

Chapter News

Alabamense

Pam Thompson, Secretary

A meeting was held at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens on March 2, 2012 to reorganize the Alabamense Chapter of the ASA. There was an informative presentation by BBG's Executive Director, Fred Spicer, on Native Azaleas in the Southeast, followed by an interesting tour of the Kaul Wildflower Garden. Members of the chapter met briefly to elect the following officers: President Patrick Thompson, Vice President Larry Quick, Secretary Pam Thompson, Treasurer Billie Oliver, and Parliamentarian Dennis Pinkard. Patrick Thompson, Davis Arboretum Auburn University, was instrumental in getting the ball rolling. Bylaws have been formally approved and a bank account is being opened by the treasurer.

A second meeting was held at the Davis Arboretum on April 23rd, where Mr. Thompson presented slides on the Arboretum's Red Hills azaleas, *Rhododendron colemanii*, and a recently donated collection of several hundred native azaleas and deciduous hybrids. During the tour that followed, those in attendance were able to see numerous Red Hills azaleas in bloom from across the range of the species. At the first two meetings, more than 30 non-members were in attendance, and have been encouraged to become a part of the ASA. A good number expressed interest and are expected to join.

Upcoming activities of the chapter were discussed including a plant rescue on June 5th at Camp Hill, AL; a Providence Canyon Plum Leaf Azalea tour later in the summer; and a fall meeting featuring a seed swap and propagation techniques with Vernon Bush at Huntsville Botanical Gardens.

Northern Virginia

Barry Sperling, Corresponding Secretary

The Northern VA Chapter started an active spring on March 25th with a meeting at the Wildfire Restaurant in Tysons Corner, enjoying a dinner-quality brunch, arranged largely by **Carolyn Beck**, and then a well illustrated talk on Satsukis by Ajit Thakur, a long-time expert in both that group and bonsai.

On the morning of April 29th many members opened their gardens for viewing at the height of the spring display: **Fran and Andrew Boninti, Brenda and Joe Klimavicz, Dave and Patsy Meadows, Bob Stewart and Barry Sperling**. After that we all adjourned to the garden of **Dave and Leslie Nanney** for snacks and a continuation of the camaraderie. Many of the club members are packing for the annual convention as the spring rolls on!

Rev. John Drayton

Gloria Jean Williams, Corresponding Secretary

Kathy Woolsey, a representative from Cypress Gardens in Charleston, provided the program for our November 2011 meeting. Her talk gave special emphasis on the Red-headed Caterpillar that eats and lays eggs on our beloved azaleas.

These caterpillars, smaller than a grain of rice, eat the tender parts of the leaf. These pests are most active between July 4 and August 1. Look for and remove small dead branches and brown leaves. Eggs are deposited under the leaves, with about 80 eggs per clutch. These leaves should also be removed. Spinosad is effective control for these caterpillars but will also kill butterflies, other caterpillars, and moths.

Our January meeting was centered on the trip to France by club members Mr. & Mrs. Tom Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. Miles Beach. Among the numerous slides shown of the many gardens they visited, due to the time of year, the only azalea bloom seen was a blue one.

It is time to start planning for hosting the Azalea Convention to be held in Charleston in March 2014. Everyone is getting excited. Lots of work lies ahead but it will be a great time in Charleston.

Join us the 4th Monday of every month at Magnolia Gardens, 3550 Ashley River Rd, Charleston, SC 29414 843.571.1266. If you have questions, please contact Gloria Jean Williams @ 843.795.2584.

Texas

Sherrie Randall, Secretary

The Texas chapter held their spring meeting at the Tyler Junior College Center for Earth and Space Science Education in Tyler, Texas. This new state-of-the-art facility, formally the Hudnall Planetarium, features a hands-on exhibit area, instructional/workshop space and a series of outdoor educational plazas. The Center features a domed theater equipped with the Digistar 4, the latest in digital projection technology. TJC is one of only two facilities in Texas to utilize this new system – and one of only 50 worldwide. This renovation included a new surrounding garden planted with Texas proven plants with an emphasis on fall color. Tyler Junior College also features the Ina Brundrett Azalea Garden, which showcases 175 azaleas, and the James F. and Virginia H. Gatewood Garden which features various groundcovers.

Magnolia Plantation (Continued from page 14)

lias. J. Drayton Hastie Jr., a namesake of John G. Drayton, always believed the garden had rare plant material within its borders. The task was to find it.



Photo Miles Beach

▲ 'Prince of Orange'

In 2010, Bart Brechter, curator of gardens at Bayou Bend in Houston, came to Magnolia to study the azaleas and locate, if possible, any rare varieties. Mr. Brechter covered only a small part of the garden, but found more than 10 rare, endangered varieties.

Tom Johnson, Magnolia's Executive Director, believes that once the survey expands many more rare, possibly extinct, varieties will be rediscovered. Over its 300 year history Magnolia has stood sentinel on the Ashley River, silently witnessing the events of our shared past, all the while guarding her own. A history now being revealed which will place Magnolia once again in the national consciousness.

C. Preston Cooley is from upstate South Carolina and was graduated with a BA in United States history from the College of Charleston in 2004. He has more than a decade of experience in the field of history education and heritage tourism. Preston is the official historian at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in historic Charleston, SC. He lives in Summerville, SC with his wife, Bonnie, and their sons, Jefferson and William.

Breeding for Hardiness (Continued from page 11)

Another approach is to use a variable parent, such as *kiusianum*. Here the tendency toward hardiness is less favorable in the first generation, since the hardiness parent may only have one copy of any gene that promotes hardiness. In that case, the probability that the gene is passed on to any given child plant is only 0.5. On the other hand, there is a chance

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Our featured speaker was Steve Brainerd, Park Development Superintendent, City of McKinney. Steve designed the Ina Brundrett Azalea Garden and the Jonsson Color Garden, the original azalea garden at the Dallas Arboretum. Steve is a former National President of Azalea Society of America as well as a past President of the Dallas chapter of ASA. He has authored extensive articles for 'The Azalean.' His presentation focused on the planting of azaleas for four-season color.

Following a brief business meeting, we were given a tour of the facility and garden by Mitch Andrews, director of the TJC advisory committee. His surprise to us was a private screening of one of the current shows, *Cosmic Collision*.

Vaseyi

Suzanne W. Medd, Secretary

On February 26, members met and discussed the programs for the year. Richard and Betty Becker graciously invited Vaseyi members to visit their garden in April. It was suggested that we also visit the garden of Marilyn Grist. This would allow a sneak preview of two of the premiere gardens of the convention.

On March 25, the convention planning committee met and worked out many of the final details. Bob Stelloh shared the beautiful "Appalachian Spring" T-shirt design.

A visit to Vivian Abney's East Fork Nursery was April's meeting with a picnic lunch. As usual Vivian had gift plants for all members!

On May 3rd, Vaseyi members set up their various convention areas, and prepared their gorgeous gardens; Marilyn Grist, the Collins, the Stellohs and the Bells were excited to share their work with visitors from around the country and the world. Mother Nature did not disappoint either because our chapter namesake, the native rare *R. vaseyi* was in beautiful early bloom on the Blue Ridge Parkway!

Our joint convention with ARS was a huge success. A hearty "Thank You" to so many hard working Vaseyi Chapter members!

that a favorable characteristic, such as color, will be passed on. Experience with my variety 96 (*R. kiusianum* x ('Ivan Anderson' x *R. oldhamii*)) illustrates this possibility. Some of these plants are hardy, with white, red, and lavender flowers.

Breeding efforts continue. Time will tell whether any of these ideas work out.