

A Bay Country Welcome — Ben Morrison Chapter Hosts the ASA 2004 National Meeting and Convention

Debra Hughes — Lusby, Maryland

Take 111 people keenly interested in azaleas. Add some nice weather, pretty near peak azaleas (hailstorms notwithstanding), informative speakers, wonderful public gardens, generous and gracious private garden hosts, a “blow-your-socks-off” plant sale and auction, a flower show, a propagator’s roundtable, a delicious banquet with Maryland crab cakes, and, of course, the “Pot Heads.”

That appeared to be the recipe for success for the “Best Bloomin’ Azaleas in Bay Country,” the 2004 Azalea Society of America National Meeting and Convention, held May 6-9 in Bowie, Maryland. The Ben Morrison Chapter, this year’s host, was pleased that so many people were able to enjoy what Bay Country has to offer. Attendees included all the ASA officers/directors; in addition, eight of the nine ASA chapters were well represented (missing was Tri-state), as was the At-large membership.



Photograph of Convention attendees at evening presentation by Bill Miller
(Photo by Bill Miller)

Many attendees, including host chapter members themselves, discovered for the first time what area actually comprises “Bay Country,” thanks to an informative talk by Bob Hobbs, who provided an

overview of “Azaleas in Bay Country.” Other speakers included Courtland Lee, whose vast knowledge of the history of the “Glenn Dale Azaleas—Plants for All Seasons” was complemented by William C. Miller III, who gave his Saturday evening keynote speech on Ben Morrison and his azaleas (see page 54 of this issue). Sandra Austin discussed color in the azalea garden and explained how color attributes create diverse variations depend-



Bill Miller, keynote speaker at banquet. (Photo by Charlie Evans)

ing on light, texture, and time. She also outlined how colors work together in families and combinations.

Ethel M. Dutky shared her knowledge in “Azalea Diseases,” noting that the window of opportunity to treat for petal blight is at the first sign of a brown blotch on an azalea petal; after that, it is too late (see page 64 of this issue). Dr. Michael J. Raupp provided a less toxic alternative, “Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for Azalea Gardens.” He argued that the worst culture is monoculture. The best is biological control of insect pests; that is, having a landscape varied enough to attract insects that eat other insects (see page 61 of this issue). Deer in the garden, however, are another matter. In “Azaleas Can Be Very EnDeering,” Jonathan S. Kays provided myriad ways to minimize deer damage to ornamental shrubs, from high fences, electrical fences, and dogs, to applications of commercial deer repellents; but, somehow, hungry deer always seem to find a way to eat—and, unfortunately, destroy—even the best-protected garden. [The Hobbs, Lee, Austin, and Kays papers will be published in the Winter 2004 issue of *The Azalean*, Ed.]

The four tours—US National Arboretum, Baltimore, Annapolis, and Southern Maryland—each offered a special overview of the azaleas in Bay Country and all were equally enjoyed by attendees.



Convention attendees (l to r) Bill Miller, Bob Hobbs, Don Voss, and Bill Bode deep in conversation on Southern Maryland Garden Tour. (Photo by Charlie Evans)

The Saturday evening banquet and the Society’s annual business meeting were both well attended. The “Best *Azalean* Article

Award” was presented to ASA President Buddy Lee for his article “Azaleaphile Margie Jenkins” [25(4): 84-85, 87]. He immediately donated the honorarium to the ASA’s Azalea Research Fund project. Also highlighted was the Azalea City program, established earlier this year to find, recognize, and certify municipalities that promote and display



Sue and George Switzer and Bill and Phyllis Meyers at the Switzer Garden. (Photo by Bob Hobbs)

azaleas. The results of the election of 2004 - 2006

board of directors were announced during the business meeting: Bob Hobbs, Ronald Hooper, and Tom Milner joined the board for the Sunday board meeting. The amendment to the By-Laws described in the Winter 2003 issue of *The Azalean* was approved by the members present.



Convention banquet. (Photo by Charlie Evans)

Hundreds, if not thousands, of azaleas and companion plants were carried or wheeled out on hotel carts during the ongoing plant sale. Thanks to chapter members Charles and Wanda Hanners, Gray Carter, and to Courtland Lee and Don Hyatt for donating plants to the plant sale and to Buddy Lee for donating the Saturday banquet table favors. The lively auction, presided over by Don Hyatt, included native azaleas and



ASA President Buddy Lee. (Photo by Charlie Evans)

many stunning varieties donated by the Hanners and Harry Weiskittel. In the flower show, which was presented by the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and coordinated by Don Hyatt, awards were swept by Bill Bedwell of Dinwiddie, Virginia. Bob Hobbs of North Beach, Maryland, won the photography competition.



Don Hyatt, plant auctioneer. (Photo by Charlie Evans)

Throughout the convention, diversion—and great gifts—were provided by the “Pot Heads,” two enormous (anony-

The Azalea and Rhododendron Flower Show. (Photo by Bob Hobbs)



mous) walking flowerpots. Alas, their entry into the flower show, “*R. fakus*,”—obtained (but not stolen) from the garden of Michaels (as in the crafts store)—did not fool the judges and garnered no awards.



The “Pot Heads” visited the evening convention venues frequently, to the delight of all. (Photo by Bill Miller)

Sunday morning’s propagator’s roundtable, moderated by Ed Collins, attracted serious growers of azaleas: J. Jackson provided a handout on “Growing Azaleas from Seed,” Allen Cantrell presented “Alternative Methods for Propagating Native Azaleas,” and Aaron Cook presented “Propagation of Native Azaleas from Cuttings.”

Finally, special thanks to all of the Ben Morrison Chapter members who participated in the planning and execution of the 2004 convention (including Carol Segree, chair, and Bob McWhorter, president) and to Don Hyatt for the Web site. What camaraderie!

The ASA 2005 National Meeting and Convention will be hosted by the Lake Michigan Chapter in Holland, Michigan, May 19-22. Many of the featured events of the convention were described by chapter president John Migas in a brief talk at the banquet. See you all there! For more details, visit the chapter’s Web site: <http://www.azaleas-lake-michigan.org/events.cfm>.



Lake Michigan Chapter President John Migas invites all to attend the 2005 convention in Holland, Michigan. (Photo by Charlie Evans)

Debra Hughes and her husband, Peter, joined the Ben Morrison Chapter after moving to southern Maryland and say they are lucky to have fallen in with a great group of people far more knowledgeable about azaleas than they could ever hope to be. The 2004 convention in Bowie, Maryland, was their first ASA convention, for which Debra handled publicity.