

Azalea Society of America 2004 National Meeting and Convention

Debra Hughes — Lusby, Maryland
on behalf of the 2004 ASA Convention Steering Committee

We look forward to welcoming you to the “Best Bloomin’ Azaleas in Bay Country,” the Azalea Society of America (ASA) 2004 national meeting and convention, sponsored by the Ben Morrison Chapter.

Excitement is building for what we believe will be an enjoyable and educational event for all participants. The planning committee, chaired by **Carol Segree**, has been working diligently for more than a year to ensure its success, including a judged flower show sponsored by the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society (both azaleas and rhododendrons will be accepted), the ever-popular plant sale, and fabulous tours of the surrounding areas and popular speakers. They all touch upon our theme, “Best Bloomin’ Azaleas in Bay Country” and on Benjamin Y. Morrison, the first director of the US National Arboretum and our chapter’s namesake.

For detailed information on hotel accommodations, schedule, registration form, and speakers’ biographies, please see the 2004 Convention insert following page 84. For more details on the judged flower show, including rules and an entry form, visit www.donaldhyatt.com/BenMorrison. Four all-day tours of both public and private gardens are scheduled, two on Friday and two on Saturday. Each offers a special feature, making selecting just one each day a difficult choice. We suggest that you reserve early to avoid disappointment.

Friday, May 7, 2004

Tour A: US National Arboretum Tour

The tour begins at Boxlee Azalea Farm in Glenn Dale, Maryland, and

includes a visit to two special private gardens in Silver Spring before continuing to the US National Arboretum.

Boxlee, owned by Courtland Lee, is a 10-acre farm and historic site that has thus far survived in a rapidly urbanizing area east of Washington, DC. The town of Glenn Dale is only a mile from the USDA Plant Introduction Station where Ben Morrison developed the Glenn Dale azaleas and Dr. George M. Darrow developed the Olallie daylily, both featured items at the US National Arboretum. Boxlee’s display gardens are set amidst tall tulip poplar trees. The farm propagates azaleas by growing cuttings from a number of old azalea collections from the Maryland area, with an emphasis on the “Ten Oaks” Glenn Dales. Other groups include the Linwood, Kurume, Satsuki, Kaempferi, Beltsville, Kehr, Gable, and Back Acres hybrids. Also grown are some unusual boxwood varieties, the Olallie daylily, and a few native azaleas. The tour will include a drive by the Plant Introduction Station, which unfortunately is being phased out by

the USDA and is in decline, with the last few years of drought having taken their toll.

Next we’ll visit the private gardens of **Bill and Karen O’Brien** and **William and Susan Poling**, both in Silver Spring.

“When we first saw ‘the azalea house’ in the spring of 1995, the stone pathways that wandered through the more than 250 azaleas were barely visible,” recalls Bill O’Brien. “Many of the 50-year-old plants appeared never to have been pruned, reaching 15 feet into the air. Accenting the azaleas were sprawling rhododendrons, fragrant boxwoods, white and pink dogwoods, hollies, mahonia, aucuba, a Chinese redbud, magnolia, crape myrtle, camellia, weeping cherry, pine, Carolina hemlock, ash, and mountain laurel, as well as ferns, Virginia bluebells, May apples, native ginger, snowdrops, wild strawberries, myrtle, jack-in-the-pulpit, trillium, and a carpet of English ivy,” he noted.

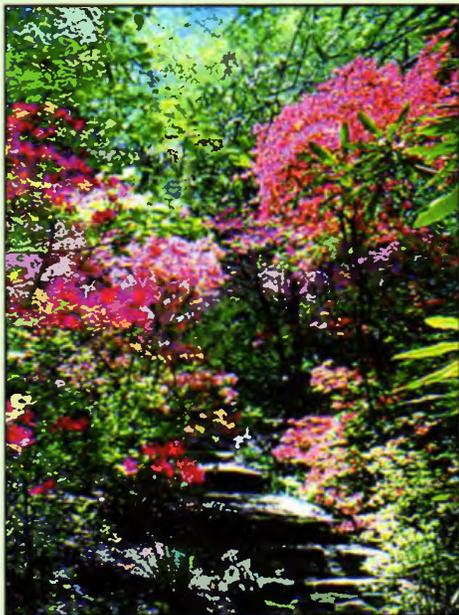
“We have since all but eliminated the English ivy, pruned back the azaleas, added a weeping China bell,

some unusual viburnums, chaste trees, butterfly bushes, witch hazels, winter hazels, nandinas, cherry laurels, hydrangeas (including an oak leaf), summer sweet, hostas, epimedium, Solomon seals, plumbago, liriopse, various ferns and, in place of an



View of Boxlee Nursery (Photo by Courtland Lee)

asphalt drive, created a perennial and herb garden. Since all of the above are shaded by, among other trees, half a dozen towering tulip poplars, ours is almost entirely a shade garden. The azaleas include a few Glenn Dales and some lovely surprises.”



View of O'Brien Garden
(Photo by Bill and Karen O'Brien)

In 1992, William Poling and his wife, Susan, became owners of a home built in the mid-1930s for Stuart Armstrong and his wife, Marion. “As explained in an article in *The Azalean* (March 1994), our current efforts to maintain and restore the garden began when we acquired the property, after it had suffered a long period of neglect,” William Poling noted.

“As many know, Stuart Armstrong was a neighbor and friend of Ben Morrison, the creator of the Glenn Dale and Back Acres hybrids,” Poling said. “He was also an avid amateur horticulturist who served as president of the American Horticultural Society between 1957 and 1960. Over a period of more than 30 years, Armstrong amassed a sprawling collection of Glenn Dale, Back Acres, and other azaleas in his yard overlooking Sligo Creek Park.

“Armstrong died in 1970, but hundreds of his azaleas survive today in

our half-acre garden. Most are single specimens. In addition to very mature Glenn Dale and Back Acres azaleas that were obtained directly from Morrison himself, the garden retains numerous exotic hollies and other trees that date from Armstrong's time, including unusual conifers. Some azaleas still bear their original metal and/or plastic name tags. Most are not tagged, and their identities are uncertain.”

Neither the **US National Arboretum** nor the curator of the azalea collection, **Barbara Bullock**, needs an introduction to those who love azaleas. The Glenn Dale Azalea Hillside, the Morrison Garden, and the Frederic P. Lee Garden comprise the 12,000-plus Azalea Collection, the country's premier reference collection. Full credit for the extensive restoration of the Azalea Collection—which has not only improved the garden but has also resulted in the discovery and identification of many older plants—goes to Bullock and her team of volunteers. We'll have a box lunch and visit the Bonsai Collection and Herb Garden on our own prior to embarking on a 2-hour private tour with Bullock. If you haven't recently visited the Arboretum, you're in for a pleasant surprise.

Tour B: Baltimore Tour

The Baltimore Tour begins at Marshy Point Nursery in Chase, Maryland, then visits the garden of **Jim Michaels** in Kingsville before heading to a gourmet catered lunch and a wander through the Ladew Topiary Gardens in Monkton. After lunch, the private gardens of **Bill and Phyllis Meyers** and **Bill and Ann Mangels** will be featured.

Marshy Point is located on two tributaries of the northern Chesapeake Bay and is blessed with a mile of waterfront (maybe not such a blessing after Hurricane Isabel). The nursery produces about 50,000 container

plants a year, the majority being azaleas and rhododendrons. While the gardens have many well-established plants, they are integrated with new varieties of azaleas and rhododendrons that are the result of Harry Weiskittel's hybridization efforts.

The garden of **Jim Michaels** features a Japanese miniature garden, a beautiful gazebo, a pond, and an allee of perennials and azaleas. “When I was a boy, for a number of years my parents and I would vacation at my mother's uncle's shore down towards Annapolis. He owned 800 acres that was almost wilderness—no electricity, water from a spring, coal oil lamps—I loved it,” Jim recalls. “Then one year we came down and almost all the trees were cut down and pushed into piles to make charcoal. There was electricity and the start of many small houses. I was devastated.

“Years later, I bought an old farm house and 20 acres from a speculator. The front and two sides were tomato fields and the back was pasture. As you'll see, it all has changed. In a small way, it's a return to 'yesterday,' I guess.”



Jim Michaels' Garden
(Photo by Jim Michaels)

Ladew Topiary Gardens has been called “the most outstanding topiary garden in America” by the Garden Club of America and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Developed between 1929 and 1971 by Harvey Smith Ladew II, the 15 individually themed flower gardens were designed to provide color for every season. Azaleas are featured in

the Victorian Garden, Pink Garden, White Garden, Yellow Garden (Exbury), the Portico Garden, and the Garden of Eden (Azalea-Orchard with Gable and other hybrid azaleas). The highlight of the 22 acres is the Topiary Sculpture Garden, which includes a unicorn, sea horses, French hens, and a hunt scene. Ladew had discovered the art of topiary in England in the 1920s during one of his many winter fox hunting trips. We'll have lunch in the restored barn—be sure select one of the two options on the Registration Form.

The garden of **Bill and Phyllis Meyers** is almost 3 acres of lawn and wooded areas surrounding a Victorian house. When the Meyers moved onto the property 31 years ago, the only flowering plants were three *Rhododendron maximum* and a few groupings of daffodils. The first 10 azaleas planted were 1-year-old 'Hershey's Red' purchased at a nursery. "Mystery" azaleas were acquired over a period of a few months when a local nursery sold its property and had customers dig their own plants. About 6 years ago, the Meyers met a member of the ARS who was an expert in rooting cuttings. They subsequently joined ARS and ASA and have propagated many plants from cuttings.

Their interest and knowledge continues to grow, and both hold offices in the Mason-Dixon chapter of the ARS; Bill is the current president. At the last flower show held by the club, a Best in Show ribbon was won for an azalea entry. Phyllis is now completing requirements for becoming a Federated Garden Club flower show judge.

Bill and Ann Mangels describe their garden as a "changing garden, not only by season but also by continued planting of rhododendrons and azaleas." Their 1-acre garden is surrounded by woods and includes beds with plants that range from fairly new plants to deciduous azaleas, rhododendrons, evergreen azaleas, and conifers at least 30 years old. Companion plants such as hostas and perennials are also interspersed. "On trips around the country and in England we have gathered plants and seeds. As a result, we have a smattering of Hachmann, Dexter, Gable, Delp, Leach, Robin Hill, Satsuki, Exbury, and natives," they note.

Saturday, May 8, 2004

Tour C: Annapolis Tour

On Saturday, the Annapolis tour will include three private gardens—Carol Segree Gardens, Rosa Gardens, and Netherwood Garden—as well as the Wm. Paca Garden and historic Annapolis and its waterfront, where we'll have our box lunch at City Dock. In the afternoon, we'll visit the always-popular London Town gardens. **Be forewarned: of all the tours, this one will require the most walking.**

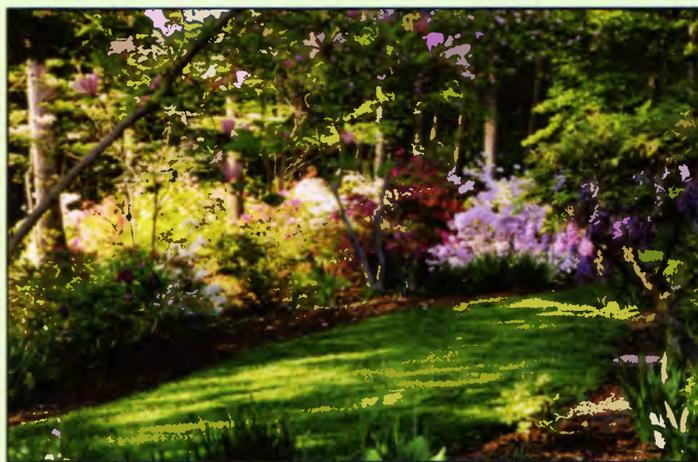
The day begins at the garden of **Carol Segree** in Gambrills. This 1-acre garden is characterized by its network of paths that add interest and aid navigation on the wooded knoll that is bordered on three sides by steep

ravines. Large trees—mostly oaks and tulip poplars—inhabit the property along with native hollies, dogwoods, and kalmia. Large- and small-leaf rhododendrons are blended with evergreen and deciduous azaleas.

The property, which had been farmland and woods, was purchased in 1987. After joining the ARS in 1991 and the ASA in 1993, Carol's small collection of white, pink, and red azaleas and 'Roseum Elegans' dramatically expanded to include more than 1,200 hybrid and species plants. She particularly likes the contrast of different textures and colors achieved by combining these plants, especially the deciduous azaleas with the evergreens.

Carol has grown many plants from cuttings or seeds; however, most were acquired from auctions at the various ARS/ASA chapter functions. She is an active member of the Ben Morrison Chapter of the ASA, and three ARS chapters. Her favorite azaleas are 'Sweet Christy', 'Wagner's White Spider', 'Fairfax', 'Nancy of Robinhill', 'Gay Paree', 'Yamato', 'Double Pleasure', 'Ben Morrison', the natives, and many, many more!

She is also partial to magnolias, Japanese maples, and peonies. Other plants of interest in this garden are deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) and dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*).



Carol Segree's Garden (Photo by Carol Segree)

Rosa Gardens, also in Gambrills, is the home of **Rosa and Bob McWhorter**. Bob, current president of the Ben Morrison Chapter, likes to say his favorite hobby is digging holes; Rosa's hobby is telling him where to dig them.

The vision of Rosa Gardens, begun in 1986, was slow to develop. The design of their home, lawn, and gardens is largely Rosa's work, with new plantings working their way from the front to the back year by year. They first selected azaleas and rhododendrons available from local nurseries. After joining ASA in 1997 and the ARS a year later, they increased the varieties of plants added. Now, Rosa Gardens consists of about 1,100 azaleas and several hundred rhododendrons, many with name tags. The gardens also include hundreds of daffodils, several varieties of

hostas, and a small rose and perennial garden.

Bob likes a collage of colors, represented by the border of 'Tradition' azaleas in the front and the great views from many places along the trails that Bob created. Once the trails were established, filling in with azaleas (and rhododendrons) wasn't too difficult. The two-acre property slopes to the rear; while most trails are an easy walk, there are a few steps. Favorite plants include 'Rocket', 'Lord Roberts', 'The General', 'Solidarity', and an unknown but beautiful fragrant lavender rhododendron from the garden of Russ Parsons of the Mason-Dixon Chapter of the ARS. He is also partial to 'Blaauw's Pink', 'Sunglow', 'Day-spring', 'Purple Splendor', and all the reds! Rosa's favorites include 'Carrie Amanda', 'Pocono Pink', 'Treasure', and the deciduous azaleas.

Bob installed the Raindrip watering system about seven years ago and each of the 1,100 plants has its own dripper. Maintenance is simple, with surface hoses covered with mulch or leaves. The system has helped during the droughts the past few years.

The Ben Morrison Chapter has been working with Barbara Bullock, curator of the Azalea Collection at the US National Arboretum, on a conservation project, and an area of Rosa Gardens has been set aside for Arboretum azaleas.



View of Rosa Gardens
(Photo by Bob McWhorter)

Our next stop is **Wm. Paca Garden** in the center of historic Annapolis. Paca was a Revolutionary War-period governor of Maryland and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. His house, built between 1763 and 1765, is now a National Historic Landmark and is surrounded by a two-acre garden carefully restored after the property was acquired by Historic Annapolis, Inc., which saved it from becoming a glass and steel office-and-apartment complex.

After a stroll through the garden, you'll have time for a self-guided walking tour of Annapolis. Box lunches will be distributed for al fresco dining at City Dock prior to our visit to historic **London Town and Gardens** in Edgewater. From 1683 to the late 1700s, London Town, with its ready access to the Chesapeake Bay, was the place to cross the South River by ferry. London Town was also a port of call for ships taking tobacco to Britain and for bringing in slaves and servants. Today, the 23-acre site features the largest ongoing archaeological exploration in Maryland. The eight-acre garden includes woodlands, native and exotic species, the Richard Hill Medicinal Garden, the African American Garden, and the Anne Lambeth Kitchen garden. (Note: the tour does not include a visit to the William Brown House, a c.1760 Georgian brick home and tavern house; however, a \$4.00 ticket may be purchased on site.)

Our final stop for the afternoon will be the **Netherwood Garden** on the Severn River, the home of **Paul and Joan Netherwood**. With its small area (less than one-tenth of an acre) and steep terrain, landscaping proved to be a challenge. The owners, who inherited the Epping Forest property in June 1990, noted there were

"no gardens to speak of"; gardening began in earnest in 1994.

"We have really enjoyed working with the unusual size and shape of our property," they said. "The steep hills on three sides were/are both a challenge and a delight. We had retaining walls built and a new set of steps built to make our walk down to the water easier. Using timbers, rocks, driftwood, small fountains, and small pieces of sculpture, we planned and planted our yard as a collection of many small self-contained gardens.

"Because of the small size of our yard, we have planted many dwarf rhododendrons, azaleas, laurels, hostas, boxwoods, and European ginger as one of several ground covers. Where space allowed, we have planted small and medium-sized varieties of these same plants plus native plants and many ferns. To help control erosion, we have used small berm gardens to edge the waterfront yard, which is the only flat area on our property.

"Although the main emphasis of our garden is woody plants, we have some bloom most of the year. A collection of both standard sized and dwarf bulbs herald the coming of spring, with lilies blooming during the summer and many varieties of hosta blooming into mid-September. The hellebores and snowdrops give us color from December to March."



View of Netherwood Garden
(Photo by Paul and Joan Netherwood)

Tour D: Southern Maryland Tour

During the Southern Maryland Tour we'll visit five private gardens. It begins at the Hobbs Garden in North

Beach and continues through Calvert County to the Holms' Garden, and Annmarie Garden on St. John Creek, followed by a box lunch on Solomons Pier. We'll spend the afternoon at Wake Robin in St. Mary's County, and return via the Switzers' Garden.

When **Bob and Bee Hobbs** moved into their home near the Chesapeake Bay in the spring of 1981, there was not a single azalea in their one-third acre of lowland. Now, their woodland garden includes more than 350 azalea plants (mostly evergreen) ranging in size from small to taller than eight feet. Bob and Bee are not big into pruning, so the paths beside the azalea beds are often narrow—there is little lawn to mow. A variety of companion plants further invade the paths. A small pond (surrounded by azaleas) accents the garden. If you like to be truly surrounded by azaleas, this garden is for you. Listen carefully and you may even hear some organ music.



The standard wisteria in the Hobbs Garden
(Photo by Nedda Hobbs)

The Holms' garden reflects the country setting of their local community. **Dave and Eileen Holm** split their free time between azalea collecting and caring for their riding horses. They have selected cultivars for their garden with a goal of maximizing the blooming season. The resulting collection of Kurume, Glenn Dale, and Satsuki azaleas is set against a backdrop of split rail

fences, woodlands, and pasture. The garden has been a "work in progress" for 20 years, with a recent focus on propagating rare and unusual cultivars in cooperation with the US National Arboretum.

Annmarie Garden on St. John Creek is a 30-acre public sculpture and botanical garden dedicated in October 1993 after being donated to the people of Calvert County by **Francis and Ann Koenig**. The entrance to Annmarie Garden is unusual, with its 650-plus-piece glazed ceramic gate stanchions. Recently, seven pieces of sculpture on loan from the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC, have been placed throughout the garden, including the bronze sculpture *Monumi* (1958) by Italian artist Giacomo Manzù.

In Fall 1997, 113 varieties of Glenn Dale azaleas—each individually tagged—were donated to Annmarie Garden and planted by young gardeners. Since then, 514 more azaleas have been added to the collection.

Box lunches will be distributed for dining on benches on the boardwalk in Solomons Island, which features a number of interesting shops. From there, we'll go to **Wake Robin on Kingston** in California, Maryland, the home of **Joe Miller** and his late wife, **Nuran**. "We were captivated by the woodland setting and loved playing garden archaeology in the unkempt, existing gardens," Joe noted. The property, with its native trees and wildflowers, has 1,000 feet of waterfront on two sides of Kingston Creek.

Original owners planted approximately 115 azaleas, primarily Kurumes, Glenn Dales, Gables, and some Southern Indicas. There were a few mid- and late-season plants, notably 'Macrantha Double'. "All planting records have been lost; therefore, I am still trying to map beds and identify the older plants," Joe said. "I am attempting to retain the original garden form while expanding it, as time permits. Herbs,

daffodils, lavender, and some perennials complement the evergreen azaleas. You will find a few deciduous and species azaleas as well as rhododendrons added to the collection. My latest interest is an attempt to propagate to add an interesting, broader collection of azalea cultivars, with the goal of extending the blooming season. There are approximately 150 azalea cultivars."

Our final stop for the day will be **Switzers' Garden** in Port Republic, home of **George and Sue Switzer**, founding members of the Ben Morrison Chapter. Their 16 acres include three acres of azaleas, which have contained as many as 1,000 varieties and 20,000 plants (see the September 1992 issue of *The Azalean* for the Switzers' description of their property). At the 1992 ASA convention, the Switzers introduced a new azalea variety they had registered, 'Nannie Angell', which has petals similar to 'Koromo Shikibu' but white. The Switzers' interests also include the "Sweet Pea" azaleas, the Beltsvilles, and the Beltsville Dwarfs. Sue and George have each served as president of the Ben Morrison Chapter, and George was a member of the ASA board of directors.

Debra Hughes and her husband, Peter, joined the Ben Morrison Chapter after moving to southern Maryland and are lucky to have fallen in with a great group of people far more knowledgeable about azaleas than they could ever hope to be. They are looking forward to learning even more at the upcoming ASA 2004 convention, their first.

We especially want to thank those who are graciously opening their gardens for the tours and to Donald Hyatt for stepping in to create and design Web pages for the 2004 ASA Convention and for hosting them on his Web site:
www.donaldhyatt.com/BenMorrison