

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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September 2005

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Oct 14-16, 2005	Days Inn, Raphine, VA
May 12-15, 2006	Joint National Meeting of ARS & ASA Rockville, MD (District 9 is sponsor.)

Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

American Rhododendron Society	http://www.rhododendron.org/
MAC Website	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/

SHENANDOAH VALLEY SITE OF FALL MEETING by Jeanne Hammer

Our fall 2005 meeting will be October 14 – 16 at the Days Inn in Raphine, Virginia, located just off I-81 in Rockbridge County between Staunton and Lexington. This southern part of the Shenandoah Valley is noted for its beautiful scenery, including the Natural Bridge. Settled predominantly by Scotch-Irish in the 18th century, Rockbridge County is full of historic sites, such as the Cyrus McCormick Farm, and is also home to the Virginia Horse Center.

On Friday evening, the talks will be open to the public, an opportunity to interest others in joining MAC. Mike Andruczyk will speak about Sudden Oak Death, a serious west coast disease that affects rhododendrons and which threatens to spread to the east coast. Mike is a MAC member and was formerly curator of plant collections at the Norfolk Botanical Garden. He is now the City of Chesapeake Extension Agent for Environmental Horticulture.

Bill Bedwell will give a slide talk on Butchart Gardens at Victoria, BC plus several gardens in Vancouver: Van Duesen Garden, University of British Columbia Botanical Garden, Natobi Japanese Garden, and Dr. Sun Yat Sen Chinese Garden. Bill visited these gardens prior to the 2005 ARS national convention. Bill is a past MAC president and is a popular speaker known for his beautiful photography and witty commentary.

Saturday tours will involve only short drives within a small radius of our meeting site at the Days Inn. We are visiting the gardens of Helen Chew and Stephanie and Pete Loquet. The gardens take advantage of the rolling, and sometimes steep hills of Rockbridge County and include interesting plants and plant combinations.

Helen Chew is known for her “green thumb” in growing plants and has won many ribbons in garden club specimen shows. Her garden includes a tall natural waterfall, Glen Falls, and is bordered by the tumbling stream. The Louquets describe their garden as “a bad habit that got out of control” and features extensive herb gardens.

We will also visit two nurseries. Co-owners Don Haynie and Tom Hamlin will welcome us to Buffalo Springs Herb Farm, a 220-acre, 18th century farmstead adjacent to Wade’s Mill, a working water powered grist mill listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the historic buildings, the farm features a nature trail and a dozen themed gardens. Visit <http://www.buffaloherb.com> for a preview of what you will see.

The other nursery tour will be to the Springdale Water Gardens, located between Raphine and Greenville. Springdale is Virginia’s largest retail supplier of water lilies and bog plants and offers display water garden. Their website <http://www.springdalewatergardens.com> provides a full description.

Our box lunch will be at the Rockbridge Vineyard, Rockbridge County’s only modern winery. Shepherd Rouse started his vineyard and winery in 1988 when he planted five acres of grapes at a higher elevation than most Virginia vineyards. Rouse complements his own planting with grapes grown by other top-quality Virginia growers and produces a full spectrum of wines using traditional, small batch methods.

Karel Bernady, a retired chemist and immediate past president of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, is our after dinner speaker on Saturday. Karel has

traveled extensively photographing both hybrids and native species. His talk will highlight rhododendrons, people, and views of private gardens around Puget Sound. Gardens featured include those of Frank Fujioka of Whidbey Island, Jim Barlup, Ned Brockenbrough, June Sinclair, and Warren Berg.

The Plants for Members (P4M) sale will feature desirable selections of rhododendrons in shades of red, orange, and yellow, named cultivars of the Japanese azalea *R. kiusianum*, and Sandra McDonald hybrids. As always, the order of entrance to the sale will be chronological, based on registration postmarks. So, register early to ensure your first choices.

On the way home Sunday, linger and enjoy the fall colors and take advantage of other optional activities such as a short side trip through Goshen Pass for its scenery and native rhododendrons, a hike on one of two Lexington, VA walking trails or the Chessie Trail. There are also several noted regional nurseries within a short drive, such as Andre Viette's. Your meeting registration packet will have information about special arrangements for MAC members.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to:

Chris & Don Bartlett, Hampton, VA 23669

Robert Rice, McLean, VA 22102

Betty White, Ware Neck, VA 23178

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

If this were a movie script I would call it 'The Attack of the Beetle'. Japanese Beetles have been here in greater abundance than ever. *Hamamelis* × *intermedia* 'Arnolds Promise' and *Corylopsis pauciflora* are completely laced as are some evergreen and deciduous azaleas. All our pink *Impatiens* are stripped to the stems but the white *Impatiens* are untouched so far. Asiatic Beetles are also here in great numbers. These beetles are really sneaky: they do all their damage after dark. If you suspect they are chewing your rhododendron leaves go out at night with a flashlight and you will find them. These pests can be controlled with weekly spraying, but I hesitate to put that much pesticide in my garden, nor do I have the energy that I used to.

The cool spring and hot summer has the bloom time of some plants confused. Most deciduous azaleas are finished blooming, even *R. prunifolium* is just about

finished. One plant of *R. arborescens* labeled 'late yellow CL2 Kehr' is just starting to show color (August 23). This plant was purchased at the ARS convention in Asheville, NC in 1994 and has never bloomed this late.

Ten or twelve years ago I decided to try crossing late blooming evergreen azaleas attempting to extend the blooming season. One plant bloomed at four years old in July so I called it 'July Surprise'. After that it never bloomed any later than mid to late June. This year it bloomed in late July so I guess it's named appropriately, a surprise when it blooms in July. It's nothing spectacular but nice to have an azalea blooming in July.

We don't have too much in bloom here at this time of the year. All the coleus I rooted last winter provide some color along with the Impatiens (if the beetles ever leave them alone). We do grow a few dahlias outside the fence, these are unpalatable to the deer. Elephant Ears are my latest love. I have a few *Alocasia* (these have a shiny leaf) and this year I invested in several *Colocasia*. My favorites are *Colocasia esculenta* 'Black Magic', 'Black Ruffles', 'Illustria' and 'Nancy's Revenge'. Of course my favorites may grow or change with new acquisitions.

Now for the serious stuff, **IT'S DUES TIME AGAIN.** As your membership chairman I will be mailing renewal notices out soon. Please, please send me a check ASAP. It saves me time and the Chapter

money if I don't have to send you a 2nd and 3rd notice.

Hope to see you all in Raphine.

MAC SPECIES STUDY GROUP: AERIAL PHOTO OF GREGORY BALD by Sandra McDonald

The weather and the azalea bloom-time finally cooperated on Gregory Bald this year and the MAC Species Study Group was able to have the commercial aerial photography company fly over Gregory Bald and take the photograph the study group has been trying to get for three years. Rain, cloudy weather and poor bloom had precluded a good picture in past years. Study group members previously had not been able to find any aerial photos that were good enough to be



Jane McKay

helpful to them which was one reason the project was undertaken. There was a photo on the Internet, but it was taken from a satellite and was not detailed enough to tell much about the bald.

MAC now has a 30 inch by 40 inch photograph of Gregory Bald which it eventually plans to place at the University of Virginia Library to go along with the Rhododendron Manuscripts Collection. A few more copies will be made and we hope will be available at the MAC Fall Meeting where orders will be taken for more. MAC will give The National Park Service a copy of the photograph to help with maintenance of the bald.

The photo was taken on June 25, 2005, from an airplane that flew 800 feet above Gregory Bald. Most of the azaleas in the hybrid swarm that are blooming appear to be orange, but when examined closely, a good pink is visible, as well as pale yellows and whites. Since not all the plants bloom at the same time, this type of display is to be expected. Study group members who are familiar with the locations of many of the special plants are able to identify the locations of these plants in the photo.

The study group also received a digital copy of the map from the photography company and plans to make some CDs with the map and photos of some of the better azaleas on Gregory Bald. With the digital photo we can zoom in closer to look at plants individually, but the resolution is not high enough to see individual flowers; we can just make out the colors better and see a general outline of the plant. All this material is copyrighted.

The study group wanted a good aerial photograph so they could pinpoint the locations of the special plants they have been observing over time. Don Hyatt will be registering names for some of the plants. As most of you know Gregory Bald has a unique natural phenomenon of a famous hybrid swarm of native azaleas (*Rhododendron*).

The spectacular hybrid swarm of azaleas is likely a complex of *R. cumberlandense-arborescens-viscosum* hybrids. Native azalea enthusiasts from the southeastern part of the U.S. as well as various other parts of North America and even overseas come to view these azaleas. The exceptional range of flower colors includes red, orange, yellow, white, pink, fuchsia, and many shades in between, often with various sized blotches, and occasional fragrance in a multitude of flower shapes. The blooming season is variable, beginning sometimes as early as mid June and sometimes as late as early July. In addition to

Rhododendron species and hybrids, the grassy bald has other shrubs, including *Vaccinium* sp. and *Amelanchier* sp., and is fringed by scrub trees quickly becoming deciduous forest below.

The bald is an irregular oblong shape with the main axis lying in roughly an East-West direction. The area of the bald has varied over the years having been at one time as much as 18 acres or more, then shrinking as the trees around the edge encroached, before being cut back again. The National Park Service has been trying to maintain the area with a small crew over a few weeks in the summer.

The Appalachian Trail used to pass over Gregory Bald, but has been rerouted. The Gregory Bald Trail, clearly visible in the photograph, passes over the top and can be reached from the Gregory Ridge Trail off Forge Creek Road from Cades Cove, or by the Hannah Mountain Trail off Parson's Branch Road (when it is not closed for repair or bad weather).

The Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society's Species Study Group has been studying the native azalea swarm on Gregory Bald for over 10 years. The Middle Atlantic Chapter funded this aerial photograph as part of its educational and scientific mission. The Species Study Group members include Jim Brant, who spearheaded the aerial photo project; George McLellan, tour organizer; Don Hyatt; Kenneth and Sandra McDonald; William Bedwell; David and Debby Sauer; and Doug and Anita Burke, and others who joined the group on various occasions.

We hope by the ARS 2006 Conference which our three chapters in District 9 of the ARS (MAC, PVC and Mason-Dixon) and the Brookside Gardens Chapter of the Azalea Society of America are hosting in Rockville, Maryland, on May 12-15, 2006, that we will have CDs available and can also take orders for more aerial photographs.

MAYMONT SHOW DATES 2006

The Maymont Flower Show will be held February 9-12, 2006. Sharon Collins says this would mean that the display garden would be constructed on Saturday, February 4, 2006 and

clean-up of the display would be on Sunday, February 12. Please put these dates on your calendar if you are helping with the booth.

2,000-YEAR-OLD-SEED GERMINATED

(Adapted from a *New York Times* June 13, 2005, article by Steven Erlanger.)

Israeli researchers have succeeded in growing a date palm from a 2,000-year-old seed that was one of several found during an excavation of the ancient mountain fortress of Masada. Scientists working on the project believe it is the oldest seed ever germinated.

This palm variety became extinct in the Middle Ages. The plant is now nearly 30cm (12in) tall and has produced seven leaves, one of which has been sent for DNA testing, according to researcher Sarah Sallon of the Louis Borick Natural Medicine Research Centre. Radiocarbon dating on a small piece of the seed showed it to be 1,990 years old, plus or minus 50 years, dating the seed from 35 B.C. to A.D. 65.

Dr. Elaine Solowey germinated the seed and is growing it in quarantine. She says plants grown from ancient seeds "usually keel over and die soon."

Solowey planted three date seeds at the end of January after trying to break their deep dormancy by soaking the seeds in hot water to soften the coat, then in an acid rich in hormones, then in an enzymatic fertilizer made of seaweed and other nutrients. She then put them in new pots in new potting soil and put them on drip irrigation. After six weeks the earth cracked in a pot and one of the seeds came up.

The first two leaves looked odd, being, very flat and pale. The third looked like a date leaf with lines, and every one since has looked more and more normal. It will be years before it could bear fruit and only then if it is a female. There is a 50-50 chance it is a female.

MAC BOARD HAS BUSY SUMMER by Sandra McDonald

The MAC board and committees had a busy summer with board meetings July 16th and August 14th, and a committee meeting for the Species Study Group on August 12. Lots of planning and business matters have been taken care of.



Debby Sauer, Jim Brant & Walter Przypek at Gloucester Library. Photo by Sybil Przypek.



MAC board meeting in Staunton. Photo by W. Przypek.



Sybil Przypek and Doug Jolley at MAC board meeting in Staunton. Photo S. McDonald.



Glenn Kauffman, George McLellan, S. McDonald, Jane & Wally McKay at Buck Hill Lodge.. Photo by W. Przypek.



Sharon Collins, Jeanne Hammer, Celia Dollarhide, Ken McDonald at Buck Hill Lodge. Photo by S. McDonald.



Helen Chew, Barbara Hall, Jean Beaudry and Frits Morsink in Helen's garden. Photo by S. McDonald.



Helen Chew, Pete Loquet and Sybil Przypek at the Loquet garden after Sybil presented the MAC garden plaque. Photo by S. McDonald.



MAC members at the Stephenie and Pete Loquet garden. Photo by S. McDonald.



MAC members at shop at Buffalo Springs Herb Farm. Photo by S. McDonald.



Sharon Collins Horn and Mike Andruczyk at "chapel" garden at Buffalo Springs Herb Farm. Photo by S. McDonald.



MAC members at SpringDale Water Garden. Photo by S. McDonald.