

# 2002 Atlanta Convention in Review

Barbara Stump — Nacogdoches, Texas

[This review is based in large part on material from the Oconee Chapter Newsletter, edited by Frank Bryan, research material from Roger Duvall, and images from Walter Przypek, Ed.]

Total registration at the Family Reunion Convention was outstanding: 408 total, with 179 ARS members, 28 ASA, 137 members of both ARS/ASA, and 54 non-affiliated persons. Thanks go to workers and contributors from the Azalea Chapter of the ARS and the Oconee Chapter of the ASA.

Edith Davis coordinated the registration and the information desk functions, which were ably staffed from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. daily. Edith also processed pre-convention registrations. Volunteers included Ruth Bryan and Mary Beasley (shown above). Jim Pruckler set up the computers for registration and visual display of plants on sale.



Hugh Denny coordinated the plant sale of several thousand azaleas and rhododendrons. He, Allison Fuqua, and Frank Bryan were primary plant salesmen, attending to buyers' questions and needs daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Many other volunteers helped, including Pat and Wesley Smith, Don Bloodworth, Barbara Milton, Ken Gohring, and Ed and Ruth Mellon. Several nurseries and members contributed plants for the sale. What a wonderful opportunity this was to buy choice plants not readily available anywhere! This writer/gardener was especially happy to see this a big feature of the convention.



Kathryn McKinsey, assisted by Ruth Bryan, handled the convention store, which sold hats, tee shirts, books, cards, art prints, and other merchandise from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. Pictures from the new CD and slide series, "Selecting

and Growing Azaleas" were prominently featured on the store's bulletin board. (See Oconee Chapter News p.67 for more about this CD series.)

Ray Goza coordinated the tours, and Jim Thornton did some of the initial selection of the gardens. This effort was simply outstanding. The garden owners were gracious, and it was very evident they took pains to prepare their gardens for visitors. Bus captains riding along with every bus helped the tour groups get ready for each garden in turn, some even conveying local history. Oconee Chapter bus captains included Hank Bruno (shown right), Ken Gohring, Ed and Ruth Mellon, and Ray Goza. Servers for the South Metro Tour were Jim Thornton, John Callaway, and Al Penland.



Joe and Donna Coleman coordinated and set up the flower show, which was recorded by Edith Davis. Several volunteers helped them.

Walter Ligon coordinated the visual arts competition, which he helped judge with the aid of a professional photographer. Several volunteers helped, including Frank Bryan.

Earl Sommerville chaired the convention, coordinated the many planning activities and troubleshooting during the actual events, besides inviting us to tour his wonderful garden.

Many, many thanks to these chairmen and their able helpers. To all of the Oconee Chapter members, what a superb job you did to make us feel comfortable and connected to other azalea enthusiasts in Atlanta.

## Awards

President Joe Schild is shown (see page 55) presenting the Society's highest award to William C. Miller III at the convention banquet April 20, 2002. (Photo by Bob Hobbs.)

Several of the ARS award recipients are also ASA members and deserve special notice here as well. Notably, Don Hyatt was awarded the ARS Silver Medal for his development of a Web site about azaleas, including native hybrid swarms on Gregory Bald and a simplified classification system for native azaleas; for his hybridizing; for his numerous contributions to *The Azalean*.

## Distinguished Service Award — William C. Miller III



In grateful appreciation for his many years of dedicated leadership and service to the Azalea Society of America at both the chapter and the national level, including chairing the Glenn Dale Preservation Project and researching the Glenn Dale azaleas, and for his faithful

services as our Membership Chairman and public interface for many years, and for his frequent and insightful articles in *The Azalean*, we present our Distinguished Service Award to

William C. Miller III

James Harris was awarded the ARS Silver Medal for his hybridizing activities over the past 30 years and for his contributions in providing the world with many beautiful evergreen azaleas, including 'Pink Cascade', which is grown throughout the world for containers and hanging baskets; for many bicolored or red azaleas; and for azaleas with long bloom periods.

Flower show top awards were: Best in Show (also best unknown evergreen azalea spray)—Theresa and Tim Ridley; Best Named Species or Hybrid Rhododendron—*Rhododendron 'Sam A. Everitt'*—Joe and Donna Coleman; Best Deciduous Azalea (an unknown pale orange)—Glenda Jones.

Top visual arts awards were: Best in Show—Tom Ahern; Landscape—Don Hyatt; Blossoms—Gregory Book; Macro—Gregory Book; Miscellaneous—Pat Draisey; Original Art—Don Hyatt (watercolor).

### Images of the Convention

When you get over 400 keen gardeners on tour, you get a great many cameras. Thankfully, they have been generous in sharing their good images with their own chapters and have sent many for use in this issue. My particular thanks go to William C. Miller III, Walter Przypek, Bob Stelloh, and Art Vance for sharing digital images. Walter Przypek, of the Northern Virginia Chapter, has put over 370 slide images of the convention onto a CD/slide show that is set to classical music by Chopin and Mozart. This format really gives you a good feel for the rich experience

we had during the four-day convention. Contact him at 757-898-9159 (or Wprzypek@aol.com) for a copy. Bob Stelloh has 36 labeled images in a photo gallery at [www.pbase.com/bstelloh/2002convention](http://www.pbase.com/bstelloh/2002convention).

### Talks

A few of the many talks are described here. The full list of tours and speakers was included as an insert in Winter 2001 issue of *The Azalean* 23(4).

George McLellan presented slides to describe characteristics of native species that grow in the Carolinas. *R. arborescens* blooms after the leaves have expanded; the flower tubes are glandular, and the stems are smooth. *R. atlanticum* blooms before leaves have expanded; the flower tubes are also glandular, and the plant is stoloniferous. *R. calendulaceum* blooms with the expanding leaves, and the flower tubes are very glandular. *R. canescens* blooms before leaves have expanded; the tubes are glandular. *R. cumberlandense* blooms after the leaves have expanded; flower tubes are glandular, but have no glands on the pedicels. *R. eastmanii* blooms after the leaves have expanded; the flower tubes have weakly developed glands, and the flowers have a yellow blotch. *R. periclymenoides* blooms before leaves have expanded, and flower tubes are nonglandular. *R. prinophyllum* blooms before leaves have expanded; the shorter tubes are glandular and have a clove fragrance. *R. vaseyi* blooms before leaves have expanded, and the flowers are flat without tubes. *R. viscosum* blooms after leaves have expanded, and the flower tubes are very glandular.

McLellan listed sites to view native azaleas, with bloom times for average years. Bloom time can vary as much as two to three weeks:

- **Wayah Bald**, North Carolina, reached from Franklin, NC, off State Route 1310: *R. calendulaceum* and *R. arborescens*, blooming mid- to late June.
- **Gregory Bald**, Great Smoky Mountain National Park, in both NC and TN: *R. cumberlandense*, *R. arborescens*, *R. calendulaceum*, and hybrid swarms, blooming in late June.
- **Parson Bald**, Great Smoky Mountain National Park: *R. viscosum*, *R. arborescens*, *R. calendulaceum*, and some hybrids in the northeastern corner, bloom in late June.
- **Copper Bald**, NC (north of Wayah Bald on the Appalachian Trail): *R. calendulaceum*, *R. arborescens*, *R. cumberlandense*, blooming in late June and *R. viscosum* and hybrid swarms blooming in early July.
- **Blue Ridge Parkway**, NC: *R. calendulaceum* at mile posts 308-310, 368-380, and 412-423, which blooms mid- to late June.
- **Roan Mountain**, NC and TN: *R. calendulaceum* (Round Bald, Engine Gap, Jane Bald), blooming the 3rd and 4th weeks in June.
- **Cherohala Skyway**, NC and TN: *R. calendulaceum* (west end of Hooper Bald) and *R. cumberlandense* (near Lake View Overlook), blooming late June.
- **Providence Canyon State Park**, Lumpkin, GA: *R. prunifolium*, blooming in late July.

In his remarks during the fabulous banquet on April 20, Clarence Towe stated that, of the 15 known native species azaleas, 12 occur in Georgia, more than in any other state. In addition to those cited by the other speakers, *R. austrinum* occurs in South Georgia along the Florida border, *R. flammeum* grows along the Oconee River and in the Atlanta region, and *R. prunifolium* grows in a narrow region in western Georgia and eastern Alabama along the Chattahoochee River near Callaway Gardens. He is working on a book called "Natives of Georgia" to be published in 2004.

Sandra McDonald described the history of Le-Mac Nurseries, which began in 1927 and moved to Hampton, Virginia, in 1932. Pericat seedlings were obtained, such as 'Hampton Beauty', 'Sweetheart', 'China Seas', 'Margaret Ann', 'Helen', 'Orchard', 'Glory', and 'Margie Ann'.

The McDonald hybrids were grown for 15 years or longer before being released. Some examples include: 'Chessie Lavender Gem', Chessie's Pink', 'Blushing Angel', 'David's Blush', 'Dream Angel', 'Angel Honey', 'Williamsburg', 'White Orchard'. Her double reds are not too hardy. The Chorus Girls Series was developed for greenhouse forcing. She likes round ruffled flowers. In her hybridizing activity, she often used 'Hot Shot' and 'Elsie Lee' as parents. She used peat and Perlite as a medium for the cuttings. It was wetted down and cuttings were dipped into Captan before inserting into the medium. Hormone was not used, but the cuttings were misted.

Jim Berry of Flowerwood Nurseries described the history of Buddy Lee's Encore™ azaleas. The first releases were: 'Autumn Rouge', 'Autumn Amethyst', 'Autumn Coral', 'Autumn Monarch', 'Autumn Cheer', 'Autumn Embers' (a bright scarlet red and the most popular), 'Autumn Bravo',

'Autumn Royalty'. Next released were: 'Autumn Carnival', 'Autumn Twist' (purple and white striped), 'Autumn Ruby' and 'Autumn Princess'. A new one, 'Sangria', will be released in the future. Convention attendees were each given one as a banquet dinner favor. 'Holy Grail', a white with a yellow throat will be released in 2003.

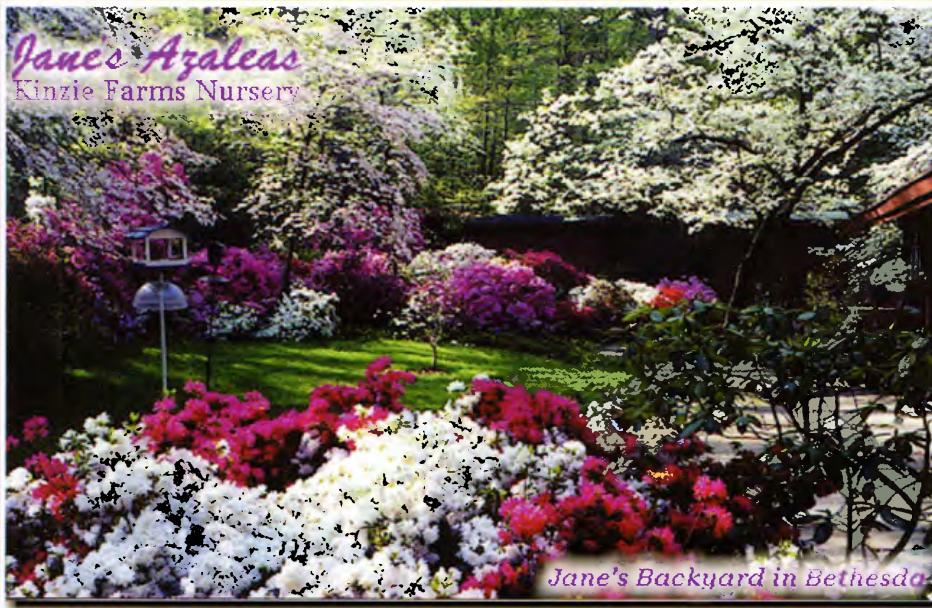
Other azalea presentation highlights were:

- Maarten van der Giessen's talk about Dr. Aromi's hybridization program, which has continued to bring new flower forms and colors to the market, by arrangement with Maarten's liner nursery.
- Don Hyatt's talk about "Computers in the Garden", giving tips about organizing your own plant records and building your own Web site.
- Maarten van der Giessen's spirited auction, which delighted the audience and beguiled them out of a lot of money for the societies.
- Barbara Bullock's amazing story of all she and her dedicated volunteers have done to improve the azalea gardens at the US National Arboretum.
- Don Voss's fine presentation on "The Robin Hill Story," which was already published in the last issue of *The Azalean*, Summer 2002, 24(2): 28-33.

This article merely touches upon the many good things that happened at the convention. **The lesson for the true azalea enthusiast is you need to come to the next convention to hear the great information exchange for yourself and get the most benefit.**

Be good to yourself; plan to attend the next convention, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, May 1-4, 2003.

For more convention photos and news, turn to pages 60-61 and 64.



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