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# *The Azalean*

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



# President's Letter



J Jackson — Trade, Tennessee

Dear Azalea Friends,

The fall of the year is closing in after a really wet and cool summer. We have had a good growing season for azaleas and now the seed pods and flower buds are swelling. In June I had the pleasure of chasing the bloom of native azaleas with several of our members. It was a wonderful experience to spend time with passionate plant people looking for native azaleas in the wild.



Most of us prefer gardening to dealing with business issues. However, it is one of my duties to keep the membership informed on ASA business. There has been a good deal of discussion among the Board of Directors and members about ASA finances. After much discussion on how to increase returns on the endowment fund, a motion was made, a vote taken and the motion below was passed.

*Our Endowment Fund and Research Fund exist to provide a perpetual resource of money for the ASA. Our objectives for these funds are to retain and to the extent possible increase their purchasing power over time, and to produce a reasonable return annually for distribution to meet current needs of the ASA. To meet these objectives, investment decisions shall be made with the goal of maximizing the long term total return of the entire portfolio both from market value increases (realized and unrealized gains) and from current yield (interest and dividends). Within the limits of this philosophy, the Finance Committee and the Research Committee shall each allocate their assets among equities, debt securities and cash, and shall make their specific investment recommendations to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall then direct the Treasurer to make the investment recommendations it approves. The Finance Committee and the Research Committee shall periodically track market conditions and the performance of their investments and recommend any resulting changes in investments to the Executive Committee for its approval and direction to the Treasurer. These committees shall endeavor to, but are not required to, invest donations to their respective funds in accordance with the wishes of the donors. None of these committee members can be held personally responsible for the results of their investment activities done in good faith.*

The Board of Directors is tasked in the by-laws to oversee the assets of ASA as stated below:

## ARTICLE VI. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### A. General Powers

**The direction and management of the affairs, business, and property of the ASA shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors (herein also referred to as "the Board").**

Our Treasurer, Dan Krabill has formed a standing Finance Committee. Now the real work begins for the Finance and Executive Committees. Anyone with questions or concerns about ASA finances should feel free to call me.

It is my pleasure to report that there is a new chapter forming in Wilmington, North Carolina. We look forward to meeting and being with the members from the "Cape Fear Chapter" of the Azalea Society of America in the near future.

Best Regards,  
J Jackson

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 which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthena* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Eriaceae*).

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*Errata: I apologize for not having corrected "R. Obtusum Group" to "R. Obtusum Group" in my text on p. 40 of the Summer 2013 issue. Words in cultivar epithets and in Group names are to be set in roman, not italic, type—even if they are Latin words.*  
Don Voss.

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## ON THE COVER

AUTUMN TWIST 'Conlep'  
photo by Will Ferrell.  
Please see the related story  
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# What is an Azalea?

Charles Andrews, Cumming, Georgia

The question does not have a simple answer. The horticultural answer is not the same as the botanical answer. Consider these facts.

- Plants do not always fall neatly into discrete groups of plants. Botanists created the concepts of genus and species to help mankind understand plant life, but plants do not read botany texts, nor always fit neatly inside sharp boundaries.
- Before Carl Linnaeus, the father of taxonomy, various plants we know today as azaleas, mountain laurel, and rhododendrons were all called, among other names, by the foot-long word, *Chamaerhododendron* (low-growing rose tree).
- Carl Linnaeus named the Azalea genus in 1735 in his first book, *Systema Naturae* (System of Nature). In *Species Plantarum* (Plant Species), first published in 1753, he placed the first six species in genus Azalea, including *A. indica* (evergreen), *A. lutea* (deciduous), and *A. viscosa* (deciduous). Note that in the Azalea genus, he included both deciduous species and evergreen species. Linnaeus's *A. indica*, now *Rhododendron indicum*, is one of the ancestors of the Satsuki hybrid azaleas. *A. lutea* as documented by Linnaeus is now considered three separate species, *R. periclymenoides* (Pinxterbloom), *R. canescens* (Piedmont Azalea), and *R. calendulaceum* (Flame Azalea). *A. viscosa* is now named *R. viscosum* (Swamp Azalea).
- Linnaeus did not create the *Rhododendron* genus until 1753, in *Species Plantarum*, eighteen years after he defined the *Azalea* genus.
- A major reason for Linnaeus's separating azaleas from rhododendrons is that the azaleas he knew had 5 stamens and the rhododendrons had 10.



Among American azaleas *R. vaseyi* is distinctive: almost no tube, 5-7 stamens, and bee tracks.

- Around 1800, some botanists decided all except one of the known *Azalea* species in the *Azalea* genus should be merged with the *Rhododendron* genus. The lone remaining *Azalea* species, *Azalea procumbens* (Alpine Azalea) was later renamed to another genus, *Loiseleuria*, essentially eliminating the *Azalea* genus. Slowly, azaleas became accepted by plant experts as part of the rhododendrons.



Typical evergreen azalea ('Hampton Beauty'), bushy, compact, highly floriferous.

- Following the main principle behind botany's naming rules (use the oldest valid name), moving azaleas into *Rhododendron* was illogical, because *Azalea* was the much older genus. *Rhododendron* species should have been merged into the *Azalea* genus, not the other way around.
- Over the next 150 years, some botanists continued to keep *Azalea* as a separate genus, especially for the deciduous plants, but their opinion did not sway the opinions of most botanists. To go back and reestablish *Azalea* as a separate genus would require hundreds of botanical name changes, something the botany community was and is reluctant to do.
- Plant naming rules created long after Linnaeus's time prevent the name *Azalea* from being used in any official capacity (such as a subgenus of *Rhododendron*).

Yet, the name *azalea* will not die. Extensively used since its coinage in 1735, the name has never dropped from favor. Azalea has a sonorous sound, and the plants are some of the most popular in the plant kingdom. The word conveys clear meaning. But since azalea is no longer a valid botanical name, its use is determined primarily by the public at large, and the name is now entrenched in our vocabulary for both deciduous and evergreen azaleas. Gardeners continue to use the name azalea for both the Asian evergreens indigenous to Asia and

the deciduous plants primarily from North America. Scores of books have been written with *Azalea* in the title. Thousands of articles on azaleas have been published. Azaleas have be-



Lepidote rhododendrons like this *R. minus* have scales on the underside of the leaves and tend to have smaller leaves.

come such an important group within the rhododendron family that many books carry redundant titles like *Rhododendrons and Azaleas* to emphasize the fact that these popular plants are included in their texts along with what is more typically thought of as a rhododendron. Thousands of azalea hybrids have been produced and named. Towns and cities hold annual azalea festivals. Azalea lovers form organizations like the Azalea Society of America and the Azalea Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.



Classic tall, big-leaved, elepidote rhododendrons in the garden of Charles Dexter Owen

### The Botanical View

As far as most botanists are concerned, all azaleas are rhododendrons, but not all rhododendrons are azaleas. Some botanists divide the large genus *Rhododendron* (over 850 species) into three major groups: lepidotes (scaly leaves), elepidotes (non-scaly), and azaleas (e.g., H. H. Davidian). Other botanists

divide them into four major groups: lepidotes, elepidotes, deciduous azaleas and evergreen azaleas (e.g., Kathleen Kron). In fact, DNA studies show that deciduous azaleas may be more closely related to the elepidote rhododendron subgroup than to evergreen azaleas. Further, Kron found deciduous azaleas *R. molle* (Chinese azalea) and *R. arborescens* (sweet azalea) to be related closer to lepidote rhododendron *R. edgeworthii* and other lepidotes than to the evergreen azaleas. With rare exceptions (e.g., 'Griedal'), lepidotes and elepidotes are not known to hybridize with one another. Some deciduous azaleas and elepidote rhododendrons crosses have been made. However, crosses of evergreen azaleas with either deciduous azaleas, or with elepidote or with lepidote rhododendrons are rare. Most often such hybrids are sterile and the offspring are weak. Hybridization data support these major distinctions within the large genus *Rhododendron*.

Lepidote rhododendrons have small scales on the undersides of their leaves and sometimes also have hairs on their leaves and branches. These lepidotes mostly have small leaves and are usually dwarf or relatively low-growing plants. Elepidotes do



Not all azaleas have five stamens. Evergreen 'George Lindley Taber' has ten.

not have those scales, usually have hairs, and tend to be large-leaved, big plants, the type of plant many associate with the classic rhododendron. Even though botanists know azaleas do not have scales and therefore are technically elepidotes, they still tend to consider them separately from the main group of elepidote rhododendrons, putting them mostly in subgroups of their own.

### Rhododendrons, A Diverse Group

*Rhododendron* is not only a very large genus but contains a highly diverse group of plants. Almost all rhododendrons are found in the northern hemisphere. Some plants are only inches tall; some can grow to ninety feet; some have trunks over three feet in diameter. The genus is mostly evergreen, but some species are deciduous, and some are dimorphic, having

*Continued on page 62*

# An Unknown Plant Virus Causing a Ringspot Disease in Azaleas

Rodrigo A. Valverde

In Louisiana, azaleas are popular ornamental plants in residential and commercial landscapes. Indica azaleas, also called Southern Indian azalea, are the most common cultivars grown throughout the state (Fig. 1). There are several insect pests and diseases that affect azaleas. Petal blight, caused by a fungus, is a major problem not only in Louisiana but throughout the United States. Diseases caused by viruses have been minor in comparison. During the late fall and early spring of 2011/2012, a disease consisting of foliar ringspots was observed on azaleas in several locations throughout Louisiana. The symptoms were prominent on the second-year leaves, especially during the flowering period. The ringspots varied in color and size depending on the azalea cultivar and time of the year (Fig. 2). They began as faint discolorations and chlorotic spots which later developed into necrotic ringspots. In general, new leaves (current year growth) did not show symptoms. The disease was very common in azaleas in old plantings, particularly those in plantation homes, but less common on new plantings. Ringspot symptoms in plants are often an indication of viral infection. There are many species of plant viruses that can cause foliar ringspots on plants. To determine the identity of the virus causing the foliar ringspots, procedures commonly used for plant virus identification were followed. Surveys for ringspot-affected azaleas were conducted in various locations, including the



Fig. 1 Healthy 'George Lindley Taber' at LSU.



Fig. 2 Necrotic ringspots on azalea leaves.



Fig. 3 Nursery plant with ringspots.



Fig. 4 'Mrs. G. G. Gerbing.'

United States National Arboretum. Identifying the virus causing the ringspot on azalea has been challenging. The main problem is the nature of the host plant, azalea. Azalea contains many organic compounds that interfere with virus isolation and detection. Several methods for virus purification using infected azalea tissues failed to yield virus particles. However, we were able to transmit the ringspot-causing virus by grafting infected scions onto healthy plants. Furthermore, we were able to detect viral RNA in leaves with ringspots but not in leaves from healthy plants. In spite of these efforts, the exact identity of the virus causing the ringspots on azalea is still not known. The virus symptoms and viral RNA are similar to those caused by a newly described blueberry virus called blueberry necrotic ring blotch virus; therefore, it is possible that the azalea virus may be related to the blue-

berry virus. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that most plant viruses tend to infect related plant species, and both azaleas and blueberries belong to the Ericaceae plant family. During 2011, visual surveys of plants at several local retail nursery operations were conducted. Ringspots were found in azaleas in only one nursery. Plants in one-gallon pots of the cultivar 'George Lindley Taber' showed disease symptoms (Fig. 3). The fact that all the plants of this cultivar at the nursery were infected suggests that they were propagated from an infected mother plant. Surveys were also conducted



Fig. 5 'Pride of Mobile' ringspots.

know the long-term effect that this virus may have. Infections of old cultivars in plantation homes suggest that plants "can live" with the virus. Nevertheless, it is recommended that when propagating azaleas, particularly indica azaleas, only virus-free mother plants are selected. Moreover, when purchasing azaleas, examination of the foliage for ringspots is recom-



Fig. 7 Azaleas at the National Arboretum.

in gardens of plantation houses, and most of the plants showing symptoms were indica azaleas between 50 and 75 years old. In 2012, about 50 azalea cultivars from the Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden located in the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center Hammond Research Station, were examined for the azalea ringspot virus disease. Only Southern Indian azaleas, 'Mrs. G. G. Gerbing' (Fig. 4), 'Pride of Mobile' (Fig. 5), 'Formosa', and 'George Lindley Taber' (Fig. 6) showed the disease; all other examined azaleas at the research station appeared disease-free. During the spring of 2012, a survey for the azalea ringspot virus was conducted on the azaleas of the United States National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. Many plants were carefully inspected for ringspots, but the disease was not observed in any of the examined plants (Fig. 7). The azalea ringspot virus appears to be restricted to a few but popular Indica cultivars. Preliminary research suggests that the

virus is not mechanically-transmitted from infected to healthy azaleas. This is supported by the presence of healthy plants near infected ones. Most likely, the virus is transmitted and disseminated by using virus-infected plant materials during azalea propagation. Plants with many foliar ringspots suffer significant defoliation. Although affected plants recovered from the disease, we do not

mended, and only ringspot-free plants should be purchased. Once the exact identity of the azalea ringspot virus is known, methods for detection will be developed which will lead to the development of efficient control strategies.

*This article reports on an important azalea research project funded through the ASA's Azalea Research Foundation which is supported by your donations. See [www.azaleas.org/arf/donations.html](http://www.azaleas.org/arf/donations.html) for more information on supporting this and other azalea research projects.*

*Rodrigo A. Valverde is a professor in the Dept. of Plant Pathology and Crop Physiology, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center in Baton Rouge. His research focus is on diseases caused by plant viruses.*



Fig. 6a 'George Lindley Taber' ringspots.

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# Personal Observations on Encore® Azaleas in a Zone 7 Garden

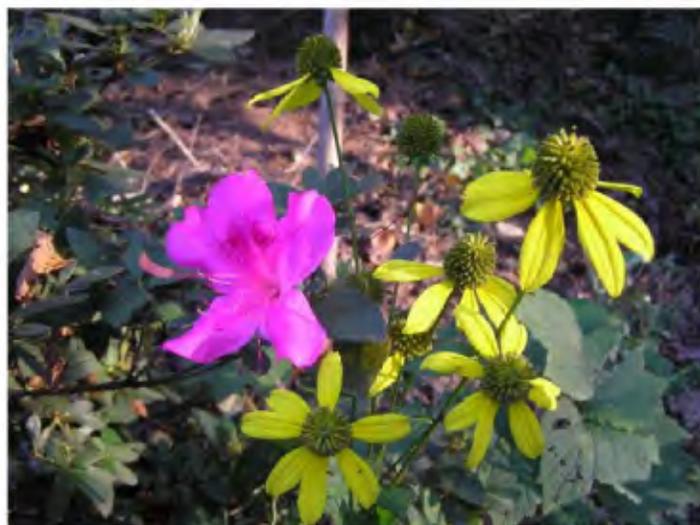
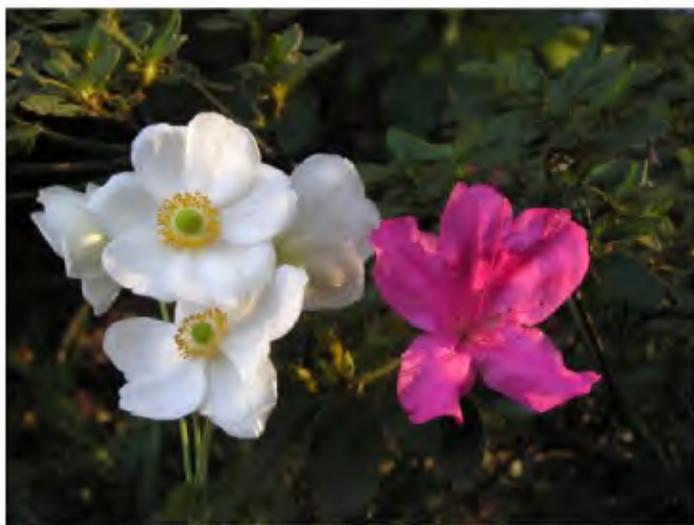
by Will Ferrell, Kernersville, North Carolina

**B**uddy Lee's fantastic array of remontant azaleas is extremely deserving of praise and attention. This article is not directed at that purpose, but rather is directed at communicating a few observations about the characteristics of the various Encore® cultivars planted in Piedmont North Carolina Zone 7a gardens. I have tried to observe Encores planted in reasonably well-amended soils, but red clay is still red clay. So I thought that observations of performance in slightly heavier soils and slightly cooler temperatures than the sweet spot for Encores would be of interest.

I've been growing and enjoying Encores for almost a

other or next to a white-blooming camellia.

Perhaps the immunity to lacebugs and drought tolerance derive from the Encore® group's *Rhododendron oldhamii* blood. This Taiwanese species is a Zone 8-9 plant in America, which probably has something to do with why the creators make the point that the plants can take more sun



dozen years now, starting with AUTUMN TWIST™ ('Conlep'), AUTUMN TWIST ('Conlep'), AUTUMN ROYALTY™ ('Conlec'), and AUTUMN SANGRIA™ ('Roblee') are three of the very best in terms of two-season floriferousness, vigor, and drought tolerance. They also share an attractive leaf of above average substance, which seems absolutely immune to lacebugs. All three are fantastic plants in every respect.

AUTUMN SANGRIA™ ('Roblee') has a rich neon color that is beautiful, but I find it challenging to blend with other spring-blooming ericaceous plants. In the fall, it doesn't seem like a problem at all; it is fun to have 'Honorine Jobert' Japanese anemone on one side of it and *Rudbeckia laciniata* on the

than most azaleas. In spite of this provenance, 13 of the 29 Encores are hardy even in Zone 6a.

AUTUMN AMETHYST™ ('Conlee') performs excellently for me. It is unique in its attractive, veiny foliage and its predilection to bloom when temperatures are cooler. It is the first to bloom in spring, right with 'Geisha', and then waits later in the fall to bloom (continuing till hard frost). In this respect, AUTUMN AMETHYST™ ('Conlee') is smarter than many Encores, whose August blooms melt in 90+ degree heat.



AUTUMN CARNATION™ ('Roblec') is an excellent performer in terms of two-season flowering—even as a young plant—and vigorous growth. Most Encores seem to improve their flowering ability with maturity.

I do not grow AUTUMN ROUGE™ ('Conlea'), AUTUMN BELLE™ ('Robleo'), AUTUMN CARNIVAL™ ('Conlet'), AUTUMN SUNSET™ ('Roblen'), AUTUMN PRINCESS™ ('Roblea'), or AUTUMN CHEER™ ('Conlef'), but I have observed them to thrive and be two-season bloomers in gardens in my area - especially AUTUMN CARNIVAL™ ('Conlet'). On the negative side, I observe diffidently (small sample) that AUTUMN RUBY™ ('Conler') has not bloomed in fall for me. While AUTUMN EMBERS™ ('Conleb') does fall bloom, it seems inferior to AUTUMN SUNSET™ ('Roblen') in foliage and bloom. Other Zone 7a gardeners reported that AUTUMN CHIFFON™ ('Robled') and AUTUMN CORAL™ ('Conled') did not perform as well as other Encores for them.

Returning to plants I grow myself, I really enjoy AUTUMN ANGEL™ ('Robleg') with its low Satsuki habit. It blooms a little weakly for me in the fall, even after about five years in the ground, but better each year. On the other hand, the more upright-structured AUTUMN MOONLIGHT™ ('Mootum') is probably the most floriferous of all, even as a young plant. Unfortunately, AUTUMN MOONLIGHT™ ('Mootum') is on the edge in Zone 7a, as its foliage burns during our typical winter. (The Encore® website provides information on the varying hardiness of the cultivars. Keep in mind, it is very hard for a seller of plants not to be a smidge optimistic.)

I should note that all of my azaleas are planted in what I regard as optimal azalea conditions: high, dappled shade with a little direct sun of roughly an hour each day. The Encore® website specifies 4-6 hours of direct sun to achieve optimal spring/fall blooming (ideally with afternoon shade). But that can pose a bit of a problem in that lots of sun degrades the blooms of azaleas, except those blooming in the cool of April or October. At worst, a hot sun melts the blooms; at least, it robs them of any blue subtlety in their shading.

At any rate, when I mention the following Encores that only spring-bloom for me, realize that they are planted in conditions similar to what the more floriferous ones above experience (less sun than the Encore® website specifies as ideal). AUTUMN LILAC™ ('Robles'), for instance, is a perfectly beautiful spring bloomer, but I've yet to see a fall bloom on it in my

garden. AUTUMN STARLITE™ ('Roblem') also blooms beautifully in the spring but never blooms at all in the fall. I would say the same of AUTUMN SWEETHEART™ ('Robleja'), but also add that though AUTUMN SWEETHEART™ ('Robleja') remains healthy, it shows no vigor and remains small. AUTUMN DEBUTANTE™ ('Roblel') also blooms nicely about mid-May, but only blooms sparsely in the fall; mine actually gets about three hours direct sun.

But overall, what a marvelous achievement **Buddy Lee's** Encore® Azaleas represent! How many plants will bloom profusely for two weeks in the spring and then have a good number of blooms from early August till November's hard frost? And every one in my experience is hygienic—to wit, not a hanger-of-spent-blooms in the group. Bravo to Buddy Lee! I hope these details of my experience will be of some use to those just delving into this great group of plants. Be sure to consult the Encore™ website for information about hardiness, the natural size and structure, and other details of the diverse cultivars. A pleasant thought to end on: Buddy's still at it!

*Will Ferrell is the author of the historical novel The Secrets of Sterling Shearin: The Noblest Cause and has been an ASA member since 2001.*

### Order of spring blooming:

AUTUMN AMETHYST™ ('Conlee')  
AUTUMN RUBY™ ('Conler')  
AUTUMN STARLITE™ ('Roblem')

AUTUMN SUNSET™ ('Roblen')  
AUTUMN SWEETHEART™ ('Robleja')  
AUTUMN CARNIVAL™ ('Roblec')

AUTUMN TWIST ('Conlep')  
AUTUMN ROYALTY™ ('Conlec')  
AUTUMN SANGRIA™ ('Roblee')  
AUTUMN LILAC™ ('Robles')

AUTUMN DEBUTANTE™ ('Roblel')

AUTUMN ANGEL™ ('Robleg')  
AUTUMN MOONLIGHT ('Mootum')

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# Chapter News

## Northern Virginia Chapter News

*Barry Sperling, Corresponding Secretary*

We were all saddened to hear of the death of **Frances Louer**, a founding member of the ASA and the Northern VA Chapter. Among many chores over the last 30 years she was co-editor, with her husband Phil, of the chapter newsletter "The Azalea Clipper."

On a brighter note we all enjoyed the annual Cutting Exchange, held at the home of **Bonnie and Frank Pattie** on the Potomac River in Stafford. This enjoyable afternoon included extensive food selections, a large variety of cuttings, and a tour of the grounds led by Bonnie.

**Paul Beck** has been hard at work on the new chapter website and it is already a top-notch destination. Check it out at: [www.nv-asa.org](http://www.nv-asa.org) (note that is a hyphen and not an underscore.)

We all have fine selections from hybridizers **Joe Klimavicz** and **Bob Stewart**, but now Joe has introduced a special plant named 'Bob Stewart'. This looks to be a major feature in all our gardens for years to come!

The fall will be busy, as usual, with the annual auction on Oct. 12 at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Virginia, a meeting with a speaker on Nov. 17 and the annual holiday social December 8. Join us if you can!

## Oconee Chapter News

*Mike Sikes, Chapter Member*

After hosting the 2013 ASA Convention in Athens, Georgia, the Oconee Chapter was proud to present a check for \$2,500 to the ASA General Fund. The Oconee Chapter also sent \$2,500 for the Azalea Research Foundation. The Foundation's mission is to foster knowledge and improvement of the standards of excellence with regard to azaleas. A \$1,000 check was made to the Georgia Master Gardeners Endowed Scholarship Fund to encourage the passion for growing, learning and teaching in University of Georgia horticulture students. A gift of \$500 was given to support the future Children's Garden at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia.

## Texas Chapter News

*Barbara Stump, Chapter Member*

We've begun our planning for hosting the 2015 convention in our fair city of Nacogdoches, Texas, from the roots up. Pardon the pun, but besides collecting committee chair people and looking at private gardens to visit, we've begun our first-ever cutting propagation project. Under the experienced and organized direction of our chapter secretary **Sherrie Randall** and member **Peg Kern**, we've got our first set of rooted cuttings now potted into gallons for you for

2015. Both have been trained in this as SFA Mast Arboretum volunteers by Research Associate for Plant Evaluation Dawn Stove for over 10 years, so they are leading the more timid of us into this new territory. I got to select my top 30 evergreen cultivars from the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden as our preliminary cutting stock; Sherrie picked her top 20 hydrangea cultivars as well. So far our best luck has been with 'Hampton Beauty', 'Wakaebisu', 'Chinzan', and 'Speckled Spider'. We're negotiating with **Maarten van der Giessen** for our favorite liners of Aromi hybrids and we're nursing along more deciduous liners from **J Jackson's** Native Plant Nursery. This is all very standard stuff for you who've been in the ASA for years, but it is very exciting for us. Good practice for our propagation next spring as well. When you visited us in 2007, we had plants from generous friends, but we wanted to grow our own this time.

In other news, we hope to help the City of Nacogdoches and Keep Nacogdoches Beautiful with their first-ever "Tree and Azalea Planting" event in October. What a great idea, actually planting azaleas at the best time—the fall.

## Vaseyi Chapter News

*Suzanne Medd, Corresponding Secretary, and Audrey Stelloh, President*

Our April meeting was a field trip to two different gardens, one owned by Ray Head and the other owned by **Wayne Hutchins**. Some special plants that the group enjoyed were 'Grandiflora' silverbell, 'Winter King' hawthorne, 'Madison' dogwood, and many blooming rhododendrons and azaleas.

At our June meeting members voted to send \$200 to the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville in order to print more brochures for the Native Azalea Repository. Our speaker was Laura Felt, an accomplished Ikenobo Ikebana artist who lived in Japan for 4 years. Ikebana is the Japanese art of flower arrangement which dates back more than 500 years and is still practiced as a highly respected cultural art form in modern day Japan. Laura delighted us with her artistry, spontaneity and the ten beautiful arrangements she created, using branches of azaleas in bloom brought by members.

Our July meeting was our annual cutting exchange in Hendersonville, NC. The 50 baggies of cuttings to share were scooped up enthusiastically. **Bob Head** showed 3 of the hybrid azaleas that he developed for repeat blooming from July to frost - one with frilly double pink blooms, one fuchsia, and one dark magenta with a white center. They are being sold in nurseries as "Bloom-a-Thon" and "ReBloom" and are hardy to zone 6.

**Bob Stelloh** led a discussion to find out the members' views about the ASA investing in conservative dividend-paying stocks because the CD rates earned by the Endowment Fund are no longer high enough to supplement the cost of the publication of *The Azalean*. Many members were knowledgeable about investing, and voted that it would be good to invest a portion of the Endowment Fund in conservative dividend paying stocks.

We decided to help the ARS with nominations of azaleas that should be on the Proven Performers list for our area. We nominated 21 new evergreen azaleas and suggested that the Rhododendron of the Year award for the azalea category be given to either 'George Lindley Taber' or 'Hardy Gardenia'. We recommended 8 new deciduous azaleas, with *R. prunifolium* nominated for deciduous azalea Rhododendron of the Year.

## In Memory

### Frances Lucille Louer



Frances Lucille Louer passed away Monday, June 17, 2013. She is survived by her loving husband Phil as well as five children and their families, including Leslie and David Nanne. Frances began growing azaleas in the late 1960's. She joined the American Rhododendron Society a few years later and also completed the Master Gardener course.

Frances was a founding member of the Northern Virginia chapter ASA in 1981 and became its first corresponding secretary. She and Phil produced the chapter newsletter for 30 years. In 1983 they moved to a new home on five acres in Haymarket, Virginia and began to assemble one of the largest privately held azalea collections in the country. It now has 9,200 plants of 3,500 different cultivars displayed in a beautifully designed woodland garden. Frances always welcomed visitors to the garden and hosted as many as 20 tours every spring for local plant societies, church groups and, of course, the ASA and ARS.

In 2009 the ASA awarded Frances and Phil the Distinguished Service Award for their long-standing contributions to the Northern Virginia Chapter and the National ASA.

### Sybil Przypek

Sybil Przypek, a longtime member of the ASA and the Northern Virginia Chapter, passed away on July 25, 2013. Sybil was also very active in a number of other horticulture societies, including the American Holly Society, the American Rhododendron Society and York County Master Gardeners. She was a founder of the York County Learning Garden and Arboretum in Yorktown, Virginia. We extend our condolences to Walter, her husband of 55 years, and the entire family. For those who want to send cards, the Przypek mailing address is: PO Box 1087, Yorktown, VA 23692.



## Article of the Year Award

To encourage the continuing high quality of articles in *The Azalean*, the Azalea Society sponsors a monetary award for the author of the article judged best for the year by vote of our members. The award is in the form of a check presented at our annual conventions. The award was instituted in 1990.

Congratulations to 2012 winner **Patrick Thompson**, President of Alabamense Chapter, for his article entitled "Auburn University's Davis Arboretum," on page 62 of the Winter 2012 issue of *The Azalean*.

# New Members

## Alabamense

Dr. & Mrs. Richard M. Cobb  
3600 8th Street East  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35404

## At Large

Alma Buffkin  
117 Lee Dr.  
Leland, NC 28451-7603

Valerie A. DeSanti  
8602 Hammock Dunes Drive  
Wilmington, NC 28411-8301

Five Oaks Nursery  
2120 Old Winter Park Rd  
Wilmington, NC 28405

Louis Fratello  
950 Route 9W South  
Upper Grandview, NY 10960

Auburn and Ron Harris  
1018 Plantation Drive  
Panama City, FL 32404

James & Diana Hayden  
90 Spruce Pond Dr  
Strafford, NH 03884

Al Hight  
5100 Gorham Avenue  
Wilmington, NC 28409

Margaret Riddle Russ  
230 Pinecrest Drive, Apt. 12  
Fayetteville, NC 28305

Suzanne Thatcher  
1704 Signature Place  
Wilmington, NC 28405

The Transplanted Garden  
502 S. 16th Street  
Wilmington, NC 28401

H. Les Turlington  
2025 Oleander Drive  
Wilmington, NC 28403

## Lake Michigan

Tere Cole-Long  
Holden Arboretum  
9500 Sperry Road  
Kirtland, OH 44094-5172

## Oconee

Connie Cottingham  
PO Box 969  
Watkinsville, GA 30677

## Rev. John Drayton

Ernest Koone III  
705 Wright Rd  
Pine Mountain, GA 31822

## Vaseyi

Laura Brown  
286 Mountain Dale Rd  
Vilas, NC 28692

Bill and Jane Duke  
101 Citation Lane  
Gastonia, NC 28056

Laura Felt  
1403 Fifth Ave W  
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Anne Guelker  
RR1 - Box 1771  
Winona, MO 68588

Charles Harris  
33 Beri Dr.  
Asheville, NC 28806

Nick Presnell  
1235-E East Blvd #146  
Charlotte, NC 28203

Bob Smart  
1 Approach Rd  
Asheville, NC 28803

Ann and Jim Wetmore  
5515 Pinnacle Church Rd  
Morganton, NC 28655

## 2013 Azalea Society of America Distinguished Service Award Recipient: Jim Thornton

The Distinguished Service Award was presented to Jim Thornton in recognition of his many contributions to the Azalea Society of America. His love for azaleas and sharing of his knowledge has truly advanced ASA and has enhanced the appreciation of azaleas for many people. Serving as a board member and president of both the national society and the Oconee Chapter, coordinating two annual conventions, and working diligently to develop and implement our research foundation, Jim has truly been an exceptional asset to our society.

His response to ASA follows:

*Looking back, I am sure that I didn't make much of an impression in accepting the award bestowed on me at the convention but I was completely taken by surprise. I had no idea it was coming. Maybe I was in shock! Please believe me, I was so humbled my being selected by my peers for this award!*

*When I joined the society years ago little did I know that I was embarking on a journey at both the local and national level that would last this long and provide such an ongoing learning experience.*

*I tried to assist in making the society an organization we would all be proud of and one which would help enlist new members. Above all though, Patsy and I have enjoyed establishing very dear lifelong friendships with folks from all across the country!*

*Please don't take this as my "swan song" for I will always, as long as I can, be a humble servant to the Azalea Society of America!  
Thank you again for the Distinguished Service Award! Jim*



# Recognizing Generous ASA Members

Dan Krabill, Treasurer

I would like to recognize and thank those individuals and institutions who have made donations to the Azalea Society of America, by paying dues in excess of the \$25 annual standard amount or by making direct payments to the ASA. We have three categories for donations – Contributing (payment of \$50 to \$99 for the year), Sustaining (\$100 to \$199), and Endowment (\$200 or more). These donations provided more than 5 percent of our income and are very important in carrying out the work of the ASA.

Following is a list of members in these three categories through dues payments for the year 2013 or donations during the first 8 months of 2013.

## Contributing Members 2013

### Payments of \$50 to \$99

Jeff and Leabeth Abt  
Mitch Andrews  
Stephen Ash  
John Barnes  
BoxLee Azaleas  
Virginia & Samuel Burd  
David Dethero  
Suzi and Nelson Durant  
Joseph E. Gutierrez, MD  
Harold and Caryl Hall  
Bob Head  
Bob & Martha Kelly  
Magnolia Plantation & Gardens  
Dr. Patrick McKenna  
W. T. Norris, Jr, MD  
Gloria Banks Ormsby  
H. M. Fuzzy Perritt  
The Polly Hill Arboretum  
Harry Smutzer  
Benjamin D. Taylor  
Billie Trump  
Maarten van der Giessen  
Lloyd & Margaret Willis

## Sustaining Members 2013

### Payments of \$100 to \$199

Louis J. Appell, Jr  
Nien-Chou Chen  
Jeanne M. Hammer  
Dan & Barbara Krabill  
Larry Miller  
Mrs. Lawrence Nachman  
Richard G. Odom  
River Oaks Garden Club  
Cecil and Gloria Settle  
Barbara Stump  
Roger A. Thompson  
David Wertz

## Endowment Members 2013

### Payments of \$200 or More

Donald H. Voss

## Join the Azalea Society of America

The Azalea Society welcomes membership by anyone interested in azaleas, from all cultures and disciplines. We invite those who wish to learn, and those who know and wish to share their knowledge.

Member Name

Street Address

City, State, Nine-Digit Zip Code

Area Code and Telephone Number / Private ( )

E-Mail Address / Private ( )

Type of Membership:

- Individual (\$25 U.S., Canada, Mexico / \$40 International)
- Contributing (\$50)
- Supporting (\$100)
- Endowment (\$200)
- Lifetime (\$500 U.S., Canada, Mexico / \$800 International)

Chapter Affiliation:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alabamense (AL)            | <input type="checkbox"/> Rev. John Drayton (SC)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ben Morrison (MD)          | <input type="checkbox"/> Southern California (CA)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Michigan (MI, IL, IN) | <input type="checkbox"/> Texas (TX)                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Louisiana (LA)             | <input type="checkbox"/> Tri-State (IN, IL, KY)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern Virginia (VA)     | <input type="checkbox"/> Vaseyi (NC, SC, TN)       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oconee (GA)                | <input type="checkbox"/> At-Large (no affiliation) |

Mail membership application form along with your check or money order to:

Dan Krabill  
ASA Treasurer  
6009 Copely Lane  
McLean, VA 22101

Privacy Notice: Membership information is published in the society's membership roster and quarterly journal, The Azalean. Information may also be published in a password-protected online Roster available only to society members. If you mark ("X") private on your telephone number and/or e-mail address, it will only be used for official society business and will not be published.

two sets of leaves, one set of which is deciduous. A very few are semi-deciduous; that is, they become deciduous in the colder end of their hardiness range and remain more or less evergreen at their warmer end. Leaves vary in length from a fraction of an inch to almost three feet long. They can be thin or they can be thick like southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) and lusterleaf holly (*Ilex latifolia*). Upper surfaces of leaves can be smooth or rough. The undersides can be smooth, scaly, or hairy. Rhododendrons are found from sea level to as high as 18,000 feet. Some are alpine plants living in arctic conditions or high altitudes under many feet of snow in winter and then flowering and producing seed in cool short summers; others are tender plants living in subtropical rain forests. Only one (*R. afghanicum*) can be considered a high desert plant. A few are epiphytic, growing like orchids attached only to tree limbs, downed logs, or even rocks, just hanging on, waiting for the monsoon rains to nourish them.

Some rhododendrons have buds from which both leaves and flowers emerge, and others have separate flower buds and leaf buds. Most have flower buds only on the terminal ends of branches, while some have flower buds emanating from the axils of branch and leaf. Flower blossoms vary in size from less than half an inch to more than six inches across. Some have fragrance; most do not. Some rhododendrons bloom as early as January or February; some as late as August or even September, rarely into November. Rhododendrons come in a wide variety of flower colors in the white to pink to purple range and in the yellow to orange to red range, but true blue is a hybridizer goal more than a reality. Some plants have single flowers, and some have trusses of blossoms. Most have 5 five petals on the flower corolla but some species have 7 seven or more. The number of stamens vary from five (azaleas), to 10 (the majority), on up to 28 (rare exceptions). In fact, rhododendrons and their subclassification groups are so variable, it is difficult to make an absolute statement about them; someone is certain to point out an exception.

### Making Distinctions

In botany, the term *azalea* no longer has any official standing; in botanists' formal language *azalea* is now an illegitimate name and cannot be used in grouping and classifying plants. It continues only as a vernacular name, a common name. To millions of gardeners and plant lovers, azaleas are delightful, floriferous, desirable evergreen shrubs. To a smaller number, it includes the deciduous rhododendrons primarily from North America, including the plant William Bartram called, "certainly the most gay and brilliant flowering shrub yet known."

To a gardener, azaleas are distinct from other rhododendrons. Choosing an azalea and choosing a rhododendron are not synonymous. Books that commingle azalea species among other rhododendron species without mentioning the distinction or combine deciduous hybrids and evergreen hybrids in the same lists with no clue given of this major trait the differ-

ences are not helpful to those trying to choose a plant. Such practice is common, however, because all are in the *Rhododendron* genus.

Beginning in 1915, the American Joint Committee on Horticultural Nomenclature was formed by horticulturists, pharmacists, nurserymen, growers, and plant societies. Its purpose was "so far as practical" to promote "the consistent use of a single standardized 'scientific' name, and a single standardized 'common' name for every tree, shrub, and plant in American commerce." The Statement of the Problem issued in 1917 included the following example. "Azalea is now classed under *Rhododendron* by some botanists, yet for trade reasons it seems inexpedient to catalogue the Azaleas as *Rhododendrons*." In their 1923 edition of *Standardized Plant Names*, they state, "Azalea is retained as a genus name in accordance with the universal horticultural distinction between Azaleas and Rhododendrons, although leading botanical authorities regard the distinction as of subgeneric rank and apply the name *Rhododendron* to both groups ..." In the 1942 edition, their stance is modified. Under Azalea they write, "Because of their outstanding horticultural interest, and because they are popularly (as well as by some botanists) generically distinguished from Rhododendrons, Azaleas are listed separately here, as well as under Rhododendron." Under Rhododendron, is the notice, "Special attention is called to the fact that botanically all Azaleas are properly listed below under Rhododendron. In horticultural practice, however, it is deemed permissible to use the generic Latin term Azalea for the (mostly) deciduous forms of Rhododendron. Some horticulturists, however, prefer to use the technically correct botanical name Rhododendron for the entire group, confining the name Azalea to common and hort[icultural] names where appropriate. For convenience of reference, a botanical list is also included under Azalea ..."

Horticulturists and gardeners have no problem distinguishing between evergreen azaleas, deciduous azaleas, and the other rhododendrons. Almost any gardener can tell an azalea from other rhododendrons at a glance. What are the differences?

### Azaleas

- Almost, but not all, azaleas have five stamens; most rhododendrons have 10 stamens.
- Azaleas are mostly medium-sized shrubs, with unbranched (single stem or strand) hairs usually found on the leaves and branches.
- Azalea leaves are smaller and thinner than most rhododendrons, and generally the plants have smaller flowers. All azaleas are elepidotes and do not have scales on the undersides of their leaves.
- Azalea flowers are mostly funnel-shaped, while other rhododendrons are usually bell-shaped.
- Azaleas sometimes have flowers of different colors on the same plant, even within the same flower bud. Other rhododendrons are much more consistent in flower color.

- Stamen and sepal abnormalities resulting in hose-in-hose or double flowers are not unusual in azaleas; such characteristics are rare in the other rhododendrons.
- Azalea flowers tend to be at the ends of the branches. Some rhododendrons form flowers along the branch.
- Culture of azaleas is somewhat easier than rhododendrons. Azaleas are more tolerant of habitat than other rhododendrons. In general, they can tolerate more sun, more drought, more water, more fertilizer. Early-blooming azaleas seem to be less tolerant of early spring frosts than other early-blooming rhododendrons. In the United States, azaleas can be successfully used as garden plants in more areas of the country than other rhododendrons.

### Evergreen Azaleas

- The azaleas we call evergreen azaleas are not actually true evergreens. They have dimorphic (two sets of) leaves: (1) deciduous leaves, which come out in the spring and drop in the fall or winter; (2) smaller, thicker leaves growing in summer at the ends of the new branch growth and usually remaining through winter, dropping after new spring leaves have formed.
- Evergreen azaleas are bushy shrubs, usually compact and mounded, usually smaller than other rhodys, but can be from low ground covers to plants over 10 feet.
- Both flowers and leaves emerge from the same terminal bud on evergreen azaleas.
- Most evergreen azaleas bloom earlier than most rhododendrons, but there are many exceptions.
- Almost all evergreen azaleas have single flowers, not a cluster of flowers, but the quantity of flowers is usually large. Most deciduous azaleas and other rhododendrons have clusters of flowers in a truss.
- Some evergreen azaleas, primarily *R. oldhamii* and recently developed hybrids, regularly bloom in both the spring and fall because they bloom from a second set of flower buds on new growth as well as from last year's growth. While deciduous azaleas and other rhododendron occasionally re-bloom out of their normal bloom season, such re-blooming is an anomaly.
- The corolla of an evergreen azalea flower can be tubular, funnel-formed, or bell-shaped, with a large variety of petal shapes.
- Flowers on evergreen azaleas tend to stay on the plant after they wilt. On deciduous azaleas and other rhododendrons, flower corollas tend to drop cleanly from the plant.
- Evergreen azaleas usually have five stamens, but some species and hybrids have varying numbers up to 10. The stamens on evergreen azaleas do not extend much beyond the petals.
- Flowers on evergreen azaleas can have unusual color combinations not just with different coloring on separate flowers but with spots, flecks, streaks, stripes, and edg-

ing in different colors. Other rhododendrons may have a strong blotch with colored spots ("bee tracks") and some flushes of lighter or darker colors but are not found with flecks, streaks, or picotee edging.

- Yellow and true orange are colors not found on evergreen azaleas.
- Most evergreen azaleas have no fragrance.
- Evergreen azaleas were once thought too tender to be grown outside in the U.S. or Great Britain. They were considered hothouse plants. Since almost the beginning, deciduous azaleas were called the hardy azaleas, primarily grown out of doors.
- Cuttings from evergreen azaleas are much easier to root than those from deciduous azaleas or other rhododendrons.
- All evergreen azaleas come from Asia. There are 60 or so evergreen species (some sources state as many as 110), and many, many hybrids. Determining what is a species and what is a man-made hybrid is difficult. Evergreen azaleas have been cultivated in Japan and China for over 1000 years. None are native to America, though to see many gardens in the United States one would think the azalea is the U.S. national flower (no, it is the rose).

### Deciduous Azaleas

- Deciduous azaleas are, of course, deciduous, dropping their leaves each fall or winter and often providing good fall color. In Florida they can be almost evergreen. The vast majority of other rhododendrons are evergreen.
- Leaves of deciduous azaleas are for the most part much longer and proportionally narrower than those on the evergreen azaleas .
- While mature deciduous azaleas can be short (e.g., *R. atlanticum*), they are typically taller and more upright than evergreen azaleas, occasionally reaching 15 feet or more, and on rare occasions having trunks greater than five inches in diameter.
- Some deciduous azaleas are stoloniferous, with multiple stems growing out of the ground at a distance from the main plant. In favorable circumstances over a long period of time, single stoloniferous plants have been known to cover an acre or more. Evergreen azaleas and other rhododendrons are not stoloniferous.
- Deciduous azaleas have separate flower buds and leaf buds.
- On deciduous azaleas, multiple leaf buds form at the stem terminal, below any flower buds, resulting in upright limbs often having one or two feet of bare stem between swirls of branches. Evergreen azaleas tend to branch more often, producing more compact plants.
- Most deciduous azaleas have funnel/tubular-shaped flowers, with longer tubes than on the corollas of evergreen azaleas.
- With two exceptions, all deciduous azaleas have five sta-

mens, usually extending well beyond the corolla. *R. vaseyi* has five to seven and *R. canadense* has 10. The corollas of these two deciduous azaleas are also considerably different with no or almost no corolla tube.

- Some species of deciduous azaleas bloom only in late summer and into fall (e.g., *R. prunifolium*, *R. arborescens* var. *georgiana*, *R. viscosum* var. *serrulatum*); except for re-blooming evergreen azaleas, other rhododendrons are not late bloomers (finishing in May or June, depending on climate).
- Unlike most evergreen azaleas, deciduous azaleas have trusses of flowers, with multiple flowers coming from a single flower bud. There can even be multiple flower buds on the ends of vigorous branches, creating a pom-pom effect. Almost 100 flowers at a terminal branch have been reported.
- When deciduous azalea flowers first begin to open, all the still-closed flowers in a bud stand up like fingers or claws. This is a particularly attractive stage, often with multicolored fingers.
- Deciduous azaleas can be multi-colored with flushes of colors blending on the petals and with a large solid blotch on the upper petal. Spots and flecks do not normally occur on deciduous azaleas, but coloring along the center of the petal and on one side or the other can yield a peppermint effect. Of the deciduous plants, only a few (e.g., *R. vaseyi*, *R. albrechtii*) have colored bee tracks (dots) in the upper petal blotch.
- Several deciduous azalea species are in the yellow and orange range, colors not usually found in evergreen azaleas or other rhododendrons. While lavender or light purple can occasionally be found on some deciduous azaleas (*R. periclymenoides*), purple is a color reserved for evergreen azaleas and other rhododendron.
- Many deciduous azaleas have distinctive fragrances (e.g., clove, lemon, vanilla, heliotrope, honeysuckle). Fragrances can be weak or strong, depending on species and other factors, like time of day. Some species of other rhododendrons are fragrant.
- Deciduous azaleas come primarily from North America, where currently 17 species are defined. Georgia can claim the most species, and some states, like Indiana, have none. Asia has a few species and one species is found in eastern Europe along the Asia border.

### On The Fence

In such a large genus as *Rhododendron*, one should not be surprised to see some plants that do not fit cleanly into one category or another. Some declared species may look like transition species between certain rhododendron and azalea groups or between deciduous and evergreen azaleas. As mentioned, leaves can be deciduous, semi-deciduous, dimorphic, or evergreen. There are a few species with some deciduous-azalea-like characteristics but notable differences (e.g., *R. dauricum*,

*R. mucronulatum*, and *R. albiflorum*). The semi-deciduous *R. dauricum* and the deciduous *R. mucronulatum* are lepidotes and thus have scales. Each flower bud opens to a single flower, a trait not occurring in typical deciduous azaleas. While *R. albiflorum* of the North American Rocky Mountains is deciduous and has no scales, it has 10 stamens and flowers that look like little bells appearing along the stems (instead of at the terminal end). A common name for this plant is Cascade azalea, though it has seldom been considered a deciduous azalea. It is also difficult to grow and quite rare in gardens.

A small group of deciduous azaleas has long been considered more closely related to the evergreen azaleas than to the majority of the deciduous azaleas. These azaleas (including *R. mariesii*, *R. reticulatum*, and *R. weyrichii*) usually have 10 stamens, instead of the usual five, and flowers and leaves emerge from the same buds.

### Reclassification and More Dilution

To make some sense of such a large genus as *Rhododendron*, it is not surprising that the whole has been divided into subgenera and even smaller divisions. The divisions have changed over the years, but for the most part deciduous azaleas and evergreen azaleas have been placed in two subgenera, *Pentanthera* and *Tsutsusi*. In a recent proposed move (Goetsch et al, 2004), Goetsch demoted subgenus *Tsutsusi* and moved these evergreen species under subgenus *Azaleastrum*, which with some irony is identified as the “False Azaleas” by Davidian. While there is phylogenetic logic to her reclassification, to the horticulturist at least, the *Azaleastrum* of Goetsch does not appear to be a coherent whole, but more like a group of interesting cats and dogs. In the 2004 revision, deciduous azaleas (with the exception of a few placed with the evergreen azaleas in subgenus *Azaleastrum*), were also demoted from subgenus status and moved under the existing subgenus that contains almost all the elepidote rhododendrons (*Hymenanthes*). Of all American azaleas, *R. vaseyi* and *R. canadense* are the most distinct in flower characteristics, and these somewhat similar species have usually been classified together. While Goetsch moved deciduous *R. vaseyi* to join the evergreen azaleas in subgenus *Azaleastrum*, deciduous *R. canadense* remained with the deciduous azaleas in subgenus *Hymenanthes*. For azaleas, the net effect of these proposed reclassifications is to separate even further evergreen azaleas from most of the deciduous azaleas and to demote both evergreen and deciduous azaleas from major category status (subgenera) within the genus *Rhododendron*.

### Conclusion

What is the conclusion? What is an azalea? Don't ask a taxonomic botanist, because the botanist will tell you that there is only one species that is (or was) an azalea, now renamed *Loiseleuria procumbens*. Instead, ask any gardener, and the gardener will smile, get up off of his soil-stained knees, and describe two most delightful groups of floriferous plants.



Deciduous azaleas lose their leaves in the winter like this *R. austrinum*.



Azaleas tend to have smaller flowers than this 'Dexter's Purple' rhododendron.



Many deciduous azaleas have a blotch of a different color on the upper petal like this natural triploid hybrid (*R. flammeum* x *R. calendulaceum*).



Deciduous azalea *R. viscosum* has long sticky tubes



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*Charles Andrews is a nature lover who spends time in his garden, in the woods looking for native azaleas, and on trout streams. He is a member of the Oconee Chapter ASA and the president of the Azalea Chapter ARS.*

# 2013 Annual ASA Conference in Athens

Mike Sikes, Athens, GA

The ASA Annual Convention was held in Athens, Georgia, home to the University of Georgia. This April 18-20 event was sponsored by the Oconee Chapter. Everyone was welcomed the first evening by Dr. Wilf Nicholls, director of the State Botanical Garden of Georgia. We visited the State Botanical Garden the next day for garden tours and lunch in the Conservatory.

Several private gardens with plant collections galore were the highlight of that day's tours. Vince Dooley's garden was a horticultural menagerie, with collections of Japanese maples, redbuds, azaleas, and camellias. Many one-of-a-kind plants made it even more interesting, especially Weepers' Corner, a collection of weeping trees.

The Charlotte and John Waters garden was a peaceful collection of garden rooms that led the eye in quiet and unique directions – especially the mirrored garden room. The natural woodland garden of Cindy and John Karp was outstanding, even in the brief downpour of rain. The unusual art throughout their garden was an added treasure.



Ram & Tom Giberson's garden

The final garden of the day was that of Ram and Tom Giberson. This connoisseur's garden was a collection of plants, garden rooms, water features and unique chicken and duck houses. A true plant lover's paradise, this garden had a loving spirit that was felt by all. It is not often that the garden hosts are awestruck by the tour guests, but Ram



Oconee Chapter members Mike Sikes, John Harrison, and Jim Thornton with Vince Dooley (holding plant).

and Tom expressed their gratitude in the following thank you note: *What a wonderful garden-loving group we got to meet today. Even though it was a rainy day, you all brought sunshine. When we built this garden we had no perception that it would be a source for the shared love for gardening that it has been. The garden itself seems to give love to people and people respond by sharing that love with*

*us. It was so delightful to spend an afternoon with a group that appreciates the beauty nature provides when we add a little creativity. Tom and I had an almost instant connection with you all as though we had known you for a lifetime. I have to say that this unique and unspoken connection was a real gift - it was just a lot of good feelings and sensations. Tom and I will treasure this moment throughout our lives. Thanks to the Azalea Society and to all of you who came to visit us today, April 19th, 2013.*

The second day of tours highlighted the nursery industry in the area. Tours and BBQ lunch at Homeplace Gardens was a special treat hosted by ASA member **Willis Harden**. Homeplace is a wholesale nursery that specializes in azaleas, rhododendrons, mountain laurel, and Japanese maples. After lunch everyone visited Transplant Nursery, owned by **Lisa and Jeff Beasley**. Many plants were available for sale and the busses quickly filled with blooming beauties. That evening our banquet speaker was Dr. Michael Dirr of international horticulture fame. The plant sale was a great success. Most cars left filled with beautiful and unusual azaleas and other ornamentals. Thank you to the Oconee Chapter for a wonderful spring weekend in the beautiful 'Classic City' of Athens, Georgia!



Plant sale at Transplant Nursery.

# Magnolia Gardens: Shaped by Many People

Herb Frazier, Charleston, South Carolina

I am the unlikely public relations and marketing manager at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in Charleston, South Carolina. Selling a Southern garden to the press and public was not on my list of career options when I was growing up in this port city, but when I saw the White Bridge, Magnolia's iconic symbol, for the first time in November 2010, then inhaled the aroma and listened to passionate memories of these gardens, I knew this was a place for me.



Frazier

Gardens and the life that grows in them was not a childhood fantasy when I lived in the government-built projects called Ansonborough Homes at the east end of Calhoun Street. My grandmother, Mable Frazier, liked plants and cared for them outside our stoop. I have fond memories of her blooming four o'clocks. Grandmother also liked cut flowers. One of her most curious possessions was a glass flower frog at the bottom of a large glass bowl.

At that time, I had no concept of large-scale gardens, but I knew of a place called Magnolia Gardens even though I'd never seen it. At that time, social barriers might have kept me away. The picture of Magnolia's White Bridge graced the phone book's cover. That image is as much a part of my childhood memories as fireflies flickering at nightfall.

I was aware of azaleas, the flower that gives Magnolia international fame. But I didn't know of Magnolia's azaleas. When I was a boy, the ubiquitous azalea splashed color across Charleston each spring, luring tourists here to see its majesty. Now tourists come to Charleston and Magnolia year-round.

Public relations and marketing is an unlikely profession for me. In college, visions of large corporate accounts danced in my head. Instead, I wrote and edited at five Southern dailies for 32 years, traveling from Tokyo to Cape Town and never writing about gardens.

Medicine, law and crime took up much of my time. So did history. That's why Magnolia is a good fit for me. Magnolia is steeped in history. Founded in 1676, Magnolia is America's oldest garden and Charleston's first tourist attraction. The gardens were opened in 1872, but before that, rice was the staple before azaleas and camellias became centerpieces.

I've traveled to West Africa and Barbados to write about history and their connections to Charleston. But that history comes with pain. Slavery ties Charleston and Magnolia to those regions of the world. So, as a black man I am an unlikely Magnolia marketeer considering that former Southern plantations give some black folks the hebejebes.

Why not me? Because of the reporter that still resides in me, I can't ignore that pain, and Magnolia doesn't try to hide it. Daily, Magnolia opens its gates to tell of the contributions that enslaved people made in the building of Magnolia and Lowcountry culture. That presentation is part of an award-winning "Slavery to Freedom" program centered on restored cabins that were once the homes of enslaved people. After gaining their freedom, some remained at Magnolia and some of their descendants, although they left Magnolia, have stayed close to the gardens.

After Emancipation, the cabins became home to the Leach family and other black families. Four generations of Leaches have lived and worked at Magnolia. Fifty-five year old gardener Isaac Leach speaks eloquently and passionately about growing

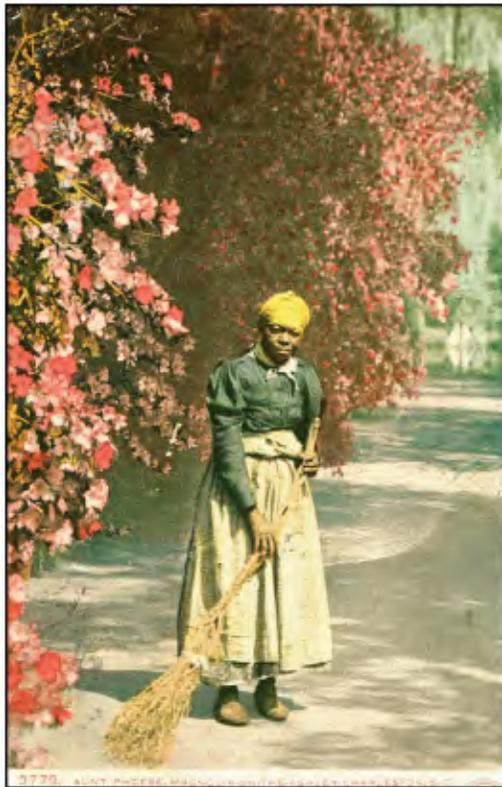
up at Magnolia during racial segregation. He adds more meaning to his words when he says he felt safer at Magnolia at a time when laws would not have protected his rights beyond the garden gates.

In the gardens are stories, yes of slavery, but also of tribute and friendship during a time of bondage. Adam Bennett was enslaved at Magnolia and stayed after he was freed to work as garden superintendent. He and other black people were more than just hands in the soil. They were technicians in the propagation and care of the plants. Historians give the Rev. John Grimké Drayton credit for opening the gardens to the public after the Civil War, but he couldn't have done it without people like Adam Bennett.

There are the stories of John Bennett, Adam Bennett's son, and Tina Gilliard and Willie Leach, three people of African descent who have camellias at Magnolia named in their honor. All have since died, but their memories live on like the plants they saw in their lifetimes. Magnolia

is perhaps the only garden in the world that has camellias named for that many black people. That's a history that I can sell.

The story of the azaleas is just as intriguing, and in the time I will spend at Magnolia it is expected to grow even larger. While the Rev. Drayton is credited with developing the azalea gardens, he didn't work alone. People of African descent were the gar-



Aunt Phoebe

deners. After the gardens opened in 1872 they worked as gatekeepers and tour guides and mingled with Magnolia's guests. If they were still alive, they'd be pleased that Magnolia is seeking older varieties of azaleas to replenish the inventory with pre-1900 plants.

Magnolia was at the forefront of a national effort two summers ago to save cold-hardy azaleas hybridized by Ben Morrison at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. that were slated for destruction simply because they were unnamed. Morrison was a friend of the Hastie family that owns Magnolia. The DNA of some of those plants originally came from Magnolia. Therefore, bringing those plants to Magnolia's greenhouse is tantamount to returning Magnolia's grandchildren home for future generations to enjoy.

When Charlestonians are overcome by the summer's heat, azaleas retreat. Magnolia has expanded its azalea garden to include late-blooming azaleas in a landscape designed last summer by two French horticulture students. An expanded azalea garden borders the tram road. In time, Magnolia's guests will gaze across a carpet of color at the end of a nature tram excursion.

So, like those before me, I am witnessing Magnolia's evolution in the early part of the 21st century. With care, Magnolia and its azaleas will survive three hundred more years, and at that time the job of selling its beauty would have long since passed to another likely or unlikely marketeer.

*Herb Frazier is the public relations and marketing manager at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in Charleston, South Carolina. He can be reached at frazierh@aol.com.*

## Doin' The Charleston – Azalea Style

2014 National Convention hosted by the Rev. John Drayton Chapter



Historic Charleston, South Carolina, named the #1 travel destination in the country, is the site of the 2014 Azalea Society of America's national convention. The Doin' The Charleston – Azalea Style headquarters will be the Charleston Marriott Riverview Hotel, overlooking Brittlebank Park, the Ashley River and the Joe Riley Baseball Stadium, not far from downtown. Spend time under stately live oaks hung with Spanish moss, visit the intimate gardens of the old homes, the historic plantations and gaze at the plethora of azaleas as the Lowcountry seduces you.



Charleston Harbor

Come early and enjoy a number of optional tours on your own. Thursday, March 27th, is Glorious Gardens day on the month-long Historic Charleston Foundation's Tours of Homes & Gardens. We hope to have a block of tickets available so you can spend an afternoon touring up to 10 gardens of homes in the historic district. If enough people are interested, we will arrange for a bus for an Island Sip & See tour, visiting the historic Angel Oak on Johns Island, the Charleston Tea Plantation (America's only tea plantation), the Irvin-House Vineyards and the Firefly Distillery, home of the famous Sweet Tea Vodka, all on Wadmalaw Island. And samples are available at each!

Set up for the 2014 convention will begin at 2 PM on **Wednesday, March 26th**. Registration will be from 4 to 7 PM, and will include acceptance of plants for sale, as well as flowers and photos for the competitions. General registration includes a welcome bag of gifts, the opening reception, breakfast Friday and a Saturday morning "Southern-Style" breakfast.

**Thursday, March 27th**, registration and plant sales will open at 8 AM. A welcoming reception beginning at 7 PM, is an introduction with light hors d'oeuvres and 2 drink tickets per person (cash bar after that). We plan to have Michael Trouche, a native Charlestonian and well-known tour guide, introduce you to the Holy City with "A Primer on Charleston." We may also have a Gullah lady talking of their big part in Charleston's history. Just

to make sure you are really acquainted with Lowcountry traditions, we will teach you to Shag, our State Dance, and to do the Charleston! The silent auction will open that evening.

**Friday, March 28th**, is plantation tour day. Plant Sales and the Plant and Photo Competition will open at 8 AM. Entries for the competitions will be accepted until 1 PM. Judging will take place from 2-4 PM.



Magnolia Plantation Bridge

Buses will begin boarding at 8:45 AM. We will split into two groups but both will visit Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, the oldest Romantic garden in the country, and Middleton Place Plantation with its more formal gardens, including the famed butterfly garden. Local docents from our chapter, the Garden Club of Charleston, and the Tri-County Master Gardeners will guide you and answer any questions. The plantations are quite large but you will have plenty of time to wander amidst the azaleas. Lunch will be served for both groups at Magnolia. Buses will return to the hotel by 5 PM.

From 7 to 9 PM, Tom Johnson, Director of Magnolia Plantation, will explain how azaleas first were grown outside instead of in conservatories while Ernest Koone, of Lazy K Nursery in Pine Mountain, GA, will talk about the state of the azalea industry since a number of nurseries have gone out of business in the last few years while others are doing better than ever. There will be light snacks and a cash bar.

On **Saturday, March 29th**, you have a choice of tours. The first tour choice is to travel to Cypress Gardens in Moncks Corner for a full morning of exploring walking trails through the swamp and gardens. It's a chance to see bald cypress and tupelo trees and the antique rose garden, as well as stroll along the original dikes from the rice growing era on Dean Hall Plantation, dating from the early 1700s. Be sure to check out the Butterfly House because during lunch, Dwight Williams will explain the role of butterflies in the fertilization and propagation of azaleas. Normally this time of year is the peak bloom of Cypress Garden's azaleas. The buses will drop you in the Old City Market area by mid-afternoon to explore the town, shopping, or whatever you would like to do and will return you to the hotel by 5 PM.

The second tour choice is an intensive tour of Charleston's beautiful historic district. During the morning, professional guides will show you our famous Battery with its elegant town houses built by planters and merchants in the 18th and

19th centuries. A stop at the Heyward-Washington House (c. 1772) showcases the finest collection of Charleston-made furniture and the only original kitchen building open to the public. Another stop will be Mrs. Whaley's Garden, an intimate and charming space designed by the early 20th century landscape architect Loutrel Briggs. Also included will be St. Michael's Church, the oldest church building in the city, 18th Century Rainbow Row, made famous by Porgie & Bess, and many other points of interest. At 12:15, you will board one of Spiritline Cruises' boats for a private harbor historic tour, including lunch. After the tour, buses will drop you at the Old City Market (time permitting) and get you back to the hotel by 5 PM. This tour is limited to the first 100 people to sign up.

Our Awards Banquet and Meeting will be 7 to 10 PM. The silent auction will end at 9 PM. Enjoy a buffet of our best Southern specialty tastes along with a cash bar. Think she-crab soup, fish with smoked cheddar grits, and many other local delicacies. Our keynote speaker is Mary Roper, Garden Director of the Asticou Azalea Garden in Northeast Harbor, ME. This is an old and truly unique collection of azaleas, mainly from the mountainous regions of the U.S. and Japan. It was started by Beatrix Ferrand at her Reef Point estate. In 1956, Charles Savage purchased the plants and created Asticou to preserve the unique plants. Also speaking will be **Robert "Buddy" Lee**, the inventor of the Encore® Azalea and now Director of Plant Innovations for Plant Development Services at the company. He is also a board member of the International Plant Propagators Society – Southern Region and a past president of the Azalea Society of America.

Sunday is a day on your own. We will have many suggestions of places to visit either in Charleston or on your way home listed on our website and in your welcome bags.

Visit [www.nationalazaleaconvention2014.org](http://www.nationalazaleaconvention2014.org) for updates and registration.



Magnolia Plantation Path