

Dedication Ceremony at Callaway Gardens Honors Fred Galle

Hank Bruno — Pine Mountain, Georgia

On the beautiful spring afternoon of April 5, 2002, Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia, paid tribute to Fred Galle, their director of horticulture from 1953 until 1979. A gathering of family, including his wife Betty and daughter Peggy, friends, and horticultural professionals remembered Fred with the dedication of a plaque in his honor at Callaway's Overlook Garden. Galle worked with the founders and staff to create the beautiful landscape we enjoy today. Those of you who design and cultivate your own gardens can appreciate the effort required to establish a garden of 2,500 acres.

The offices he held and awards bestowed to Fred Galle during his career were as numerous as they are prestigious. Naming just a few here demonstrates the scope of his impact on American horticulture. Over the years he served as the president of the American Horticultural Society, the Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta, the Holly Society of America, and the American Rhododendron Society. Galle was a fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was the recipient of the Liberty Hyde Bailey Award of the American Horticultural Society, the Arthur Hoyt Scott Garden Award of Swarthmore College, a Gold Medal from the American Rhododendron Society, and a Silver Medal from the National Council of State Garden Clubs. He was truly a horticultural Olympian. Never one to rest on his laurels, Fred Galle went on to publish the authoritative texts on both azaleas and hollies.

Azaleas, native deciduous and exotic evergreen, have always been the heart of spring at Callaway. It was not the profusion of color or the sweet fragrance of deciduous species but the brilliant orange of plumleaf azalea (*Rhododendron prunifolium*) in the summer woods that began this legacy. Garden founders Cason and Virginia Callaway discovered the rare plumleaf azalea on what was to become their Blue Springs farm, which combined

sanctuary for native flora and for the display of exotic plant collections. Overlook Garden is the exotic azalea collection of Callaway Gardens.

Several speakers at the dedication shared their recollections of a man unlike any other in the Azalea Society of America. In his opening remarks at the dedication, Ralph Callaway, grandson of the founders, characterized the invitation to direct horticulture in the Georgia woodlands as the "opportunity of a lifetime." Galle was recognized as a rising star in horticulture by his teaching and research at the University of Tennessee. Hired first as a consultant for his knowledge of native azaleas, he was soon employed by the Callaways full-time. Overseeing the propagation and installation of thousands of plants, Fred Galle "changed the face of this land forever" according to Ralph Callaway.

Ernest Koone, second generation plantsman at Lazy K Nursery in Pine Mountain, Georgia, told of the tremendous influence of Fred's writing and lectures in creating a market for native azaleas.

Koone credited Galle with influencing his own career choice of running a business that sells thousands of native azaleas annually. He also commented on the generous way Fred would make plants available to the nursery industry—the best examples were his discovery and release of *Clethra alnifolia* 'Hummingbird' and the wild ginger selection *Asarum shuttleworthii* 'Callaway'. The economic impact of Fred's work cannot be overestimated, as it extends far beyond Pine Mountain, Georgia.



The Fred Galle memorial plaque on a boulder of native Hollis quartzite, with native azaleas in the background and the wild ginger he popularized, *Asarum shuttleworthii* 'Callaway', in front. (Photo by Bob Stelloh.)

sustainable farming practices with a vast assortment of crops to reclaim worn-out land. It was a natural extension of this conservation ethic to plant thousands of seeds of the threatened plumleaf azalea. The creation of a public garden and the hiring of Fred Galle as director of horticulture in 1953 were the next phases in a saga of landscape restoration. The tireless efforts of Fred and the horticulture staff in plant rescues and extensive plantings established Callaway as a garden of distinction, both as a



The sheer beauty of the native azaleas Fred Galle propagated and grew for Callaway Gardens is shown here, with ASA secretary John Brown dwarfed by a plumleaf azalea, *R. prunifolium*. As Ernest Koone said at the dedication, "If you seek his monument, look around you." (Photo by Bob Stelloh).

Dr. John Floyd, Jr., editor of *Southern Living* magazine, remembered Fred's long and fruitful association with the faculty and students of Auburn University. Floyd was an undergraduate student of Dr. Henry Orr and roomed with Dr. Bill Barrick, who would become vice-president of Callaway. A field trip to Callaway was a "walk in the park" for the horticulture professor because Fred Galle taught the class. The influence of such visits on students and interns was tremendous and guided many of them into future careers in horticulture.

As trails manager at Callaway, I recalled Fred Galle as teacher and mentor. Galle inscribed my personal copy of the book *Azaleas* with, "Azaleas offer endless challenges," and a few years later in the holly book he wrote, "Have a great time." Beyond the valuable information about plants that Galle shared unstintingly, he was equally generous as a career counselor, providing perspective and a sense of purpose. I related the story Fred called the 'Bear Facts on Gregory Bald' to the audience. Starting in 1947, Galle had been conducting morphological and cytological studies on the hybrid swarm of native azaleas atop Gregory Bald in Tennessee. His notebooks and plant maps held enough information to complete a Ph.D. dissertation. In the summer of 1954, he returned to Gregory Bald with his friend Ben Pace. It was a hike he had made often without incident, one season climbing to the 4,948-foot summit seven times. But on this ill-fated trip a bear stole the backpack containing all his research data. The backpack was never recovered, the degree never conferred. Lesser men would have been devastated, but Fred returned to Callaway and started hybridizing plumleaf and sweet azaleas, making over 200 crosses that same summer. Fred always joked that he did the work—but the bear got the Ph.D. By his example, the life of Fred Galle encourages all to put forth their best effort.

For those of us who had the privilege of knowing him, and for all of us who continue to benefit from his published works, Fred Galle will long be remembered. He was quoted as saying the Gardens at Callaway were "built on compost and enthusiasm." Ernest Koone aptly concluded his remarks about Galle with the epitaph of Sir Christopher Wren: "*If you seek his monument, look around you.*"

Future generations that are inspired by a visit to Callaway should know that through these woods passed a horticultural giant. To that end the plaque placed in the Overlook Garden reads:

*The enduring beauty of this garden is a tribute to Fred Galle.
As plantsman, author and teacher,
Galle dedicated his life to horticulture.
For 30 years he was instrumental in shaping
Callaway Gardens. His legacy is reflected in the plants,
books and gardens he gave us.*

For more images of the dedication ceremonies, consult the following Web site, which has 12 images: www.pbase.com/bstelloh/galle.

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

Acknowledgments

ASA secretary John Brown and treasurer Bob Stelloh attended the dedication ceremonies and provided insights to Hank for this article.



On May 24, 2002, Jane Kinzie of Kinzie Farms presented a landscape-size specimen of the new cultivar 'Brookside Delight' to Phil Normandy, Plant Collections Manager of Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, Maryland. This new azalea was introduced at the 49th Annual Landon Azalea Garden Festival, May 3-5, 2002, and was featured in the Spring

2002 issue of **The Azalean**, 24(1): 4-5; 17. Jane did all the propagation in preparation for the formal introduction of this azalea. (Photo by William C. Miller III.)