

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

A Publication of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American
Rhododendron Society

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February 2008

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Apr 16-19, 2008	ARS Annual Convention, Tulsa, OK
May 7-11, 2008	International Rhododendron Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland
June 6-8, 2008	MAC meeting Canaan Valley Resort & Conference Center, WV

Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

American Rhododendron Society	http://www.rhododendron.org/
MAC Website (UPDATED REGULARLY)	http://www.macars.org/
U VA Science & Engineering Libraries	http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm
UVA Special Collections	http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/
Henry Skinner Website	http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/collections/projects/rhodo/skinner/

MAC SPRING MEETING AT CANAAN VALLEY RESORT JUNE 6-8 by Sharon Horn

The Canaan Valley Resort facilities have undergone extensive renovations during the past year, and we have been able



to make the arrangements so that all of the meeting rooms we will be using are connected and on the ground floor with easy access to the outdoors and the lodging building.

The weekend will begin at 4:00 pm on Friday evening with registration and dinner on your own. The Canaan Valley Resort has a beautiful restaurant looking out over the valley, as well as a small sandwich shop, and there are also several other restaurants in the nearby area if you want to venture off-site.

Our meeting will feature a welcome and introduction to the Canaan Valley and Dolly Sods areas, and speaker William Grafton, Natural Resource Extension Specialist in the Division of Forestry and Natural Resources at WVU, who is an expert in wild life and plants.

We will have two opportunities to begin the acquisition process of the weekend – the MAC member-stocked Seedling Sale (Hint: with the later meeting date you will have lots of time to pot up

some choice plant divisions and seedlings to contribute to the Seedling Sale.), and the always-tempting Book Sale with Theresa's newest finds.

The Flower Show promises to include blooms from species and cultivars not normally ready for earlier meeting times, and will be open for entries before and after the evening meeting.

Saturday morning we will board two Canaan Valley buses for the short trip to Dolly Sods to explore the unique plant populations there. (Warning: there will be no facilities on the buses or at Dolly Sods, so be prepared!) We will return to the resort for a "Burgers & Dogs" with all the fixings picnic at noon, followed by a short trip in the opposite direction to the Blackwater Falls area. There are several choices of walking trails at Blackwater Falls from gentle walks to more vertical challenges for the adventuresome in the group.

Saturday evening will begin with the always competitive Plant Auction, followed by our second MAC "Ribs & Bibs" dinner.

We will welcome Stephen Krebs from the Holden Arboretum as our speaker. Dr. Stephen Krebs is a plant breeder and geneticist and is Director of the David G. Leach Research Station of the Holden Arboretum where he used to work with David Leach. He has been appointed adjunct associate



Dr. Stephen Krebs. Photo from hcs.osu.edu web site.

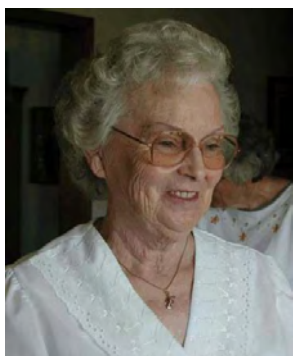
professor in the Ohio State Horticulture & Crop Science Department.

Please pack your suitcases, travel over the mountains and through the woods, and join us on June 6-8, 2008 in Davis, West Virginia, to experience "Getting Back to Our Roots."

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

We had a few mild days this week so I started one of my least favorite gardening jobs, cleaning oak leaves out of the azaleas.

A few years ago, well maybe more than a few years, MAC members visited the Nachman garden and Rosalie Nachman told us they had all the oaks removed leaving only pine trees. She said it was getting to be too big a job to remove all the oak leaves from the



Jane McKay

azaleas whereas the pine needles sift down through. Unfortunately we do not have any pines only oaks and each year the job gets bigger. This year the summer leaves that winter over on the evergreen azaleas seem smaller than usual on many of our plants possibly from the drought. It seems the smallness of the leaves creates more space between the branches and more oak leaves get through. If the leaves are not removed the center of the plant dies and the azalea is no longer attractive. So I guess I'll keep pulling the leaves out and keep complaining.

At that same Nachman garden Rosalie shared some variegated Solomon seal with me and also gave me branches of willow leaf Aucuba and ivory berried Aucuba. The Solomon seal has spread and I have shared it with friends. The Aucuba branches I placed in water and they grew roots within a few weeks. I planted them and now they are big healthy plants. I have propagated them and brought them to a MAC plant sale. So many plants in our garden are gifts that gardening friends have shared with us. To me the best reason for joining a group like MAC and the Rhododendron Society is the friends we've made over the years.

I understand we will be going to Canaan Valley for the Spring meeting and we are looking forward to it. I can't remember who spoke at the meeting when we last visited the area but I remember the bacon

served at breakfast and the delicious sandwich we had at one of the tours I know it was made with grilled eggplant and cheese. So even if you don't come for the speakers and the tours come for the food. All kidding aside come for the meeting it's a great area to visit.

CORRECTION for the article, "MAC's Return to Lynchburg"

Bill Massie has sent a correction of information in my article about the fall meeting that appeared in the Fall 2006 MAC newsletter. The garden of former MAC president, Anne Glass, was not located on property that is now Liberty University. Bill said that property belonged to her father-in-law, Senator Carter Glass. According to Bill, the garden of Anne Glass was located in Lee Circle "and is now completely covered by vines, bushes and trees." Bill continued, "In the '60's, Annie and I were given a tour of the garden by Mrs. Glass, and it was beautiful."

I regret this mistake, and I think the remainder of information in that article is correct. Many thanks to Bill Massie for sending this correction.

William F. Bedwell

DEATHS

While no member's deaths have been reported recently, Jim Brant's mother-in-law, Grace Hasty Woltz of Newport News passed away on December 9, 2007.

Also, one of Gladys Wheeldon's daughters, Wilton Elizabeth Wheeldon, died on November 21, 2007 in Reston, Virginia.

IN THE NEWS

The Wilton Elizabeth Wheeldon with Bill Bedwell and Ken McDonald, Jr., at Gladys Wheeldon's memorial service in January 2007. Photo by S. McDonald.

of *American Nurseryman* had an article "Propagation at the US National Arboretum" by Barbara Bullock, curator of azaleas and rhododendrons at the arboretum.



The January 15, 2008, issue of *Weekly Nursery E-mail*, mentioned that the American Rhododendron Society named its 28 top azaleas and rhodies for 2008 and had a link to the Web site.

WINTER OBSERVATIONS IN DINWIDDIE, VA by William F. Bedwell

The viola border is quite colorful in early February, thanks to the 'Sorbet Yellow Delight' variety. Some of the blues, such as the color-changing 'Yesterday Today and Tomorrow' and the lovely 'Icy Blue' are nice but not as showy at this point. Perhaps they look too chilly for this cold time of year. I got some new hybrids that are doing well. One surprise is red 'Ultima Red Radiance' which is getting lovely and cheerful. It may be a variation of 'Ultima Morpho,' the striking blue and yellow combo with the dreadful name that won major awards a few years ago. 'Ultima Red Radiance' has vivid, intense red borders with a large cream to yellow centers. I did not expect it to do so well in the winter. My border does not get much sun, if any, during the winter, but that is changing as we advance into February and the flowers are forming.

Because of their smaller flowers, I think violas look better planted in groups of three to five of the same variety which grow together and make a show of that color when viewed from a distance. After expanding this mixed border out several feet last fall and reshaping the curves, I ended up planting 360 violas, with just a few pansies, mostly for the faces. Years ago, I tried a few violas in the pansy border and discovered how much better the violas withstand rain and still look good. And they bloom better in the winter.

Finding a nice variety of violas to buy is a challenge, requiring many trips from late September into mid-November to all the garden retailers in this entire area, plus Lowe's and Home Depot. I've seldom seen violas at K-Mart or Wal-Mart and no longer bother going there. I found out that many violas need cool temperatures for seed germination so this may be why the best varieties arrive late in the season, but production techniques may be changing. Buying them too early in autumn seems to make them grow lanky and ugly in warm weather. I ended up pruning some early purchases with scissors last fall and that helped, but I think those I bought later have performed much better this winter. I have been making notes on the best varieties to look for in the future, whenever I see them in the stores. In 2006, I tried growing some violas from seed but I think that cost more than buying the plants and it was a lot of trouble. Pansies are easy from seed.

Behind the viola border are perennials that need to be moved out into the recently expanded area to give more room to the formerly dwarf conifers that are now trees in the background and the rhododendrons in front of them. The colorful winter leaves on rhododendron 'PJM' look nice against the colorful conifers behind them, and the newer lepidote, 'Landmark', from MAC's P4M sale, is going to make an even more colorful winter contrast.

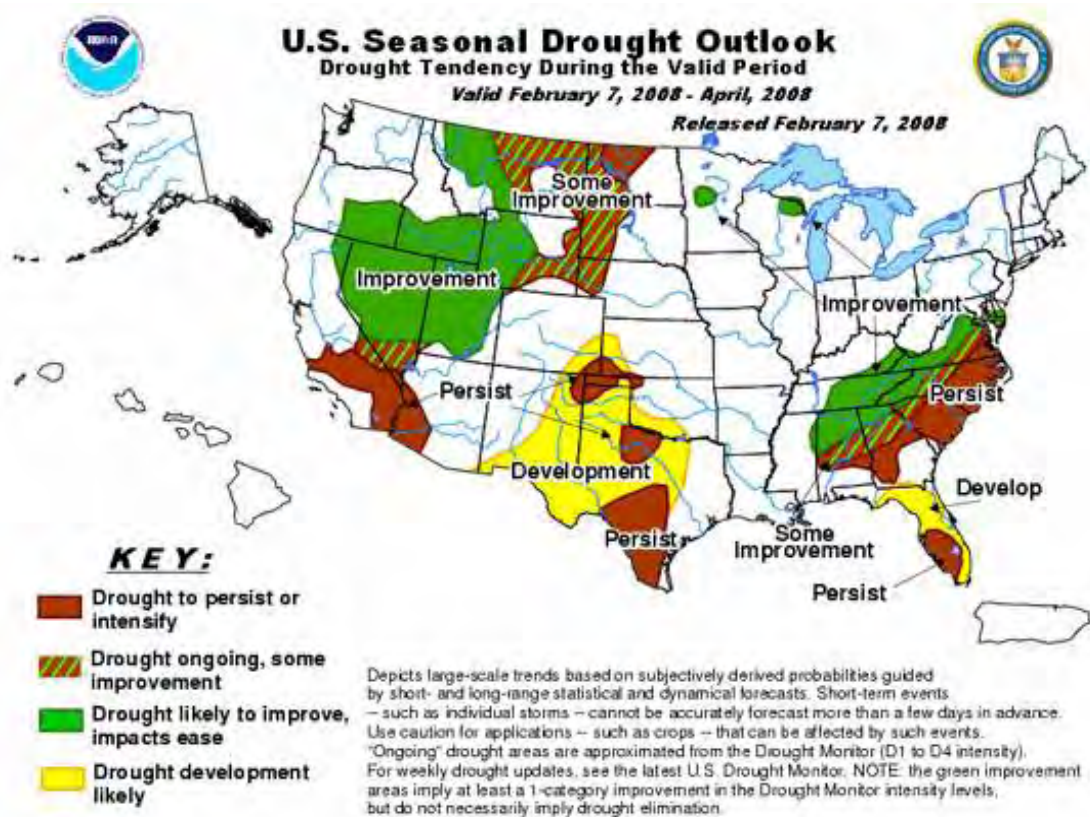
I just checked my cardoon (artichoke) which was sold locally as an annual and it still has signs of life so it may live over and actually have flowers next year. I thought it was such a wonderful accent plant in English gardens so I decided to try one last year. We have not had a terrible winter so far so it still has some testing to go. The huge lacy grey-green leaves grow quickly so it works okay as an annual anyway, if you can find a replacement plant every year. Its biggest problem for me is the amount of space it requires since the leaves arch out well over two feet and then droop down on the ground with age, or perhaps dry weather. I kept the drooped leaves cut off all summer to keep from smothering some nearby plants. New leaves form quickly after any water, and the new leaves are completely grey. I think it is interesting to try something strange and watch what it does throughout the year instead of the one time view you see it in some other garden or in a photo.

Some of the hellebores that I got on late winter trips to NC in February of 2006 and 2007 finally were planted in the ground in early December, and they are getting ready to bloom. I located them between the early red rhododendron, 'Taurus,' and *Edgeworthia chrysantha* 'Snow Cream,' a selection recently named by Plant Delights Nursery. Maybe there will be some overlap of flowers in that area. The hellebores are mostly named selections of *H. niger* hybrids and they are said to have a long blooming season. Foliage is nice. These plants did well to survive the dry summers in their original nursery pots, since I did not water them often enough. Some hellebore species were victims of squirrels that removed them from their pots, but these were not touched. George McLellan told me they are poisonous to voles so the squirrels may have told me in advance which ones are not poisonous.

The older hellebores that I planted in the old garden down the hill are taking over. I have decided to call them Croatian Kudzu. I got them at one of the MAC meetings in WV when we made an adventurous excursion in our cars to Barry Glick's nursery. Everyone who was in that caravan of cars still remembers the trip.

SOUTHEAST WEATHER

The map below is from the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center Web site at http://www.cpc.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/seasonal_drought.html.



SOUTHEAST WEATHER by Sandra McDonald

Weather has been a major concern in the Southeast this past year because of the drought. The water supply has been dangerously low in many places with a real drinking water crisis in Atlanta as well as some smaller towns.

Last summer's drought was very bad. In the southeast Virginia area we ended 2007 with a deficit of approximately 12 inches, most of it occurring in the last half of the year. We have started 2008 with a deficit also. As of February 12th, we have a deficit of 3.1 inches in Hampton for the new year.

One result of the extreme drought was the cancellation of MAC's participation in the Home and Garden Show in Richmond this February. The MAC board made that decision at its February 9th board meeting in Charlottesville. Some of the plants which had been intended for use in the exhibit were not in very good shape due to the drought.

Some parts of southeast Virginia and North Carolina experienced a number of brush and small forest fires when we had the high winds batter our area on Sunday, February 19th. The smoke from smoldering fires in the peat in the ground is still in the air after four days and may continue a while longer.

From the above weather service map it appears our drought is going to persist a while longer. We are having some welcome rain now that will help.

We can reduce water loss on our rhododendrons and azaleas by making sure they are adequately mulched. Let's hope that we have enough water so water restrictions are not imposed, and we can help out mother nature a bit with some irrigation.

GARDENS OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS

New members are encouraged to visit members' gardens in their area. The officers and board members have agreed to show new members through their gardens if the member will call ahead and arrange a convenient time.

GARDENS IN MIDDLE ATLANTIC AREA

MAC is trying to put together a list of public and private gardens in the Middle Atlantic area. We need to know what public gardens are available in various parts of the region. Please contact Dave Banks at dfbanks@earthlink.net or Sandra McDonald at sfmcdonald@verizon.net or call or write them using the addresses in the membership list. Also, members who allow visitors at pre-arranged visiting times, especially in the spring, are needed.

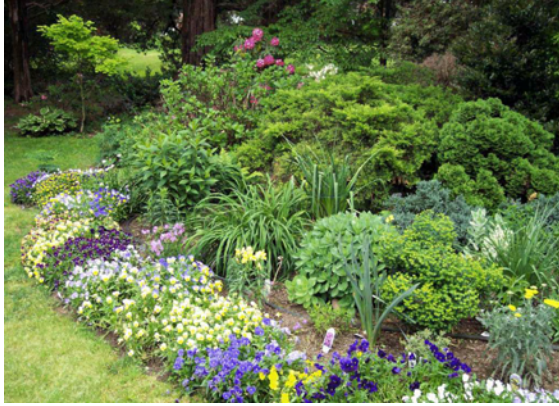
TRIP TO NEW ZEALAND

MAC has received a message from ARS member Diane Weissman of the De Anza Chapter that a trip to New Zealand is being planned by her for this fall. The group plans to attend the New Zealand Rhododendron convention in Geraldine and then tour both public and private gardens of the South Island of New Zealand. The dates are 24th October – 10th November 2008. This will be a fully escorted tour with a group of fellow rhodie members. Full details will be available shortly. Contact Diane at diane1030@gmail.com or 1-650-964-1003(California) if you are interested. Diane is a licensed travel professional. She and her husband Bob Weissman, ARS Webmaster, have been members of the American Rhododendron Society for over 20 years. Diane has previously taken rhodie groups to Hawaii and Tasmania.

MAC APPOINTS A DIRECTOR EMERITUS AT FEBRUARY 9TH BOARD MEETING

At the MAC board meeting in Charlottesville on February 9th, the board appointed George McLellan to the position of Director Emeritus, joining Kenneth McDonald, Jr., the other Director Emeritus. This position has been held in the past by General Robert Porter, Austin Kennell, Harry Wise, and Kenneth McDonald, Jr.

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Viola/pansy border 5-17-2007 with *R. 'Consolini's Windmill'* in background. Photo by W. Bedwell.



R. 'Consolini's Windmill'. Photo by W. Bedwell.

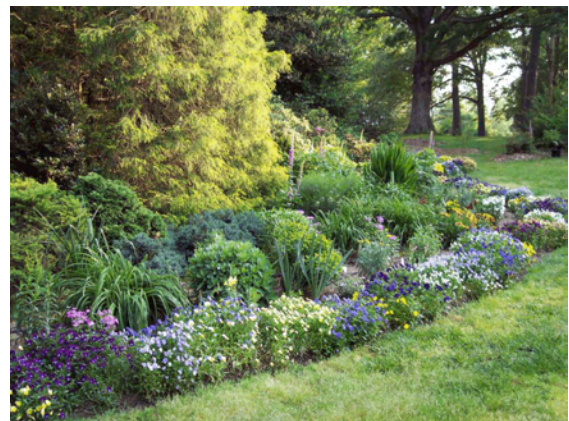


DOLLY SODS
WEST VIRGINIA

Doug Jolley



Color-changing viola 'Yesterday Today and Tomorrow' with darker purple viola, yellow viola and cardoon. Photo W. Bedwell.



Mature viola/pansy border with yellow conifer. 5-21-07 W. Bedwell.