Forest there is an exceptionally deep rose form of *vaseyi* that people just refer to as "419.2", signifying the mile post by which it is located. However, nurserymen will probably need a more marketable name if this plant is successfully propagated and offered to the general public.

The Blue Ridge Parkway from Cherokee to Grandfather Mountain is a magnificent drive whether or not *R. vaseyi* or the many other native azalea species growing along the roadside are in bloom. There are many excellent side hikes, including the spectacular rock outcroppings at Grandfather Mountain where *R. vaseyi* also grows wild. The Native Americans considered the area at Grandfather Mountain sacred land, and so it should be with us.

There are many other places in the Appalachian Mountains that evoke similar feelings of inspiration and awe. Clingman's Dome, the highest point in the Smokies, is one such place, although combined effects of acid rain and a foreign spruce adelgid introduced to the area have devastated the evergreen forests. The visitor's tower on top of Clingman's Dome does not fit with the natural beauty either. However, in 1000 years it will probably no longer exist, though I hope the beauty of the surrounding mountains will still be there for people to enjoy.

The Orange Group

The remaining five species belong to the "Orange Group," although their

flowers are not always orange, but can range from shades of clear yellow, through gold, to deepest red. The early blooming *R. austrinum* is the only fragrant native of this group, and its flowers are typically gold or yellow with a long red flower tube. There are some excellent forms of *austrinum* already on the market including *R. 'Lisa's Gold.'*

R. flammeum (formerly *R. speciosum*) also has long flower tubes. It is early blooming too, but the flowers are usually orange or red with a prominent blotch, and there is no fragrance. The clone *R. 'Hazel Hamilton'* is a nice yellow form of *R. flammeum*, but is reportedly difficult to propagate and has limited distribution in the trade.

R. prunifolium is easily distinguished from the first two because of its very late season of bloom. *R. prunifolium* is typically coral orange to deep red with a long flower tube and begins its floral display at the end of July or August. There are excellent stands of *R. prunifolium* in Georgia's Providence Canyon as well as extensive plantings at Callaway Gardens.

The other two species in the "Orange Group," *R. calendulaceum* and *R. cumberlandense* (formerly known as *R. bakeri*), have shorter flower tubes than the first three species mentioned in this group, but are difficult to distinguish from one another. Genetically, *R. calendulaceum* is a tetraploid having twice the number of chromosomes as *R. cumberlandense* or any other native azalea species. However, one cannot tell this fact from casual inspection. The flowers of *R. calendulaceum* are usually larger than *R. cumberlandense* though, and the former usually blooms before the leaves have fully expanded. With *R. cumberlandense*, next year's flower buds are often forming as the current season's blooms open.

There are superior forms of *R. cumberlandense* already in the trade, including *R. 'Camp's Red'* that was introduced by Dr. Henry Skinner in

1964. Members of the Middle Atlantic Chapter ARS Species Study Group would often travel down the Cherohala Skyway from North Carolina into Tennessee to see *R. cumberlandense* in bloom. In June of 2000, we were particularly disappointed to find that someone had recently dug up a favorite deep red form of *R. cumberlandense* from its site along the roadside. Theft from the wild is a very serious problem with native azaleas as well as many other wildflowers.

R. calendulaceum is widespread and quite variable. There are many excellent forms being introduced into the trade, such as *R. 'Cherokee'* or *R. 'Kelsey's Flame'*. Travelers are amazed at the beautiful forms growing right along the roadside, but I wonder what variation exists throughout its natural realm. At a recently opened trail to Hooper Bald, our species study group has documented some of the largest flowered forms of *R. calendulaceum* that we have ever seen. One superior form we call *R. "Hooper Copper"* because of its coppery-orange flower color. The flowers of this selection are in excess of three inches in diameter, huge for representatives of the species. The flower edges on *R. "Hooper Copper"* are plain without any frill or ruffling. There are some nice gold, orange, and orange-red forms at Hooper Bald, but we have not noticed any clear yellows. Unfortunately, these plants are becoming overgrown by trees and shrubs, so unless proactive measures are taken to give them some growing room, they could easily be lost. Another concern is that feral pigs on Hooper Bald are also causing significant damage to the environment by burrowing for roots and grubs.

Favorite Locations

There are wonderful examples of *R. calendulaceum* all along the Blue Ridge Parkway from the Roanoke, south to the Smokies, and beyond. I have seen excellent forms of *R. calendulaceum* at a number of places in Virginia, includ-

ing Mount Rogers and Grayson Highlands. In North Carolina, the mountainside at Wayah Bald can turn orange when the *R. calendulaceum* in the woods has a heavy bloom. The *R. calendulaceum* at Andrews Bald in the Smokies is beautiful too, but the deer have been grazing this area rather heavily in recent years.

R. Calendulaceum and the Appalachian Trail Near Roan Mountain

For me, the best place to see *R. calendulaceum* in all its glory is along the Appalachian Trail near Roan Mountain at the North Carolina-Tennessee border. The combination of the native azaleas, wildflowers, and the mountain scenery make this special site one of the most beautiful places on earth. Starting up the Appalachian Trail at Carver's Gap, the path ascends several hundred feet to the top of Round Bald, elevation 5,826 feet. The trail has recently been rerouted to discourage erosion, making the climb a bit longer and more scenic, and certainly less strenuous. From the top of Round Bald the view is spectacular. As the trail descends to the right toward Engine Gap, a magnificent display of *calendulaceum* begins, continuing all the way to the next ridge at Jane Bald. The peaks in this region are all from 5,000 to 6,000 feet in elevation, and because of variations in bloom time, this impressive native azalea display lasts through much of June, with peak season probably the second or third week, depending upon the year.

On the balds in this area there are also rare wildflowers such as the red Gray's Lily (*Lilium grayi*), and great masses of the lavender-purple rhododendrons, *R. catawbiense*. On a good year (and on a clear day), a side trip out to Grassy Ridge Bald affords one of the most dramatic sights imaginable. As the elevation rises gradually to a height of 6,189 feet, a 360-degree view reveals the entire mountainside has turned purple from the rhododendron blossoms. Even when not in bloom, the majesty of this setting is an

inspiration to all who walk along the trail. Words cannot describe the awe one feels standing on the top of the world surrounded by such incredible beauty. The US Forest Service has placed a plaque on the mountain to honor the memory of local resident Cornelious Rex Peake (1887-1964). It reflects on the beauty of this spot and how much this man and his forefathers loved the Roan Mountain region. I hope there are people in our generation who will be similarly remembered as caring forefathers who loved and protected such solemn grounds.

One of my favorite forms of *R. calendulaceum* sits boldly near the ridge at Jane Bald. We refer to it as *R. "Molten Lava"* because of its brilliant golden orange color that contrasts so beautifully with the blue mountains in the distance. The flowers of "Molten Lava" are relatively large, usually over two inches across, and the edges are beautifully ruffled and frilled. Choosing a favorite form of *R. calendulaceum* is hard to do because there are so many lovely forms scattered along the edge of the bald from Engine Gap to Jane Bald. They come in all shades from clear yellow and gold, to blends of orange and deep orange-red. Dr. August Kehr reported seeing a double form of *R. calendulaceum* at Jane Bald, but I have looked for that plant many times with no success. I fear that it may have been overgrown, lost, or possibly stolen.

In the past few years there has been noticeable damage from deer browsing on Roan. The deer are not only eating the native azaleas, but also the rhododendrons and rare wildflowers on the bald. Even more alarming is news that North Carolina is apparently trying to establish elk populations in the mountain regions. This will put even further stress on the native plants unless some natural balance is secured. In addition to animal damage, invasive plants are causing concern too, since alder, blackberry, and various trees are crowding out the native azaleas and wildflowers. Each

year, though, I see evidence that admiring visitors have tried to break back branches of the encroaching shrubs and trees giving these wildflowers another year to share their beauty with us. One interesting note is that *R. calendulaceum* plants tangled in blackberry and alder seem to show less deer damage than those in the open.

The Hybrid Swarm on Gregory Bald

The very finest display of native azaleas that I have ever seen, though, is on Gregory Bald, another open bald of about 10 acres on the North Carolina-Tennessee border in the Smokies. At an elevation of 4,949 feet, Gregory Bald is noted for its "hybrid swarm" of native azaleas. Four native azalea species are believed to be present on the bald (*R. calendulaceum*, *R. cumberlandense*, *R. arborescens*, and *R. viscosum*), and over the years they have been cross-pollinating to create azaleas in almost every conceivable color. The display lasts many weeks, with peak bloom usually being near the end of June.

I remember Fred Galle and others talking about this unique spot many years before I made my first trip. According to one story, Fred was working on his doctoral thesis while on Gregory Bald when a bear attacked and carried off his research notes. Unfortunately, he never completed his degree because of that loss. I made my first trip to Gregory in 1995. Now I make an annual pilgrimage, but I keep a close lookout for bears.

There are two trails up to Gregory Bald, both originating in Cades Cove; but neither one is an easy hike. The longer but more scenic trail via Forge Creek to Gregory Ridge begins along rushing stream waters and winds through a magnificent virgin forest of hemlocks and thickets of *R. maximum*. The trail eventually gains elevation as it ascends through drier forests of hardwoods, *Kalmia*, and beds of galax, finally reaching the bald. The hike takes about three and a half hours,

with an elevation change of approximately 3,000 feet. The alternative route via the Parson's Branch Road and Hannah Trail cuts off about 45 minutes and 1,000 feet in elevation, but requires that one travel by car on a one-way, primitive road from Tennessee into North Carolina. This road has numerous fords and is often closed due to bad weather. There is also limited parking where the Hannah Trail starts.

Once on the top of Gregory, the difficulties of the hike are forgotten as one becomes enthralled by the color, fragrance, and sheer floral beauty of the native azaleas there. The predominant azalea color is typically orange-red, similar to *R. cumberlandense*, and the flower size is about one to one-and-one-half inches in diameter depending upon the clone. Growing throughout the bald though are whites, creams, yellows, golds, pale pinks, deep pinks, fuchsias, corals, reds, and wondrous blends. There are larger flowered forms, and many have distinctive foliage qualities too. Unless chased off the mountain by fierce thunderstorms or the threat of nightfall, I usually stroll for hours through acres of azaleas as though I am judging some enormous flower show. I keep trying to decide which are the best of the best, but there are so many from which to choose.

Members of our study group have given many of the best forms special names, some of which are very descriptive while others are more whimsical. In an article I wrote for the *Journal American Rhododendron Society* in 1998 [5], I discussed my "Top Ten" on the bald. I gave names to some of the favorites, like *R.* "Gregory Christmas Red," one of the older plants on the bald with deep red flowers and dark green leaves that reminded me of Christmas poinsettias and holly leaves. Another favorite is *R.* "Gregory Blush," a large-flowered white brushed with pale pink that carries a bold yellow flare. The plant is on the right to greet visitors as they enter the

bald from the Forge Creek Trail. Another showstopper is an enormous plant we call the *R.* "Hannah Trail Coral," a brilliant coral orange that grows on the other side where the Hannah Trail enters the bald. Images of these and many other selections can be seen on my website.

In the middle of the bald are so many wonderful plants that it is really hard to choose the best forms, but each year I try. *R.* "Gregory Candy Stripe" has a large rose pink flower with a yellow flare and beautiful bluish green foliage. We gave it the name because the pink flower buds are striped with white before they open, giving a striking floral effect. It blooms later than many of the others, but it is surely one of the best on the bald. Another one of the top plants we call *R.* "Salmon Balls" because the round trusses reminded us of balls of poached salmon. Perhaps we should change the name to *R.* 'Gregory Salmon', if it is ever registered or introduced. Two other favorites that grow side by side are *R.* "Gregory Cover Girl," so named because a picture of this plant with its deep pink flowers and broad yellow blotch was printed on the cover of the *Journal ARS* in 1996 [9]. Right beside this plant is another striking azalea we call *R.* "Gregory Goldilocks," a brilliant golden orange. One of the best plants on the bald is surely *R.* "Gregory Fuchsia" with two-inch flowers of fuchsia pink with a yellow flare. The plant has wonderful glossy green foliage, too.

There are many other plants on the bald that we have identified as excellent forms. We have been calling them by strange names. For example, one is *R.* "Far Side Pink," because it is a nice lavender pink on the far side of the bald away from most of the other favorites. There is *R.* "Fasti Pink," so named because it has an upright or fastigiated plant habit and soft rose pink flowers. A huge plant growing right along the path in the center of the bald we call *R.* "Pink by the Path."

It has deep rose pink flowers with an orange blotch. Finally, there is an exceptional plant with creamy white flowers brushed in pink we call *R.* "Rattlesnake Cream." We gave it the name because it grows next to a place where we spotted a huge rattlesnake one year. We look out for rattlesnakes as well as bears on Gregory now.

There are other exciting hybrid swarms of native azaleas, such as along the Appalachian Trail near Copper Bald in North Carolina or at Audra State Park in West Virginia. The catalyst behind hybrid swarms is not clear, though. *R. calendulaceum* seems to be involved in these swarms; but, being tetraploid, it should produce sterile offspring in primary crosses with the other diploid natives. Perhaps when several diploid species such as *R. viscosum*, *R. arborescens*, and *R. cumberlandense* cross with one another first, then these primary hybrids produce unreduced gametes that will allow fertile progeny when crossed with *R. calendulaceum*. That would imply that many of the stunning hybrids in these swarms could be tetraploid. Of course, cytological studies would be needed to verify such a conjecture.

Conclusions

We often hear environmentalists voicing concerns over the destruction of the rain forests in remote regions of the world, but we must realize that the rich biological diversity here in our own eastern forests is also at risk. We constantly upset nature's balance, yet we are often unaware that we have done anything wrong. We build roads, malls, shopping centers, and new homes in the name of progress, yet replace the rich native flora with masses of ordinary plants such as Leyland cypress or Bradford pears. We must not lose the beauty and diversity that has evolved in our eastern forests over millions of years by using mass-market substitutes for the richness that was once all around us.

As members of the Azalea Society of America, we must protect our na-

tive azalea heritage, not only the many species we admire, but also the special places where these plants grow. We need to identify the best forms of our native azaleas, propagate them, and distribute this plant material to arboreta and commercial nurseries so that rare and superior forms are not lost forever. We also need to encourage commercial sources to propagate the natives and make them widely available so that there will be less pressure to steal plants from the wild. The general public is beginning to become aware of the native azaleas and will be looking for places to buy them.

We certainly must not forget that there is a very delicate balance in nature. Environmentalists of all kinds must look for solutions to the burgeoning populations of deer and other destructive animals that are colonizing as rapidly as we are. They pose a risk not only to our suburban gardens but also to many rare plants in wilderness areas that we don't often see. Technological advances have allowed us to travel easily around the world, but we have often brought back foreign pests that have become plagues in our local regions. We must be extremely careful not to introduce such pests or diseases into native populations, for they could devastate our native azaleas. How sad it would be if petal blight became established in the Appalachian Mountains, melting the glorious azalea display just as it opened.

There is much more to our native azalea heritage than an occasional orange flower in someone's garden or a glimpse of color along the Blue Ridge Parkway. We need to educate the general public so that others appreciate the wonderful diversity that exists in nature. They must also become stewards of our cause. If we can teach others to see the beauty that we see, perhaps there is a chance to preserve such treasures for future generations to enjoy. Mankind has been the cause of much destruction, but through education we can also bring a cure.

Don Hyatt has been an avid hybridizer of azaleas and rhododendrons for over 30 years, with a particular interest in deciduous azaleas, and has been teaching mathematics and computer science for 32 years. His exceptional web pages at <http://www.tjhsst.edu/~dhyatt/gardencenter.html> demonstrate his ability to combine his work and avocation. Don is a former district director of the ARS, and is now a director of the ASA and the president of the Potomac Valley ARS chapter. He can be reached by e-mail at dhyatt@tjhsst.edu.

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In Memory

The Society mourns the loss of Dr. August Kehr, September 27, 2001, at his home in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He had been a member since 1979, was active in hybridizing azaleas, and was recently working to establish an Azalea Society Research Foundation. Contributions in his honor can be sent to the Pincrest Presbyterian Church, PO Box 191, Flat Rock, North Carolina 28739 or to the ASA, c/o Mr. Bob Stelloh, Treasurer, 585 Ransier Drive, Hendersonville, North Carolina 28739-7820. A more complete memorial article is in progress for the winter issue of THE AZALEAN.

Position Opening

Full charge Horticultural Director needed at Quaker Hill Native Plant Garden. Duties include the training and management of a large staff of gardeners, maintenance of computerized plant record systems, design of tree, shrub and groundcover plantings, oversight of nurseries, development of research materials and horticultural library. Requirements include a deep knowledge of eastern U.S. native woody and forb plants, their cultivars and care, experience in large scale garden plantings management, and the ability to design and realize highly naturalized designs. This is an exciting opportunity with excellent salary and benefits. Please reply by letter to:

Director of Design
 Quaker Hill Native Plant Garden
 PO Box 667
 Dewey Lane
 Pawling, NY 12564

East Meets West — Deciduous Azaleas

Joe Schild — Hixson, Tennessee

Most, if not all of us are familiar with the native azalea species of the United States, but there are a number of delightful deciduous azaleas originating in Asia and one in Europe. This slide program is intended to rouse some interest in those Asian forms and tie them in with our North American natives as landscape material.

My first impulse was to dive right into the Asian species and show you a few of the deciduous and evergreen forms, but since a number of you have signed up for the Wayah Bald tour, let us take a brief side trip.

From the top of Wayah Bald, we look out onto the eastern valley with Franklin visible in the distance. In years past, I have led many groups and individuals to this wonderful mountain, and I think it is imperative that all of us become mentors while teaching those younger than us the merits of native azaleas. Here are a few slides of groups I have introduced to Wayah. The beauty of Wayah is much more than the Flame Azaleas that set the mountain on fire with bloom. It is one of the most accessible locations for those with disabilities or any not wishing to do a lot of walking.

Asian and European Species

Now, on to the slides of a few Asian and one European species, followed by many of our natives and a few shots of my hybrids in my garden. *Rhododendron wryrichii*, shown here in my garden, is a very nice pink form that blooms early midseason and is hardy to -10°F . Like most of the Asian deciduous species, the leaves are interesting with two or three at branch ends.

The single azalea species from Europe is *R. luteum*, a highly fragrant yellow azalea, shown flowering in my garden. It is very hardy to -15°F , and its scent spreads throughout the garden.

Of the yellow-flowering Asian species, perhaps *R. japonicum* is my favor-

ite. This is a delightful form that I have used many times in my breeding program, though most often it is a pollen parent and crossed with a fragrant native to mask its unpleasant leaf odor.

With the very openly bell-shaped, purplish rose blooms, *R. albrechtii* is a very nice addition to the garden. It flowers as the leaves are emerging and is hardy to -15°F .

For very early flowering, *R. mariesii* and *R. reticulatum* accent the garden with beautiful purplish flowers, as does *R. dilatatum*.

For an upright and more tree form, *R. sanctum* is superb. The one shown is a multiple clone from an introduced form that originally grew in the Japanese Royal Gardens. A cutting was sent to Clifton Gann in Hixson, Tennessee, in 1937, from Wada Nursery. Clifton grew it off to about 10 feet in size, and I rooted cuttings from that specimen in 1970.

For evergreen species from Asia, I love *R. macrorosepalum*, for its very hairy leaves and rose purple flowers. It has been in my garden for over 15 years and survived temperatures well below the rated 5°F . *R. oldhamii*, a similar species, does not survive for me in Zone 7a, though Buddy Lee has used it in the Deep South.

For tough-as-nails hardiness, nothing beats *R. yedoense* var. *poukhanense*. Rated at -15°F , it will survive much lower temperatures and delivers a beautiful purple flush of bloom in the early spring. Though listed as evergreen, it is deciduous in most parts of the country.

Many modern evergreen hybrids may be traced back to *R. kaempferi*. Its plant habit, leaves, and beautiful flowers are recognized as having some of the best qualities.

North American Species

Moving on to our native species, I have chased their bloom cycles since 1969, from the panhandle of Florida

to the mountains of Tennessee, North Carolina, and Georgia. In my garden, the Florida Azalea, *R. austrinum*, is a welcome harbinger of spring with a fantastic flush of fragrant yellow blooms.

Blooming with it is *R. periclymenoides*, and the flowers of white to deep rose offer an interesting contrast. The fragrance is highly variable between individual plants, and some have no fragrance.

Flowering after the leaves start emerging is the Piedmont Azalea, *R. canescens*, and another fragrant species of great report. In my garden, it is mounded and covered with nice pink flowers with light, sweet scent.

On the Cumberland Mountain Plateau, one will find the two previously mentioned species and a collection of interspecific hybrids between *R. alabamense* and *R. prinophyllum*. Flowering in early May, *R. calendulaceum* is in flower along with some nice specimens of *R. viscosum* around the upland bogs. In late May and early June, *R. cumberlandense* and *R. arborescens* take over the flowering with many interspecific forms. I am fortunate to have this collection of azaleas within a 45-minute drive of my home for study.

An interesting collection of native azaleas, rhododendron, and wildflowers are within a 10-minute drive of my home in the North Chickamauga Creek Gorge. For scenic beauty, this place is "eye candy." It also happens to be the home of *R. maximum*, *R. catawbiense* var. *insularia*, *R. arborescens*, *R. viscosum*, and *Stewartia ovata* var. *grandiflora*.

Heat- and drought-tolerance is reflected in the species *R. flammeum*, a tough shrub with glowing flowers of orange-red to bright yellow. For example, the form *R. 'Hazel Hamilton'*, a great yellow azalea with tight ball trusses.

Early midseason blooms of *R. atlanticum*, *R. prinophyllum*, and *R. viscosum* fill my garden with a heady perfume and colors from white to delicious pink. By mid-May, *R. calendulaceum* is in full flower with colors of yellow, orange, burnt orange, and watermelon red.

For late flowering, the reds of *R. cumberlandense* and *R. prunifolium* are contrasted with the white flowers of *R. serrulatum*.

Landscape Uses

My home landscape reflects something of an eclectic collection that was put in about 15 years ago. Arranged more for convenience than some well thought out plan, it affords me easy access to the shrubs for breeding and propagation purposes. Numbering about 1,500 shrubs, the landscape gives us flowering azaleas, rhododendron, mountain laurel, and wildflowers from early April through September. Ferns offer a fine-textured contrast with nine deciduous species used.

A number of my own hybrids grace my garden with their beauty. Crosses between a number of Exbury and Ilam hybrids with natives species have given me some very hardy azaleas. As mentioned early on, *R. japonicum* has been used often, as has the Ilam Hybrid *R. 'Primrose'*, for the good yellow color.

The final slides show a few of my hybrids that have bloomed for the first time and will be tested over the next five to ten years. For this article, I mention only two: a cross between *R. flammeum* and the Exbury *R. 'Gibraltar'* and one between *R. 'Gibraltar'* and *R. arborescens*.

Joe Schild has been an azalea chaser for over 30 years, and his gardens reflect his passion for the natives. He is the current President of the ASA, president of the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the ARS, a member of the Tennessee Nursery and Landscape Association, landscape consultant with Reflection Riding Arboretum, and an azalea breeder.

2001 Annual Meeting Minutes

Azalea Society of America
University of North Carolina –
Asheville, North Carolina
June 16, 2001

President Bill Bode called the meeting to order at 9:02 p.m. with opening remarks. He congratulated the assembled members and officers on the increase in membership in a time when other organizations are struggling to survive. It was noted that the Azalea Society website, azaleas.org, has brought in 14 new members in 2000 and 38 new members in 2001. In addition, 17 new members signed up at this convention.

Old Business

Reading of the Minutes: The minutes of the last Annual Meeting were published in **THE AZALEAN**. President Bode asked for and received a motion from Bill McDavit that the minutes be accepted as published. Bob Hobbs seconded the motion, and, there being no objection, the motion was passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: A motion was made by Mrs. Donna Adams to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented to the Board of Directors. Billy Lucas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Bob Hobbs brought up the subject of and made a motion to publish the Treasurer's Report in **THE AZALEAN**, on an annual basis. The motion was seconded by Jim Thornton, and after debate, was passed by the members. The details of this report will be left to the Board of Directors.

Joe Coleman made a motion to accept the changes to the By-Laws as published in **THE AZALEAN** and to incorporate those changes into the By-Laws of the Azalea Society of America. The motion was seconded by E. White Smith and passed unanimously by voice vote.

New Business

The Charter for the new Vaseyi Chapter was signed by outgoing President Bill Bode and incoming President Joe Schild, and signed and sealed by incoming Secretary John Brown. The Charter was then presented to Ed Collins, President of the Vaseyi Chapter. Sixteen members of the new Chapter were present for the ceremony.

Joe Schild won the Best Article in **THE AZALEAN** in 2000 Award for his stimulating article "Fire on the Mountains." It is worth re-reading.

The results on the elections for Azalea Society of America national officers were announced. They are:

President — Joe Schild
Vice-President — Robert (Buddy) Lee
Secretary — John Brown
Treasurer — Bob Stelloh

Elected to the Board of Directors:
Leslie Ann Naney, John Migas, and
Maarten van der Giessen

Retiring President Bill Bode laid down the gavel to a standing ovation that lasted for a period of minutes. A moistening in the President's eyes was undoubtedly due to the harsh glare of the muted fluorescent lighting.

Incoming President Joe Schild spoke to the upcoming joint meeting of the American Rhododendron Society and the Azalea Society of America to be held in Atlanta on April 17th through the 21st of 2002. Jim Thornton is heading the committee for the ASA and Earl Sommerville for the ARS. Joe Coleman is Chair of the Speakers Committee. The theme for the Convention is "A Family Reunion." It promises great tours and speakers.

A motion to adjourn was made by Jim Thornton and seconded by Bill Bode at 9:30 p.m. and passed by the attendees.

Respectfully submitted,
John Brown, Secretary

Celebrating Native Azaleas

These photographs are only a sampling of the wide range of azaleas, gardens, and fun captured during the Society's latest convention, June 14-17, 2001 in Asheville, North Carolina. It was a blast! The native azaleas fulfilled the theme, with *Rhododendron calendulaceum* and *R. arborescens* in peak bloom along the Blue Ridge Parkway and on the balds. The headquarters was the dining hall of the University of North Carolina-Asheville, one mile north of downtown Asheville, with housing in the nearby Mills Hall dormitory. One hundred and forty two attendees could choose from one of five different tours during the day, and, after a good meal, hear some excellent talks in the evenings.



1. Ed Collins: Ed Collins was our able Master of Ceremonies for all the convention speakers and events. Well done, Ed. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

2. Delectable Quilt: Leslie Ann and David Nanney won the raffle for the magnificent commissioned wall quilt, entitled Delectable Mountain Azaleas. Shown here is Teresa Reilly, a renowned quilter, the author of *Five Seasons of Quilts*, and a teacher and lecturer on quilting. The quilt features *R. vaseyi* and other native azaleas worked into the classic Delectable Mountains quilt design. [Photo by Bill Miller.]



3. *R. japonicum*: This *R. japonicum* is a very delicate yellow-flowering Asian species, and Joe's favorite. This species has often been used as a pollen parent in native hybrid crosses. [Photo by Joe Schild.]

4. *R. sanctum*: *R. sanctum* has an upright habit and open single form. [Photo by Joe Schild.]



Thanks for the Great Work!

Thanks to all our tour leaders who made each one a successful adventure for azaleaphiles: Wes Burlingame of Laurel Springs Nursery for the Blue Ridge Parkway Tour, Joe Schild for the Wayah Bald Tour, Aaron Cook for the Copper Bald Tour, Ed Collins on Friday and Bob Stelloh on Saturday for Hendersonville Gardens Tour, and to Doley Bell on Friday and Jim Holmes on Saturday for the Biltmore Estate Tour. Very special thanks to the owners of the private gardens that were on tour, for manicuring their gardens, serving refreshments, and being gracious hosts: Denise and Bob Stelloh, Mary and Ed Collins, Ev and Bruce Whittemore, Ted Manger, and Velma Haag.

ASA 2001 Convention Photo Album



9. Stelloh Garden: Here, the tour group has refreshments at Bob and Denise Stelloh's garden. Shown (left to right) are: Ed Collins, David Nanney, Denise Stelloh, Barbara Bullock, and Earl and Verdie Sommerville. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

Tours

Here are selected images from the Hendersonville Gardens Tour.

5. Waterfall Garden: The garden of Mary and Ed Collins has this outstanding waterfall, probably the largest private collection of Cowles hybrid rhododendrons, and a large variety of azaleas, wildflowers, and other ornamentals. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

6. Yellow Salmon Flame: As seen on the Blue Ridge Parkway Tour, here is a wonderful example of why so many Society members brag about the Flame Azalea, *Rhododendron calendulaceum*. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

7. Fiery Red Azalea: This fiery red native hybrid is a native hybrid developed by Velma Haag from *R. arborescens* x *R. 'Camp's Red'* seen in her garden of hybrid rhododendrons and azaleas. She also has stunning hillsides of *Shortia*, *Galax*, *Trillium*, and other native wildflowers. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

8. Waterfall and Ed Collins: The tour ended in the Dupont State Forest for a foray into the woods to see Hooker Falls, Triple Falls (shown here) and a few native azaleas and wildflowers in the wild. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

More convention photos on page 64.

Survival of the Fittest: Azalea Seedling Selection Process at Transcend Nursery

Robert Lee — Independence, Louisiana

Transcend Nursery is located in Southeast Louisiana and is owned by Robert and Dixie Lee. Son Ryan and daughter Kelsey assist with the nursery. I have been working with azaleas since 1970, beginning with my first part-time job at Folsom Nursery, a commercial nursery that specializes in the production of quality landscape azaleas. I was employed as an azalea grower for Beason Creek Nursery and was owner of Savannah Spring Nursery. My fascination with azaleas was kindled at an early age, and azaleas continue to intrigue me. For the past several years, I have been actively hybridizing to develop unique and hardy cultivars of azaleas. Association with organizations such as the Azalea Society of America and the American Rhododendron Society has been extremely rewarding and has supplied me with a wealth of information about the many aspects of azaleas.

Once a person has successfully mastered the ability to cross-pollinate azaleas, germinate the seeds, and grow the seedlings, the number of azalea plants a person can accumulate over time can become overwhelming. An overriding desire to keep almost every seedling can decrease the overall effectiveness of a breeding program. It also can become a burdensome situation that is both space- and time-consuming. A key component to an azalea-breeding program is a continuous selection process that eliminates inferior seedlings and identifies potentially superior seedlings.

The selection process at Transcend Nursery begins at an early stage. Once the azalea seedlings have reached approximately one inch in height in the germination trays, they are transplanted into individual two-inch-diameter growing containers. All the viable seedlings of each cross are

transplanted into these transplant trays. Large numbers of seedlings can be transplanted at this time because it is relatively inexpensive and doesn't require a lot of space. In the spring of 2000, approximately 40,000 seedlings were potted in these small containers. New containers and growing trays are used to help prevent potential contamination of fungal disease from previous plantings. The plant trays are raised approximately four inches off the ground to give adequate drainage. Filtered shade is provided to protect the young seedlings from direct sunlight. The medium used for potting consists of one part ground peat moss to five parts finely ground pine bark mixture. The pine bark mixture consists of 10-percent sand with two pounds of Micro-Max and two pounds of lime per cubic yard. A liquid fertilizer is initially applied to get the young seedlings off to a good start. Later, a granular fertilizer is applied to maintain adequate growth throughout the growing season.

One selection goal is to develop azaleas that have more resistance to the common pests and diseases that may cause damage to azaleas. Therefore, a minimal amount of chemicals (insecticide, miticide, and fungicide) is applied to the young seedlings. A natural elimination process is allowed to occur. The newly transplanted seedlings are not provided greenhouse protection and are subjected to whatever weather conditions may come. In the Gulf South, this could range from extremely hot and humid days and nights during the spring and summer to wildly extreme temperature fluctuations during the fall and winter. Hot and humid conditions are as responsible for seedling demise as extremely cold conditions. This "survival of the fittest" plant selection mentality will hopefully result in a

selected group of azaleas that is healthy and hardy. At Transcend Nursery, less than 50 percent of these little seedlings will continue to the next level of selection.

After the seedlings have grown in the transplant trays for 12 to 18 months, it is time to pot the seedlings into six-inch containers. The elimination process becomes more decisive at this stage. Potting a seedling into a six-inch container is costly and space consuming. Only the healthiest and most vigorous seedlings are continued to the next phase. Plants with irregular leaves and other deformities are discarded. At Transcend Nursery this spring (2001) 14,000 seedlings were potted into six-inch containers. The container yard for the six-inch pots is located in full sun under a timed sprinkler system. The plants are again subjected to any climatic conditions that arise. This is very similar to the way commercial growers produce azaleas. The newly potted plants are fertilized, sheared, and maintained as with any traditional azalea crop. An azalea that can withstand commercial growing processes has a better chance of being accepted in the nursery industry.

As the azalea seedlings grow, the plants are regularly observed, and inferior plants are removed. Plants that have poor growth patterns or leaf deformities or those that just fail to thrive are eliminated at this point. The overall objective is to retain only the healthiest and most desirable plants throughout the selection process. Past experience with keeping seedlings that lack vigor has been extremely unrewarding. Keeping plants that have leaf deformities, in hopes that the plant will outgrow this condition, has also proven unsuccessful. One such plant that otherwise has a beautiful flower has been planted in my yard

since 1993 and continues to have what I call "crinkle leaf." This leaf deformity seems to be genetically based.

First-year seedlings hybridized for multi-seasonal blooming traits usually started their blooming for the first time around the middle of June. All of these initial plants were the result of crosses between *Rhododendron oldhamii* 'Fourth of July' and numerous named cultivars that have fall-blooming tendencies. Plants were selected not only for all of the common desirable traits (flower color, flower form, growth habit, etc.) but also for their free-flowering characteristic and the ability of the flower to withstand heat. Each selected cultivar was propagated and tested under commercial production conditions. The Encore Azaleas were selected from these cloned seedling groups by Flowerwood Nurseries, Inc., and PDSI of Loxley, Alabama. Tedious work, data collecting, observation, along with numerous man-hours went into the final testing and selection of this group of azaleas.

The cultivars *R.* 'Watchet' and *R.* 'August Through Frost' crossed with several Encore Hybrids have produced plants with a wider color variation (especially white) not commonly found in the Encore Azaleas. Most of the *R.* 'Watchet' crosses also have very heavy fall-blooming characteristics. One oddity noted with these crosses is the occasional very dwarf-type seedlings that are produced. These dwarf seedlings are all very similar, regardless of the cross, with a compact growth habit and small waxy leaves. *R.* 'August Through Frost' crossed with several of Encore Hybrids has produced plants that are heavy spring bloomers with repeat blooms beginning in May and ending in late fall with the arrival of colder weather. These plants would almost bloom continuously under the right conditions. One negative characteristic of the *R.* 'August Through Frost' crosses is that some have flowers that tend to wilt down very easily with excessively

warm temperatures. Selected seedlings from the *R.* 'Watchet' and *R.* 'August Through Frost' crosses are presently under final evaluation.

After the seedlings have been in the six-inch containers for approximately one year and spring blooming begins, another aggressive selection event gets underway. An azalea seedling's first bloom may not be the best indicator of a plant's future performance; however, it is the most practical criterion. I have selected what I had considered some spectacular blooming plants solely on their first flowering, only to be terribly disappointed the next time they bloomed. However, as a general rule, most flowering seedlings selected at this time tend to stay fairly true to flower size, form, and color during the next blooming season. Slight variations of flower color can occur from year to year due to environmental and nutritional factors. Healthy seedlings that develop heavy flower bud sets, have good flower-color clarity, have a desired flower form, and are very floriferous during their first blooming period, are in all probability the most viable plants to keep for further evaluation. Selecting flower color is a very subjective undertaking, which differs from person to person. Honestly, I have never seen an ugly blooming azalea. Deciding which flowering plant will be selected is based on the overall appearance and effect that it presents. Plants that do

not make the "cut" are removed (reluctantly) to make room for the oncoming crop of new seedlings. My past experience as a commercial azalea grower and azalea collector has had a big influence on what I wish to see in an azalea. Azaleas hybrids by nature have a wide spectrum of flower color, size, and form. This, for me, is the true wonder and beauty of azaleas.

The selected azaleas are potted into to a larger nursery container. Each plant is carefully checked for winter damage before being potted. Plants that show any bark split or cold damage are eliminated. Individual plants are labeled with metal tags at this time to ensure accurate identification. Only plants that a person truly wants to care for and carefully evaluate for the next several years should be allowed to reach this point. I visualize my plant breeding and selection process as a pyramid-shaped type of venture, realized over time, starting with a broad base composed of numerous seedlings and ending at an apex of a few remaining superior plants. Over time, through good observation and record keeping, some of these superior seedlings may prove themselves worthy of being named and registered.

continued on next page



A FAMILY REUNION 2002

A Joint Convention
of the
American Rhododendron Society
and the
Azalea Society of America

ATLANTA, GA
APRIL 17-21, 2002

See our web page at <http://arsazalea.tripod.com>

Buddy Lee has been involved with azaleas for almost 30 years, and is best known as the developer of the multi-season blooming Encore Azaleas. As the owner of Transcend Nursery, he is currently active in the development and testing of new evergreen azalea varieties. He is a long-time member of the Louisiana Chapter of the ASA and has been their president; he coordinated the 1991 and 2000 annual conventions, and he is currently Vice President of the ASA.



These blooms generated by crossing the lavender spider azalea R. 'Koromo Shikibu' with the bright white R. 'Snow' show how variable the resulting populations can be. (Photo by Buddy Lee.)

More Convention Highlights

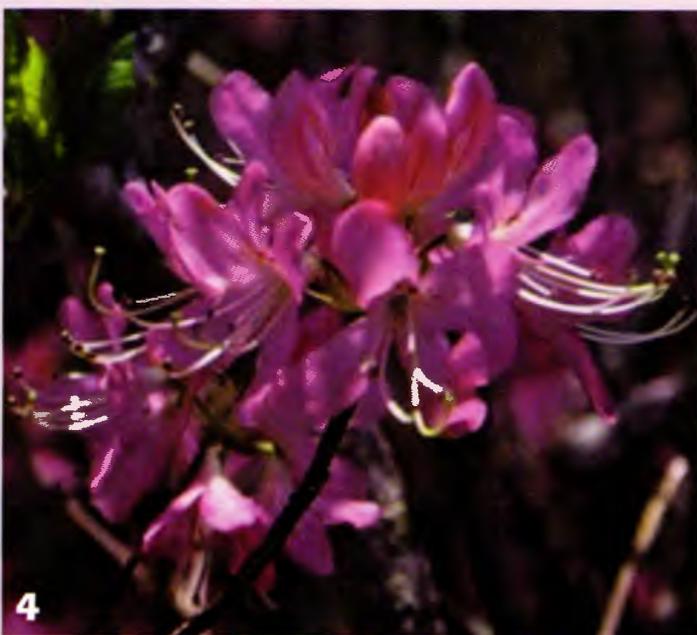
The addition of a new chapter with 40 new members in the Hendersonville, North Carolina, area shows how vital our Society is and how interest in studying the local native azaleas has helped attract members. Here are a few highlights of the annual meeting.

1. Changing Leadership: Bill Bode hands over the reins of leadership to new Society President Joe Schild. Bill was given a standing ovation for his services before we let him sit down. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

2. Joe Schild Takes Over: Not only is Joe Schild our new Society President, but he also won the award for Best Article, for his "Fire on the Mountains" article from the June issue. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

3. Presentation of New Charter: Out-going Society President Bill Bode presents Vaseyi Chapter President Ed Collins with the chapter's new charter, while Joe Schild looks on. [Photo by Bill Miller.]

4. R. vaseyi: *R. vaseyi*, the "Pinkshell Azalea" was the featured azalea for the convention, being the namesake for the new Vaseyi Chapter formed in the Hendersonville, North Carolina, area. This dark selection is named R. "419.2" for milepost location along the Blue Ridge Parkway where it was found. [Photo by Ed Collins.]



Society News

Historic Documents Needed by Your Secretary

John B. Brown —
Cleveland, South Carolina

This was my second convention and I found the same congenial, easygoing group in Asheville that appeared in Charleston. Charleston was a great convention (orchestrated by Buddy Lee), so it was easy to be friendly. We got lucky in Asheville and had no major boo-boos. It was easy to be friendly in Asheville, especially in the setting chosen for us by Bob Stelloh and the Convention Committee. However, the group that I met in Asheville would have been friendly in almost any given situation. It is a nice group and I feel privileged to be a part of the party. To earn my place in the group, I hope to contribute my talents as your Secretary for the next several years and trust that you will call on me if I can help your membership in the Society to be more enjoyable in any way. I call on each of you to balance the equation and contribute something of value (an article in **THE AZALEAN** or cookies at the next chapter meeting) to balance your books with the Society.

As the incoming Secretary, I would like to make my first (of many) requests of the members and leaders of the Society. In taking over the office, I found that many of the records of the ASA have not been collected and passed along. If you have, or know who does have, any significant records please contact me and let us decide how best to handle them. I am looking for documents—signed or otherwise—that will track the activities and progress of the Society, especially photographs, news articles, and what-
nots. This group is expanding when others are shrinking. Somebody is doing something right, and we should record the events that brought us to this point.

Treasurer's Report — 2000 Sources and Uses of Funds

Income (Sources)	2000 Totals	1999 Totals
The Azalean	\$ 2,048.52	\$ 2,941.98
Membership Dues	17,982.00	19,893.00
Gifts	3,580.00	1,433.00
Interest	2,234.17	1,951.86
Other Income	4,964.63	4,038.50
Total Income	\$ 30,809.32	\$ 30,258.34
Expenses (Uses)		
Awards and Mem.	503.60	111.85
The Azalean	19,818.28	18,544.93
Dues Expense	2,301.53	3,224.21
Member Roster	914.58	700.33
Other Expense	9,976.29	3,661.95
Other Postage	995.67	618.98
Total Expenses	\$ 34,509.95	\$ 26,864.25
Income-Expenses	\$ -3,700.63	\$ 3,394.09
Net Assets	\$ 58,039.74	\$ 59,468.38

R. T. Stelloh, Treasurer 8/24/01

Membership Year Changes

Too many of our new members join for one year and never renew their membership. To induce more of these new members to renew, the Board of Directors recently voted to extend the membership of new members joining on or after May 1 for an extra year. The

thinking behind this is to give the new members enough time to properly appreciate their benefits of membership before they get their renewal notice. This extended year has been granted to every new member who joined on or after May 1, 2001.

VISIT ITALY WITH YOUR ASA FRIENDS!

My name is Piero Sambucci, and I am an ASA member, specializing in nursery grown azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons. I live in Velletri, a small city 25 miles from the center of Rome and located in the famed Alban Hills formed by an ancient volcano, now extinct. Two beautiful crater lakes are 10 miles from Velletri, and 20 miles to the south lies the Mediterranean Sea with its wonderful beaches. Tivoli is only an hour's drive away with the Villa d'Este, famous for its gardens and fountains. Two hours away are Naples, Pompeii, and Sorrento, and Florence is three hours away.

I propose to rent my house from June through February for two-week intervals to members of the ASA and their friends. To make your vacation relaxed and comfortable I will provide you with continental breakfast and dinner, plus transportation with a van every day of your vacation. I will meet you at the airport when you arrive, and from then on I will look after you, take you to cities, parks and gardens of central Italy. At home in the evenings you will find dinner ready (Italian food). You will get the real taste of Italy.

Form a group of four or five and come to the country of art and natural beauty. For a brochure contact Piero Sambucci, C/DA Acqua Palomba 2, 00049 Velletri, Roma, Italy. Tel.: 0329 628 74 74; Fax: 06 963 50 77; Email: psambucci@allnet.it

Chapter News

Ben Morrison Chapter

Joan Sweeney—Newsletter Editor
jlsweeney@netscape.net

Ben Morrison's excellent newsletter, *The Azalea Alert* has evolved over the past two years that Joan Sweeney has been its newsletter editor. The most recent editions have been a compendium of highly relevant azalea care and culture e-mails as well as Society business. Despite Joan's wonderful work and sincere thanks from the chapter, Joan is stepping down. Bob Hobbs, Bee Hobbs, and Carol Flowers will co-edit the chapter newsletter, *The Azalea Alert*. Send gardening tips, azalea experience, or offer suggestions or ideas that you think chapter members would be interested in reading, to Bob Hobbs, rwhobbs@mindspring.com or to Carol Flowers at dflowers@bellatlantic.net. (Information for this paragraph from Bob McWhorter.)

May 6th Bob and Rosa McWhorter opened their Rosa Gardens for a public garden tour that was also a chapter membership-recruiting event. About 50 guests took the tour, which had been advertised in the local paper, the *West County News*. A special addition—and another way to inform people about the ASA—were the ten "Azalea Gardening Tip Sheets" developed by Charles and Wanda Hanners from Azalea Trace and distributed during the tour. They not only give concise information, they also direct the reader to join the local chapter of the ASA! Contact them at hannersc@prodigy.net. Finally, Gray Carter provided plants, signs, and a wooden figure called "Welcoming Gardener" to people who became new members as a result of the tour. Gray also attracted garden visitors to his "How to Plant Cuttings" demonstration. Other chapter support included Joe Miller, who brought plants, and helped Bob and Bee Hobbs and Dale and Carol Flowers greet guests, accompanied them on tour, and recruited at the same time. The garden was in peak bloom and the event was

a public relations success. No new members joined on the spot, but time will tell.

May 12th Bob McWhorter, Carol Segree, and Gray Carter attended the Potomac Valley Chapter of the ARS plant sale and flower show. Quoting from the newsletter: "Gray and Carol serve as foster parents for a large collection of plants and made a big contribution of time and effort bringing the plants and setting them up for sale." Carol and Bob both entered flowers in the show for which they received ribbons. This plant sale and flower show was very successful: 11 new members signed up and about 60 plants were sold. The point of mentioning this in the ASA journal is that it was a lot of fun and Bob McWhorter would like to see the Ben Morrison Chapter have its own sale and show.

The July cutting picnic and business meeting was held Sunday, July 15, at Wake-robin, the home of Nuran and Joe Miller. Both azalea cuttings and companion plants were exchanged. Chapter members had been invited to come to the U.S. National Arboretum July 13 to take some cuttings from the older azalea cultivars. This effort will help perpetuate populations of these old cultivars as well as provide stock for both a chapter plant sale and the 2004 ASA Convention plant sale. The chapter had asked for wish lists for cuttings and these six were requested particularly: 'Tuki Gumpo', 'Fancy Gumpo', 'Rose Gumpo', 'Pink Gumpo', 'Ben Morrison', and 'Martha Hitchcock'. Chapter officer elections were held during the business meeting, with the following results:

Robert L. McWhorter — President
David Holm — Vice President
Carol Flowers — Secretary
Dale Flowers — Treasurer

Thanks to Bob Hobbs for handling officer nominations. Joan Sweeney is the new chapter 2001 "Top Gun" recruiter; she personally recruited two new members and brought them to

the cutting picnic.

Don Hyatt, member of the Northern Virginia Chapter and chapter president Bob McWhorter have been discussing establishing closer ties between the Northern Virginia, Brookside Garden, and Ben Morrison chapters. More news on these efforts as it becomes available.



Northern Virginia Chapter

Frances Louer—Corresponding Secretary
plouer@msn.com

Dave Nanney took over as president of the chapter at the February 25 meeting, which was packed with information. First, he announced that member Bob Stewart had introduced one of his new azaleas *R. 'Ashley Ruth'*, and that it was described in the winter 2001 issue of the *Journal ARS*, in the Plant Name Register section. The chapter approved buying both the 1997 Dictionary of Satsuki Varieties and *Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas* for the chapter library.

Then, Bob Hobbs, as a guest lecturer, covered about 13 different hybrid groups in his presentation entitled "Help! I'm Trying to Understand Hybrid Groups" at the George Mason Branch of the Fairfax County Libraries. From secretary Lee McElvain's minutes, his presentation "...featured many outstanding azaleas with an explanation of the unique features distinguishing the groups and the goals and accomplishments of the "hybridizers." The interaction between the speaker and those in the audience led to a lively discussion of the relative merits of many of the varieties—particularly as they perform in this area. It is impossible to repeat all of the good information exchanged." Don Hyatt followed with a "hands-on" workshop on starting native azaleas from seed. He provided seeds, soil, and cups for those who wanted to participate.

Bill Steele's presentation, "Late Blooming Azaleas," followed April's business meeting at Green Springs

Gardens Park. He passed out a helpful list for the slides he showed and focused on varieties that bloom from late May, or in June or July, as well as the August to fall bloomers. Bill grows and sells about 2,600 varieties of azaleas in his nursery in West Chester, Pennsylvania. He contributed the article, "What are Those Spots?" to **THE AZALEAN** (March 2000, Vol. 22 (1): 8), showing why his customers travel long distances to visit his operation. The Brookside Gardens chapter awarded him the Frederic P. Lee award. He is also active in District Eight of the American Rhododendron Society and a board member of the Valley Forge Chapter, receiving its bronze medal for his achievements.

Barry Sperling organized the annual chapter garden tour that took place May 5th. Members toured the gardens of Dave and Leslie Nanney in West Springfield, Lee McElvain in Falls Church, the 13-acre estate of Margaret White in Annandale, and a few went on to see Phil Collins' garden with azaleas that are over 40 years old.

At the July 29 meeting at Green Spring Gardens Park, Joe Klimavicz showed slides of both his own hybrids and those of Bob Stewart. Then the members enjoyed a cutting exchange and plant swap and picnic.

Such a deal the Northern Virginia Chapter offered recently on the azaleas.org mail-list! Barry Sperling invited any and all to come to the chapter's annual plant auction, held at the home of David and Sharon Raden in Annandale, Virginia. Their garden is beautiful as an added incentive. He promised that "Now you can get those plants you can't find at the Nothin-Special-Is-Us Superstore down the street, put some character into your garden, and spend only a pittance." Some of the plants on offer will be ones Dave and Leslie Nanney bought at the 2001 ASA Convention in Asheville, North Carolina.



Oconee Chapter

Frank L. Bryan—Newsletter Editor
rudietorudie@aol.com

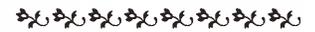
The March 18 meeting was held at the Rockdale County Extension Service Center with 21 members present, including new member Glenn McBay. Ray Goza presented slides of azaleas on Roan Mountain, located on the border between North Carolina and Tennessee. The best time to visit the 5,000-foot elevation site is around Father's Day for azaleas and July 4th for rhododendrons. What you will see if you visit is lots of native azaleas in colors of yellow to orange, largely from *R. calendulaceum*, and purple to pink *R. catawbiense*, mainly on the sides of the hill, not the top.

James Harris then presented his newly hybridized azaleas. James talked about Ralph Pennington who had 750 varieties of azaleas in his nursery and talked with Ben Morrison, Bruce Hancock, and Dewey Garrett who had 2,500 varieties. The James Harris hybrids are available from Earl Hester's Azalea Nursery in Fayetteville, and by wholesale only from Transplant Nursery in Lavonia, Georgia. James is currently working with Plant Development Services of Loxley, Alabama. The Burbank Nurseries in New South Wales, Australia, also have some of his azaleas. A unique feature of this nursery is that they rent plants to department stores, rather than selling them.

Frank Bryan collected survey results for suggested meeting topics and the members' lists of "Good Doers." John Callaway donated beautiful wooden bird-nesting boxes for sale; proceeds of \$82 went to the chapter treasury. Frank Bryan, Al Penland, and Jim Thornton reported that the "Selecting and Growing Azaleas" slide series being developed in conjunction with the Cooperative Extension Service in Athens, Georgia, is in its 11th draft. All slides have been scanned and put in sequence in PowerPoint software, edited by cropping, focusing, and color adjusting using PhotoShop software. A master gardener has assisted by preparing graphics for technical data, a cold-zone map, and introduction and conclusion. More photos have since

been found that will improve the presentation, so revision is in progress.

Joe and Donna Coleman hosted the June 23 cutting party and plant swap at their home and garden in Lithonia, Georgia. The Colemans have the most extensive collection of azaleas in the region. In addition, Al Penland brought 40 plants for sale, representing about 19 varieties, mainly Glenn Dale hybrids that he had developed from cuttings.



Tri-State Chapter

Robin Hahn, President
812-985-9388

The chapter covered a lot of ground in its spring meeting and garden tour April 21-22. They met first at the home of Helen, Steve, and David Schroeder in Evansville, Indiana, to view azaleas in bloom, especially Schroeder hybrid azaleas. Their Holly Hills Nursery grounds also contain many native azaleas.

Members then drove to the home of Art and Rae Schroeder to view a woodland setting of wildflowers including trilliums, blue phlox, Solomon's Seal. The stars of the show were beds of daylilies the Schroeders propagate from their yard.

The last stop was at Kenny and Jeanne Brown's. This viewing included evergreen and deciduous azaleas, hostas, a water garden, perennials, a bog garden, and a rock-covered dry stream.

The group then traveled 25 miles to historic New Harmony, Indiana. A German religious sect started the town in 1814. Many restored historic buildings and antique shops were within walking distance of the meeting that was held with Great Rivers Holly Chapter at the New Harmony Inn. Jim Sanders, a local historian gave a presentation about historic New Harmony from its beginnings to the present day. A plant auction followed the meeting. The next day, the group toured the historic sites Mr. Sanders had introduced the night before.

A fall meeting is in the planning stages.

NEW MEMBERS

New Members since February 26, 2001

The length of this list of 115 new members is very good news for the Society. Of these, 47 joined by e-mail through the Society website. An asterisk (*) indicates that the new member has an e-mail address. Consult the online Roster for more information and the printed 2001 Roster accompanying this issue for addresses. □ Just as a point of interest, the 57 members who have joined as at-large members come from 23 states, from Hawaii and California to Minnesota and Florida, plus Canada and one from Austria.

At Large

Robert & Donna Adams
Adkins Arboretum*
Barbara Alexander
Richard & Sandra Antony*
Merritt Barnett*
Robert Batts*
Richard A. Branham
Susan Brassill & Harry Parker Sr.
Paul Brothers*
Anita Burke*
Louise Chilson
Marit & Harry Colfer
Thomas Conover
Jim Darden, Darden's Nursery
Harold M. Dodd*
Candy Feller*
Raymond T. Fisher*
Lucy S. Foster
Al & Brenda French
Beth French*
Flora C. Garrett
Rosemary & Dale Hartman*
John Heinze*
Henry R. (Hank) Helm*
Ross Iverson
Roy Kawagoe
Ken & Margaret Kent*
Ernest F. Koone III
Nick & Mardie Lapcevic*
Joe L. Lewis*
Ted Lockwood*
Don & Flo Mabe*
Jo Magnusson*
Terry Matthews*
Joe & Barbara McClaugherty
Paulina M. Miller*
R. A. "Mitch" Mitchell*
Doug Moore
Kristine Nielsen and
 Dr. Emery E. Ulrich*
Ronda L. Oglesby
Albert Paolini*
David Rathbun,
 Quaker Hill Native Plant Garden
Joan Schiff*
George & Sharon Semko*

Wayne & Carolyn Shupp*
Bill Sweeney
Ann Tatum*
Guy Trengove-Jone
Beth Waldorf*
Harry & Linda Wallace*
Jerome V. Ward*
Remsberger Willibald
Carrie & C. V. Winter*
Boots & Dave Wright*
Mrs. Ann Booth Young*
Valley Forge Chapter ARS
Beth & Steve Young*

Ben Morrison

Charles W. & Kathryn M. Grove
Virginia Hennings*
Debra & Peter Hughes
Chris & Ruth Noble*
Norman Peterson
Jeff Pierpoint & Kathy Richardson*
Mary & Michael Redshaw*
Ed Schaeffer*
Gabrielle F. Scott
Barbara & Tom Smith*
David & Stacy Stinchcomb*

Brookside Gardens

Bill Brown*
Dr. A. R. Fitzburgh*
John Palmer*
Serge Shewchuk*
Dr. Robert B. Taylor*
Joan & Reid Warren*

Dallas

Ken Kubiak*
E. H. Corrigan, Rio Bravo
 Enterprises

Louisiana

Chris Friedrichs
Lake & Plantation Garden Club
LeAnne McGoogan*
Lynne Moore*

Northern Virginia

Philip J. Collins*
Dan Gabel
Robert Horen*

Oconee

Tony Armer*
Chip & Cathy Chappelle*
Willis & Bettie Harden
Annette Harris & Joseph Drogan*
James Harris
Mark Johnson*
L. Glenn McBay
Douglas Rouner*
Deloris E. Smith*

Tri-State

Karl W. Glander*

Vaseyi

Adrian & Lynn Ades*
Dorothy E. Alkire*
Ken H. Anderson*
Parker Andes
Alison Arnold, The NC Arboretum*
Herbert D. Bateman*
Richard Bir*
Wes Burlingame
Harold L. Crutcher
Phil Dodson*
Mary H. Fawcett*
Bruce Goforth
Ronald & Nancy Hooper*
Wayne Hutchins
J. Jackson & Lindy Johnson*
Fred C. Kalmbach*
Samuel D. Kimbrell*
Irene & Hilton Lee
Ed & Ellen Riley, Wa Ya Nursery
 and Tree Farm*
Ray & Sara Thomson*
Aileen W. Wieland*