

# President's Letter

Robert (Buddy) Lee — Independence, Louisiana

It's great to get up early on a crisp spring morning to work in the garden and enjoy the colorful azaleas coming into bloom. Day after day the azalea blooms increase until one morning you can actually say, "the peak bloom has arrived." It seems during this time that other types of blooming plants have to play second fiddle to the majestic blooming azaleas. In some parts of the country, the azalea bloom color literally dominates the landscape. Regardless of whether you like azaleas or not, you cannot escape the color. Like the swallows returning to Capistrano, the human masses flock to azalea gardens and festivals. Retail garden centers know that they had better have a good supply of the public's favorite azaleas on hand or they will lose their customers. This year we had a spectacular spring bloom here in southeast Louisiana. I hope that you have also enjoyed a wonderful spring bloom in your area of the country.

Azalea production is on the increase, especially in the southeastern United States. After declining sales during the last decade, some wholesale production growers have told me that they can't keep up with the growing azalea demand. Also, you may have noticed over the past year or so azalea images have been showing up in numerous national magazines and in background art in advertisements. These are all good signs for our

Society. We just need to get out and tell people about our Society and the great time we have. I have noticed that some of our members have been placing a line at the end of their correspondence that reads: Give an Azalea Society of America membership to a family member or friend. Sending a gift membership to someone for a special occasion sounds like a great idea. For the long-term health of our Society we need to have a growing membership. Let's all try to get at least one new member this year.

The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden in Nacogdoches, Texas, and the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail were both featured in the Neil Sperry's *Gardens* magazine for the March/April issue. Congratulation to Barbara Stump and crew for all their hard work and planning. There are several very nice pictures of blooming azaleas and very informative articles. One bold-lettered line in the article read, "Visit the nation's first designated 'Azalea City' for lessons in history and horticulture." Hopefully many people who read this article showed up in Nacogdoches, Texas, this year for their annual Azalea Symposium and Azalea Trail. There must be a lesson in all of this: Get the word out about what we are doing.

I hope everyone is having a very enjoyable spring.

## Azalea Society of America

The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation and appreciation of azaleas Subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

### Officers for 2003-2004

**President** — Robert Lee  
**Vice-President** — William McDavit  
**Secretary** — John Brown  
**Treasurer** — Robert Stelloh  
**Immediate Past President** — Joseph E. Schild, Jr.

### Directors

#### Terms Expire in 2005

Leslie Ann Nanney  
Joe Coleman  
John Migas

#### Terms Expire in 2006

Robert Hobbs  
Ron Hooper  
Tom Milner

Chapter presidents serve as ex-officio directors

### Chapters

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| <b>Brookside Gardens</b><br>(chartered Aug. 1979)<br>Dr. Charles Evans, <i>Pres.</i> | <b>Ben Morrison</b><br>(chartered May 1980)<br>Carol Segree, <i>Pres.</i>  |
| <b>Northern Virginia</b><br>(chartered May 1980)<br>Dan Krabill, <i>Pres.</i>        | <b>Louisiana</b><br>(chartered June 1981)<br>William Bode, <i>Pres.</i>    |
| <b>Tri-State</b><br>(chartered Oct. 1981)<br>Robin Hahn, <i>Pres.</i>                | <b>Dallas Chapter</b><br>(chartered May 1989)                              |
| <b>Oconee Chapter</b><br>(chartered Nov. 1991)<br>Allison Fuqua, <i>Pres.</i>        | <b>Vaseyi Chapter</b><br>(chartered June 2001)<br>Ed Collins, <i>Pres.</i> |
| <b>Lake Michigan Chapter</b><br>(chartered May 2003)<br>John Migas, <i>Pres.</i>     |  |

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual amount of \$25.00; life-membership for an individual is \$500.00. Members receive *The Azalean* and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society including those of the chapter with which the member affiliates. For information and a membership application, write to the Membership Committee, Azalea Society of America, 1000 Moody Bridge Road, Cleveland, SC 29635.

### On the Cover

'Spicy Lights' is one of the Northern Lights series of azaleas developed by the University of Minnesota (UM) with the goal of introducing cultivars representing a wide range of deciduous azaleas that are bud-hardy in Minnesota and other northern states as well as improved mildew resistance, foliage quality, and later flowering season. 'Spicy Lights' was introduced in 1985 and is the product of an open-pollinated *Rhododendron prinophyllum*. The sterile flowers are bud-hardy to 35°F and are borne in trusses of 11; the 2' flowers have a slight fragrance. The plants are broad and spreading in habit (5' tall by 6' wide). To hear more about these azaleas, attend the Lake Michigan ASA Convention in Holland, Michigan, May 19-22, 2005; Dr. Stan Hokanson of UM is the banquet keynote speaker on May 21. (Photo courtesy of University of Minnesota, Agricultural Experiment Station).