

Recruiting New ASA Members

By Robert Thau—Jasper, Texas

For those of you who don't know me, I'm Robert Thau from the Texas Chapter and the new membership chairman for the ASA. Many of us at the 2017 ASA convention in Hammond had thoughts about membership running through our minds. I was able to get some good ideas from some of our fellow members. I'm hoping we can start a dialogue among chapters to share good ideas about techniques to use for gaining (and retaining) members. We have recently been very successful in recruiting members for the Texas Chapter. Below are some techniques which you might be able to use in your recruiting efforts:



▲ Robert Thau

1. Give presentations to other plant societies – if you have speakers on azaleas in your chapter, contact other local plant societies, including the Master Gardeners. I show these members a book I maintain of azalea photos. These photos blow people away. I also propagate and give away azaleas, which is always a big hit. I make connections through these presentations that result in more connections to folks who are interested in hearing about azaleas. You can also refer people to our ASA website for additional information.
2. Engage local community organizations – I have pushed the Azalea City program to community leaders in Jasper, TX. I have spoken to the head of the Chamber of Commerce (who has also joined the society). The Azalea City concept has energized some of these leaders to recruit other members. Even the mayor of Jasper and his wife have joined! Jasper has recently submitted paperwork to become an Azalea City.
3. Invite members of other plant societies – Open your gardens to other society members. Invite them to participate in your meetings. Make them aware of what a great organization this is.

A new idea was given to me by Allen Owings at the convention. Our conventions occur all around the country, sometimes in places where we don't have active chapters. A good idea is to present a workshop the day prior to the convention to include topics such as propagating, care and planting of azaleas, and slideshows on many of the beautiful varieties. These workshops would be advertised through local media, garden centers and plant societies. A registration fee could be charged to pay for supplies (as necessary), provide compensation to the sponsoring chapter, and even to pay for a society membership. We could also give workshop attendees the ability to participate in our plant sales (which are normally restricted to society members) or

even give them a plant to take with them. I will be pursuing this idea with the sponsors of the Little Rock convention; however, this could be something we consider for all future conventions.

The word “visibility” comes to mind in our recruiting efforts. We need to increase the visibility of our society and its benefits to the public. Each of our chapters should set goals for increasing their membership and finding new ways to make the society's benefits visible and tangible. I look forward to working with all of you. If you have any recruiting ideas that have been effective for you, please send them to me and I will share with all our chapters. Finally, a big thank you to all of you for gaining new members!

Contact Robert at: rwbubbathau@yahoo.com or 409-481-8318.

Renewal Time Is Approaching

By Paul Beck, Treasurer

Important reminder: emails will be sent out in November to remind you to renew. This year I will be using the new email address, treasurer@azaleas.org. Please be sure to add this to your contact list to ensure the email gets through. This is especially important for those with an **earthlink.net** email address, since they actively block anything from our email server as spam.

That time of year, when your annual dues need to be paid, is fast approaching. Dues are still \$30 per year. Paper mailing of reminders will go out in early December. If you use email, and were not notified last year about your renewal via email, please send me your email address at treasurer@azaleas.org. If you wish for your email address to not be viewable by other **members** (membership information is not publicly viewable) on our website, please let me know and I will mark it as private. It saves the ASA money by not having to mail the paper reminder and it saves you time & money not having to mail the payment. If you choose to not renew electronically, you may use the renewal form on the wrapper of this issue and the winter issue of *The Azalean*. This application form is also available on the ASA website, at the **Join Us, Renew or Donate** link.

This year I am strongly encouraging the use of our new **subscription service**, via the **PayPal™** credit card payment service. This will allow you to register your credit card with PayPal, and have your annual membership fees deducted automatically. Click on the “Yearly Automatic Subscription” accordion near the bottom of the **Join Us** page.