

# Bowie Hill Hybrids

Buck Claggett — Derwood, Maryland

When hybridizing, I hear you should start with some goals. Beginning in 1978, I first attempted to

## Notes About Pollen and Seed Parents for Bowie Hill Hybrids

The following is an explanation of some of the parent designations in my hybrid descriptions.

*R. indicum* unknown ('Tissie' cross)—An *indicum* purchased as 'Yachiyo' that has 2-inch purple blooms with white centers. I could never match the plant to any description of 'Yachiyo' from any of my sources.

'White Orchid'—A Gold Cup azalea that is not hardy to this area (Zone 6b).

*R. indicum* unknown ('Tina's Whorled', 'Dorothy King' crosses)—A ruffled, rose red semi-double, with white variegations in some blooms. A container plant given to my mother-in-law for Mother's Day, 1984.

*R. indicum* ('Mania', 'Inch', and 'Pop's' crosses)—Another mislabeled Satsuki. I am about 90 percent sure that it is 'Issho-no-haru'.

'Christina', a Vuyk hybrid—A double red and a prolific seed-producer.

ST-1A, ST-4, CB-1A—All double, all variegated red-on-white, semi-hardy container plants, which I obtained from a friend. I cannot authenticate the background on these plants. I have heard from a reliable source that these plants were part of a University of Maryland plant study that were rescued from a discard pile by an ASA member.

create azaleas similar to those that I had seen growing in containers, greenhouses, and in warmer climates. I sought blooms that were doubled, ruffled, and with lots of variegation. Later I became interested in creating smaller azaleas for small planting situations and urban gardens. Producing the infamous yellow evergreen azalea was in the back of my mind, but I have honestly never worked very hard to reach that goal. I prefer that my hybrid selections be called Bowie Hill hybrids instead of Claggett hybrids. To me, at least, it sounds less self-serving.

Very early in my azalea experience I was fortunate to obtain a collection of the Mossholder-Bristow Gold Cup azaleas. To my dismay, only Rhododendron 'Caprice' turned out to be hardy in this area. Not even 'Easter Parade' would survive here. This was incentive enough to establish my original goal of developing azaleas that looked like the Gold Cups but were hardy enough to survive in my zone.

Following are descriptions of some of my hybrids. Bloom times listed are for Derwood, Maryland (Zone 6b); these are about one to two weeks behind bloom times in Washington, DC. See the box for notes regarding specific pollen parents and sources mentioned in these descriptions.

'Aunt Jim'—(Seedling #80-3-1) 'Cor-sage' seedling—Flower: 2-inch single, white in the center to moderate purplish pink (RHS 65A) on the tips of the petals. Flower buds are deep purplish pink (RHS 68A) and contrast very nicely with the paler flowers. Foliage: narrow, light green, slightly pubescent, only fair as foliage goes. Plant habit: about half again high as wide, only slightly open. Bloom time: May 15-30. Named for one of my father's sisters.

'Aunt Kitty'—(Seedling #84-3-12) 'Koromo Shikibu' x an unknown *R. indicum* hybrid—Flower: bloom is white, hose-in-hose, 2-3/4 inches across. Petals: are narrow and staggered. That part of the corolla borne of the sepals tends to flare at the top, as in Mayo's 'Magic Lily'. Foliage: leaves are large, 2-1/4 inches across, light green and shiny. Plant habit: as wide as it is tall. The original plant died during a drought, but indications from cuttings suggest a size closer to *indicum*. Bloom time: late May. This plant was named for one of my mother's sisters.

'Denise Ann'—(Seedling #89-4-4) 'Moonbeam' (Glenn Dale) x unnamed hybrid CB-1A—Flower: bloom is ruffled, 3-1/4 inches across, white double, hose-in-hose (15 petals), with strong purplish pink (RHS 68B). Two plants have sported rays of light and dark purple with white margins. The center of the bloom has very showy chartreuse highlights. Foliage: leaves are large (1-3/4 inches across), medium green. Plant habit: moderately open, five-year-old cuttings are 2 feet high by 18 inches wide. Bloom time: late May. Named for my oldest daughter.

'Dorothy King'—(Seedling #84-2-8) 'Koromo Shikibu' x an unknown *R. indicum* hybrid (ruffled, semi-double flowers, rose red with white variegation)—Flower: 2-1/2 inches, hose-in-hose, strong to vivid purplish pink (RHS 67A to B), showy dark purple blotch; adaxial side of corolla has orange highlights. Foliage: light to medium green and shiny; new growth appears mottled green and yellow and shiny on bright red stems and will stay like that until the new growth hardens in late summer. Plant habit: as wide as tall, dense growth habit. Bloom time: mid-May. Named for one of my father's sisters.

**'Elizabeth Ann Rowe'**—(Seedling #89-2-5) 'Christina' x 'Shinnyo-notsuki'—Flower: 2-3/4 inches across, double (13 petals), strong red (RHS 53C) with variegations of light purplish pink (RHS 55C). This variegation appears only after the plant is three or four years old from a rooted cutting. Variegations range from complete center to random blotches, to none, although most flowers have some variegation. Foliage: leaves are 1 inch long, very dark and shiny. Plant habit: open to moderately dense, about 3 feet tall by 3 feet wide after 10 years of growth from seed. Bloom time: late May to early June. The plant was named after my oldest granddaughter, and is one of my personal favorites.

**'Granny Cee'**—(Seedling #89-4-5) 'Moonbeam' x unnamed hybrid ST-1A—Flower: very open, 3 inches across, hose-in-hose, very ruffled, with occasional petaloid centers. The color is white with moderate striping of deep purplish pink (RHS 73A) and a very obvious chartreuse stain at the bottom abaxial surface of the corolla. It readily sports strong purplish pink (RHS 68B) and occasionally sports a color pattern like 'Janet Rhea'. Foliage: leaves are light green, narrow and very pubescent, not like either parent. Plant habit: the original plant is 2 feet wide by 3 feet tall. Bloom time: late May or early June. A picture of this cultivar appears in the *Journal ARS* of July 2000. The name is a nickname of my paternal grandmother.

**'Inch'** — (Seedling #84-4-5) 'Alexander' x an unknown *R. indicum* hybrid—Flower: 2-1/4 inches across, single, white, with an abundance of stripes, flakes, and sectors of bright deep purplish pink (RHS 67C) and strong purplish pink (RHS 67D), very floriferous for a late season *indicum*. Foliage: light green, small, narrow, and slightly pubescent and very intense and attractive. Plant habit: mounding, dense, very small—a 9-year-old plant is just 6 inches tall by 20 inches wide. Bloom time: late June into July. This is Stacy Lynn's nickname; I just thought it fit.

**'John Francis'**—(Seedling #80-2-1) 'Hino-crimson' x unknown seedling—Flower: 1-3/4 inches across, hose-in-hose, strong reddish purple (RHS 70B), very floriferous. Foliage: outstanding, shiny, medium green, very round, much like 'Glacier' but with more color; turns purple to bronze in the fall, looks good all year regardless of the weather. Plant habit: as wide as tall, very dense growth; a 20-year-old plant is 40 inches wide by 5 feet tall. Bloom time: early to mid-May. Named for my Uncle Jack.

**'Layne Ashlee'**—(Seedling #89-2-7) 'Christina' (Vuykiana) x 'Shinnyo-notsuki'—Flower: bloom is 2-3/4 inches across, double (12-14 petals). The color is vivid reddish orange (RHS 43B) with centers and blotches of light pink (RHS 39D). Variegations do not appear until rooted cuttings are three to four years old. Foliage: leaves are small, dark and shiny, about 3/4-inch long. Plant habit: moderately dense and slow growing; a 10-year-old plant is still only 2 feet tall. Bloom time: mid- to late June. Layne is my granddaughter. The flower is one of my favorites.

**'Mania'**—(Seedling #84-4-2) 'Alexander' x an unknown *R. indicum* hybrid—Flower: 2-1/2 inches across, single, white with a very rare strong to light purple stripe (RHS 77B-D), tubular blooms with ruffled edges. Foliage: small, dark, narrow, like *R. nakaharae*, but noticeably pubescent. Plant habit: extremely horizontal; a 9-year-old plant is 6-1/2 inches high by 23 inches wide. Bloom time: late June or July. Named for my wife's best friend, now deceased. "Mania" is Polish for Mary, they tell me.

**'Marybeth'**—(Seedling #89-4-3) 'Moonbeam' x unnamed hybrid CB-1A—Flower: 3 inches across, on young plants strong reddish purple (RHS 70B) throughout; after a few years, they develop a very pale center with RHS 70B margins, and with varying degrees of light pink in the center of the petaloid stamens. Foliage: leaves are medium green, 1-1/4 inches long. Plant habit: horizontal;

the original plant is 36 inches wide by 12 inches tall. Bloom time: late May. The plant is named for my youngest daughter.

**'Momma Cee'**—(Seedling #89-4-6) 'Moonbeam' x unnamed hybrid CB-1A—Flower: bloom is 2-12/ inches across, semi-double, strong purplish red (RHS 64B-C), with petaloid stamens marked with varying amounts of white to very pale pink. Mature rooted cuttings three to four years old exhibit lighter petaloids. Foliage" leaves are dark green, shiny, and very round. I can identify this plant by its foliage. Plant habit: open and horizontal. Bloom time: late May. Named after my Mom.

**'Patrick William'**—(Seedling #89-6-5) 'Pixie' (Glenn Dale) x unnamed hybrid ST-4—Flower: bloom is 2-3/4 inches across, hose-in-hose, very ruffled, very floriferous. The color is an elegant, creamy white with an outstanding chartreuse blotch on the three upper lobes. Foliage: leaves are very dark green, 1 inch long, with a very fine pubescence on the upper surface. Plant habit: very dense; the 10-year-old plant is 30 inches by 30 inches. Bloom time: late May. This azalea won Best in Show at the 1998 Brookside Gardens Chapter flower show. Named after my youngest grandson, it is the best white I have ever seen.

**'Pop's'** — (Seedling #84-4-1) 'Alexander' x an unknown *R. indicum* hybrid—Flower: 2 inches across, single, white with sanding, striping, and sectors, occasionally including half of some flowers, and sports of vivid purple (RHS 81B) and light purple (RHS 81C). Foliage: tiny, medium green. Plant habit: small plant much like 'Inch' except that it is a little more horizontal and a little more open. Bloom time: late June. This was George Harding's family nickname. The original plant was given to an ASA member in North Carolina.

**'Rose Lee Clagett'**—(Seedling #89-4-1) 'Moonbeam' x unnamed hybrid CB-1A—Flower: bloom is hose-in-

hose, 2-3/4 inches across, with wavy margins. The color is light purple (RHS 77D), very pale purple with picotee edges of strong purple (RHS 77B). Foliage: leaves are 1-1/2 inches long, medium green and shiny. Plant habit: horizontal; the original plant is 50 inches wide by 12 inches tall. Bloom time: mid-May. This was named after one of my aunts on my father's side.

**'Ruthy's Red'**—(Seedling #89-2-10) 'Christina' x 'Shinnyo-no-tsuki'—Flower: bloom is hose-in-hose, 2-3/4 inches across, with ruffled edges, strong red (RHS 41B) with rare centers of pale pink. Foliage: leaves are 1 inch long, medium green and shiny. Plant habit: somewhat open, as wide as tall; a 5-year-old cutting-grown plant is 15 inches by 19 inches. Bloom time: mid-June. This was named for one of my mother's sisters.

**'Ryan Michael'**—(Seedling #89-6-1) 'Pixie' x unnamed hybrid ST-4—Flower: 2-3/4 inches across, hose-in-hose, very ruffled, very floriferous; color is deep purplish pink (RHS 68A) with very showy rose dots in the blotch. Foliage: leaves are 1-1/4 inches long, narrow, and medium green. Plant habit: open, more tall than wide. Essentially this is a pink version of 'Patrick William', except that the plant is much more open. Bloom time: late May. This is named after my oldest grandson.

**'Samantha Michelle'**—(Seedling #89-2-6) 'Christina' x 'Shinnyo-no-tsuki'—Flower: bloom is 2-3/4 inches across, double, hose-in-hose (15-17 petals), ruffled, deep purplish pink (RHS 73D) with very pale purple (RHS 73D) centers of varying size in every bloom. Some have light pink margins. Foliage: leaves are small, roundish, and very dark green. Plant habit: dense, smallish. Bloom time: late June. Named after one of my granddaughters.

**'Stacy Lynn'**—(Seedling #84-3-2) 'White Orchid' x 'Cinderella' (Glenn Dale)—Flower: 2 inches across, double (12-14 petals), strong pink

(RHS 48C-D), with inconspicuous strong red (RHS 51A) spots on dorsal lobes. Foliage: dark green, shiny, larger and even more rounded than Kurume foliage. Plant habit: small plant about twice as wide as high that would not be out of place in a rock garden setting. Bloom time: late April. Because it starts early, it tends to get burned by late cold snaps when planted in front of a solid barrier with a South or East exposure. Named for my middle daughter.

**'Tina's Whorled'**—(Seedling #84-3-2) 'Koromo Shikibu' x an unknown *R. indicum* hybrid (ruffled, semi-double flowers, rose red with white variegation)—Flower: 3 inches across, strong reddish purple (RHS 78B). Individual petals do not touch, but are more elliptic than strap-like, giving a whorled effect to the flower. Mixed with new foliage that is approximately the same size, this gives the appearance of two colors of flower petals. Foliage: large, 2 inches long by 3/4 inch, new growth even larger, about the size of the flower petals. Growth habit: as wide as tall, open; the original plant is 30 inches by 30 inches. Bloom time: May 15-30. Named for my wife.

**'Tissie'**—(Seedling #79-3-2) 'White Jade' x an unknown *R. indicum* hybrid (2-inch purple flowers with white centers)—Flower: 3-1/4 inches across, hose-in-hose, strong purple (RHS 77A to B), with conspicuous strong purplish red (RHS 71B) spotting on dorsal lobes, with wavy margins. Foliage: 1-1/2 inches long, elliptic, dark green; holds up well in early spring when most foliage is at its worst. Plant habit: somewhat open, but generally as wide as it is tall; a 20-year-old plant is 4 feet by 4 feet. Bloom time: mid-to late June. Named for one of my father's sisters.

At present my hybrids are only available in large numbers and sizes from White's Nursery in Germantown, Maryland. Marshy Point Nursery in Maryland is currently producing 'Tissie' and is gearing up to sell other cultivars at a later date. Steele's Nurs-

ery in Pennsylvania has some limited quantities and sizes. Phone numbers for all of these sources should be listed in the ASA membership roster.

#### Notes:

1. Adaxial means situated toward the axis or stem.
2. In describing azalea flowers, the word "dorsal" is used in the sense defined by Galle under the heading "Corolla" on page 36 of the Revised and Enlarged Edition of *Azaleas*. As you face a 5-lobed azalea flower, the top lobe is known as the dorsal lobe. The "upper wings" as defined by Galle are known as the lateral lobes; Galle's "lower wings" are known also as the ventral lobes. In color descriptions, one usually speaks of the "inside" (the side you face when looking into the flower) and "outside" (the back) of the corolla.
3. The terms used here to describe the RHS Colour Chart numbers are taken from the following reference: Voss, D.H., ed. 1984. *A Contribution Toward Standardization of Color Names in Horticulture* by R.D. Huse and K.L. Kelly. American Rhododendron Society.

*Buck Claggett is a 62-year-old father of five and grandfather of nine and has lived in Derwood, Maryland, since 1962. A founding member of the ASA and a member of the Brookside Gardens Chapter, he's been collecting azaleas since 1963, growing azaleas from seed since 1975, and hybridizing since 1978.*

*Jay Murray has helped with the terminology in several of the articles in this issue of The Azalean. She is a member of the Brookside Gardens Chapter of the ASA. Since 1986 she has served the American Rhododendron Society as registrar of plant names for genus Rhododendron, while acting as North American representative for the Royal Horticultural Society. The RHS is the International Registration Authority for genus Rhododendron.*