

Cumberland Spring—2003 Chattanooga Convention Review and Garden Tour Report

Barbara Stump — Nacogdoches, Texas

The theme of the convention held May 1-3, 2003, was Cumberland Spring, since we were treated to early May flowers in the Cumberland Mountains. Chattanooga is a river town, situated in a big bend of the Tennessee River, south of the Chickamauga Dam and Lake, and at the feet of Lookout Mountain, Raccoon Mountain, Signal Mountain, Missionary Ridge, and Stringers Ridge. In keeping with the mountain theme, we saw both native deciduous azaleas and at least 30 species of native woodland wildflowers such as trilliums in both natural and private garden settings as well as for sale in the well-stocked plant salesroom. What a great way to celebrate 25 years of the Azalea Society of America!

The convention headquarters was the Chattanooga Clarion Hotel, just a few blocks from downtown, the Tennessee Aquarium, and the historic Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel. The city is both revitalizing its downtown with new buildings and preserving its historic fabric.

Throughout the event, the convention organizers, led by our own ASA president Joe Schild, were so welcoming and helpful; we were really treated to Southern hospitality. As the photo essay and other articles in this issue will show, the garden tours were superb; the plant sale a great chance to get extremely rare plants; and the speakers, top-notch. It takes a great many helpers to make a convention a success. So, let me list the people who made this fabulous event possible:

Volunteers at the registration table, or who made arrangement for lunches, the plant sale, and the many other details that kept the meetings going smoothly:

Hale Booth	Burton & Betty Johnson
John Brown	Dr. Frank Knight
Edward Collins	Robert Lee
James & Judith Dennis	Jim Minor
David & Deborah Fosbury	Denise & Bob Stelloh

All the owners of all the gardens visited:

Vernon & Leona Carpenter	Frances F. Jones
Robert J. Enck	Craig Walker
Ron & Nancy Hooper	Jimmy & Ilona Wooten
Dr. Rudolph & Alice Hoppe	Joe & LaShon Schild

Generous sponsors, including nurseries, who donated plants and supplies for the sale:

Don Hyatt	Bi-Lo, Inc.
Maarten van der Giessen	David's Deli
Dr. Joe Coleman	William Crutchfield
PDSI—Plant Development Services, Inc.	
Schild Azalea Gardens and Nursery	
Burbet Nursery	East Fork Nursery

Chattanooga Garden Tour Report

The garden tours were fabulous. So were many of the private gardens we passed as we rode on the bus from tour to tour. The local nursery industry is well developed, since there were many handsome and mature Japanese maples planted in front yards and in public landscapes, including those of small businesses, throughout the city. The local gray granite native mountain stone is also used frequently in landscaping. Joe Schild and his convention planners provided a helpful outline handout for each day's trip, so we knew exactly where we were going and in what order.

Friday, May 2, 2003

Craig Walker Garden

Our first stop was at the garden of Craig Walker, at the top of a steep hillside. Craig has worked most of his adult life in the retail nursery or garden center business. His



'Fascination', one of the specimen azaleas seen in Craig Walker's garden on the first garden tour. (Photo by Art Vance)

garden reflects some of the best introductions of flowering shrubs, perennials, wildflowers, and a few exotics acquired from various sources. His landscape also reflects an interest in woodland gardens as an accent for his home that is comfortable and appealing to the eye. According to a special sign, his garden is part of the National Wildlife Foundation's "Backyard Wildlife Habitat" program.

This was definitely a plantsman's garden with choice specimen plants worked into appealing beds. It was wonderful to see so many unique plants that were also labeled. His white-flowering ornamental trees included: Carolina snowbell *Halesia diptera*; *Viburnum* 'Asian Beauty', which has purple berries in the fall; *V.* 'Michael Dodge', which has yellow berries; a great find from Dodd Nursery, *V.* 'Amy' that was covered with white blooms and had salmon-edged foliage; and *V. macrocephalum*, Chinese snowball, with



The evergreen azaleas were lovely, too. Shown above is pale pink-edged hose-in-hose 'Amy'. (Photo by Carleton LeMond)

great white globes of bloom. Upon entering the garden we saw two honeysuckles, pink-and-yellow-flowered *Lonicera* 'Mardi Gras' and *L.* 'Blanche Sandman', which blooms for nine months. His wildflowers included hellebores, hostas, and a variegated holly fern. This was the first place we saw kalmias, but certainly not the last.

His azaleas include 'Amy', a pale pink; 'Klondike', a rich yellow deciduous; and bright rose-encircled 'Fascination'.

Vernon Carpenter Garden

Mr. Carpenter's lush garden is a great demonstration of the benefits of soil amendments. He has used biosolids from the Chattanooga sewage treatment plants and his plants have thrived. The main raised beds were at least 60 feet wide along the edge of the property, to the left of the house,



Kalmia latifolia 'Yankee Doodle', seen in Vernon Carpenter's garden. (Photo by Tijs Huisman)

edged with stone. Carpenter had been working on the garden for the past 27 years of the 34 he had owned the property. He said he had to cut out 47 trees the first year and 18 the second just to get enough light for his gardens. An octagonal gazebo forms a focal point from which to view the garden, and he had started a vineyard behind the house.

Peonies were just beginning to bloom, reminding those of us from the Deep South that we were in a much cooler climate zone. But the real stars were his wonderful collections of azaleas, rhododendrons, and kalmias. This was a great opportunity for us to see mature specimens. For example, the rhododendrons 'Gigi' and 'Mrs. G.W. Leak' were over 24 years old. The latter was a particularly nice maroon with a yellow blotch. His deciduous azaleas were equally brilliant. He under-planted the large shrubs with groundcover wildflowers such as *Trillium* sp., *Arisaema dracontium* (green dragon), and *Lunaria* (honesty).

Joe Schild Garden

Joe's garden was quite a surprise, since he has so many plants and propagation houses on a suburban lot. Many of the azaleas are fully mature, so walking back to look at the plants in his nursery shade house you had to push your way through beautiful trusses of raspberry-colored 'Homebush' or bright orange deciduous azalea (Exbury 'Gibraltar' x Flame azalea). He had a few for sale, too, and some visitors decided to buy rather than have refreshments. Choice specimens seen in his garden: azaleas—'Primrose' x *austrinum*, a red and yellow bloom; 'Chetco' (a Slonecker hybrid); Exbury 'Brazil'; 'Rosea' that looked like crumpled crepe paper, as well as *Rhododendron atlanticum*; and R. 'Scintillation'. He also had ornamental shrubs: witch hazel, *Styrax americana*, and fuchsias blooming. For a garden redone in the past 14

years this was quite a lesson in what can be done by a dedicated horticulturist.

Reflection Riding Arboretum and Botanic Garden

David Hopkins, the Riding's executive director, has described this public



Vibrant red-orange deciduous azalea at Joe Schild's. (Photo by Art Vance)

garden in his article on p.58. However, I must mention that it was a great treat to stop here for lunch at Humpheys House, with a grand view of the upper ponds and their dawn redwoods. We had time to take a leisurely walk to the Philp Ericaceous Garden of handsome deciduous azaleas and rhodos, and even to shop for some real native Tennessee plant treasures.

Saturday, May 3, 2003

Along our bus ride we noted many sycamores, tulip poplars, and white oaks in the forested mountainsides



'Chetco', one of the brilliant yellow deciduous hybrids in Joe Schild's garden. (Photo by Tijs Huisman)

beside the road. Small ornamentals, probably crabapples, were in bloom as were a few dogwoods.

Bob Enck Garden

This is a mature garden of a person dedicated to selecting choice plants. We entered by three glasshouses that Mr. Enck had used for years in his orchid business. The path led by pink dogwoods and white doublefile *Viburnum plicatum* var. *tomentosum* to a broad oval lawn ringed with mature rhododendrons and azaleas, all in full bloom. The rhododendrons are 25 years old, and his Japanese maples are old enough to make huge green or bronze-red clouds of foliage pruned artfully to show



We saw so many spring ephemerals in the forest at Reflection Riding and at Bob Enck's garden, including the yellow trillium. Some very lucky people were able to buy nursery-grown trilliums at the great indoor plant sale. (Photo by Art Vance)

their structural limbs. The early morning mist showed their colors to great effect. Several people asked Bob about one in particular, a full-moon maple, *Acer japonicum* 'Aconitifolium'. This is a slow growing cultivar, but it is hardy to 5° F and has orange, yellow, and red fall color. One of his specimen ornamentals was *Styrax japonicum* 'Pink Chimes'. Planted among his plants was a huge, pale pink-flowered *R. yakusimanum*, as well as younger deciduous azalea "babies" such as 'High Tide' he had planted recently. What was amazing about his garden is that he says he has never fertilized nor sprayed his plants. Below the open lawn was a lovely wildflower trail with many spring ephemerals in bloom. Enck has been working on his garden since 1964. Some of his plants came from Don Shadow's nursery.

Jimmy and Ilona Wooten Garden

We just had to walk across the street from the Enck garden to this new garden. The Wootens have been steadily carving out garden space from the forest. We could see that the various garden rooms, all centered on some feature or some piece of garden architecture, would in a few years fill in to be very beautiful. This garden had a formal herb garden parterre, an open wooden pergola surrounded by deciduous azaleas. One fabulous aspect was that

every plant was labeled so you could tell he had azaleas from Joe Schild ('Primrose' seedling, 'Raspberry Delight'), Confederate series ('N.B. Forrest', 'Stonewall Jackson'), and Made in the Shade ('Camilla's Blush') hybrids. Tucked in the woods were more young rhododendrons, kalmias, ferns, and hostas. Their wildflower collections included tiarellas, columbine, bloodroot, and *Trillium luteum* (the rare yellow trillium) and maroon *T. vaseyi*, *Iris cristata*, May apples, and pink lady's slipper orchids. The circular stone hosta garden centered on a shallow concrete fountain that was edged by Japanese painted and cinnamon ferns was especially handsome. I also like Jimmy's collection of pottery suns decorating a long wall on his garage. The Wootens began their serious azalea gardening eight years ago and used truckloads of bark mulch from the City of Chattanooga to amend their soil.

The Frances Jones Garden

Mrs. Jones has literally perched both her house and her garden at the top of the South Palisades of Signal Mountain. Or rather, the house is dug into the top of the mountain, with a wonderful rounded covered patio below the main house. We enjoyed refreshments in this area.

She grew up in the Clarksdale area of Mississippi around nurseries and had long wanted a garden on the top of the mountain. She began her garden as therapy following her husband's death and has developed it in such a way as to be able to leave it for future generations as a public park. Her gardens weave along paths that unite three properties. Beginning 16 years ago, she built her house, then her architect son built his next door, and they purchased a third and converted it to garden storage. She and her son are both very creative in their use of hardscape materials such as rock and steel, arranging handsome plant materials in very pleasing vignettes, and tying the gardens together with paths that had breathtaking views of the Tennessee River. Mrs. Jones' family even helped guide us around the path that skirted the huge boulders on the edge of the Palisades. A few of the paths were steep, but well worth the effort.

Her plant collections were meticulously labeled. Features included *Viburnum acerifolium* (maple-leaf viburnum); *Acer japonicum* 'Maiku Jaku' that had red twigs; *A. griseum*, paper bark maple; a magnificent newly planted a "Yellow Grove Bamboo" hedge to screen part of the garden from the street; a circular rose garden with architectural arched trellises; and shade-loving bloodroot and hostas. A very dramatic feature was the grove of black locusts (*Robinia* sp.) with their purplish pink

Mr. Vernon Carpenter passed away June 30, 2003. Joe Schild reported, "He will be missed by all for his wry wit and dedication to the ARS and the Tennessee Valley Chapter."



Having the plant sale inside one of the hotel's meeting rooms made it very easy to drop in during the day or before the evening lectures. Here we see (left to right) Ron Hooper, keynote speaker Don Shadow, Hale Booth (of TV-ARS), and Tijs Huisman conferring over some deciduous azaleas.

(Photo by Art Vance)

drooping racemes skirting the edge of small meadow just below a bearded iris garden in full bloom. Her unique specimens included *Quercus turbinella*, an oak with very narrow spine-like lobes, and a wonderful woodland combination at the street, right where our bus was waiting: the fine pale blue-green of the eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) with a beautiful white-blooming *Franklinia alatamaha*. Her azaleas were mainly near the front entrance and included 'Martha Hitchcock' and 'Jeb Stuart'.

Lookout Mountain Commons Caldwell Park

Located at the top of Lookout Mountain, this garden encircles a grassy area and has been planted through the efforts of the Lookout Mountain Beautification Fund. The landscaping effort has been led by Master Gardener and Curator Peter Branton, who was on hand to answer questions. Tom Blanton, owner of The Little Green House nursery in central Chattanooga, and Joe Schild supplied some plants. This park was very beautiful and a model of how a public park and public garden can work together. The day we visited there was a Little League game, our tour buses parked for our lunch break in the park pavilion, and there were walkers on the walking track.

A trail winds through the plantings of azaleas, ornamental trees and shrubs, and wildflowers, so that there were several lovely views of the grassy common area. We were given a map of the garden, a "Self-Guided Walking Tour" of what plant materials to look for in the various planting areas, descriptions of 12 of the specimen woody ornamentals, and a brief

article by Peter Branton called "Native Azaleas in Your Landscape." All this literature was so helpful to us, as visitors from other parts of the US and eager to learn quickly what the beauties were. A few particularly nice specimens were:

Loropetalum chinense var. *rubrum* 'Zhuzhou Fuchsia' (Chinese Fringe-flower)—deep pink flowers on a 10-foot shrub, just introduced from China in 1991.

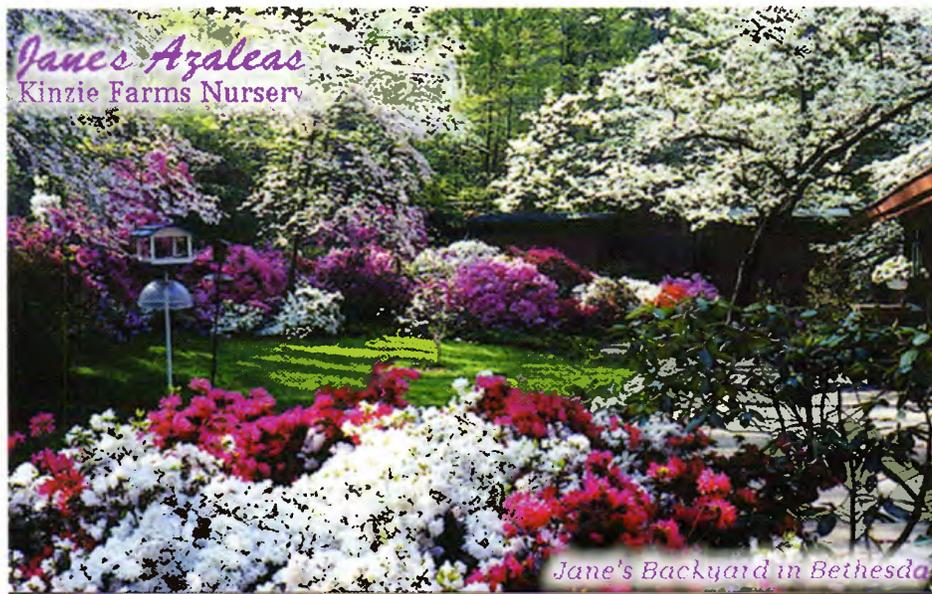
Cornus kousa—both the species native to Japan, Korea, and China and several of the hybrids that Rutgers University has developed by crossing *C. kousa* with the native *C. florida* for disease- and mildew-resistance, cold hardi-

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Thanks, Joe, for the great convention in Chattanooga. (Photo by Art Vance)



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water.) By shaking the bag and working it like dough, it soon is wetted.

I use a large mortar-mixing tub that is 2' by 4' to soak the filled trays. To the water in the tub, I add more dish-washing detergent to aid the drenching. Once the filled trays are drenched fully, I let them drain for 72 hours before sowing the seed.

Keep in mind, we will sow the seed on top of the sphagnum and will not cover them with soil mixture. It matters little what type of light source you choose to use as long as the seed and seedlings receive about 600 foot-candles of light intensity. Less light will mean spindly seedlings. Be sure to label the containers for the correct plant names.

The first batch of seedlings I grew over 35 years ago looked more like grass, for I sowed them too thickly. In a 4"-square pot, sow about 100 seed as a starter. The seedlings' health depends upon consistent moisture levels. If you use small pots or trays, sow the seed and slip the container into a bread bag or other plastic bag you can seal. Place it under a light source with bottom heat to keep the soil temperature between 67°F and 72°F. In about nine to twelve days, you should see the seed germinate. Some rhododendron may take up to six months to germinate. If you choose my method with the 10-20 flats and inserts, I use the humidity domes to keep the seedlings from drying out.

Thinning and Transplanting

Between the time the seedlings are pricked out and transplanted, do not allow them to dry out, or they will die quickly. Once they have established two sets of true leaves, they may be transplanted into flats or pots. However, seven days prior to transplanting, I give them a low-dose feeding of liquid fertilizer at 25% strength, to reduce transplant shock. I use the same soil mixture as in the propagation containers. A table fork works well for pricking out the small seedlings.

Here again, any containers will work. Flowerpots, flats, trays, peat pots, and plastic or Styrofoam cups will do nicely, as long as good drainage is provided and the

seedlings are not allowed to dry out. A light source should still be provided if you want stocky plants. At this young stage, do not allow the seedlings to freeze or become too cold. A heated basement or heated garage will provide the protection needed. On a larger scale, a greenhouse is preferred.

Once all chances for freezes or frost have passed, move the potted seedlings to a protected location outside under shade. Keep them watered, but not drowned. Feed them a liquid fertilizer twice per month. By July or early August, transplant them again to larger containers in a pure pine bark mix. They should be about 6"-10" tall by fall when it is time to mulch the entire pot with pine needles or other mulching material for the coming winter and dormancy. A deep cold frame also works well for winter protection. The following spring they will be ready to plant in the garden or grow another season in the pots.

Some of our native azaleas will put on flower buds in the first year, but most will not until they are two or more years old. Evergreen azaleas need more time for growth, so I like to pinch out the flower buds to promote root and top growth. At this point we are starting to delve into another topic for discussion. So I will close by saying, keep things clean, provide good drainage, provide even moisture levels and good air circulation, label those plants, and have fun.

Joe Schild has been an avid grower, propagator and breeder of azaleas for nearly 35 years. He has owned and operated a niche nursery specializing in the species for over 14 years. Joe is the current president of the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS, immediate past president of the ASA (2001-2003) and a member of the Tennessee Nursery & Landscape Association. He says he is better known as an azalea nut and chases the natives as they bloom each year with many fellow enthusiasts.

Cumberland Spring – continued

ness, and beautiful white flowers. *Buddleja lindleyana*, a butterfly bush that does not need the excessive pruning of *B. davidii* and rewards the gardener with dark green leaves and purple-violet flowers.

Here, we also saw *Kalmia latifolia* blooming as well as species deciduous azaleas mixed with Knap Hill and Exbury hybrids. For example, the Native Azalea Collection in Area #18 included *R. austrinum*, *R. austrinum* 'Escatawpa', *R. prunifolium*, *R. flammum* (formerly *R. speciosum*), *R. calendulaceum*, while Area #19 included 40 miscellaneous varieties of evergreen azaleas.

Barbara Stump has been editor of The Azalean since June of 1998. She currently works as a Research Associate for Development at the Stephen F. Austin State University Mast Arboretum, where she makes sure there are continual improvements to the garden she designed as part of her Master's project, the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.

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