

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

Vol. XLVI No. 4

December 2019

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

April 24-26, 2020, proposed

Lewis Ginter, Richmond, VA

American Rhododendron Society

<http://www.rhododendron.org/>

ARS Store Order from Amazon thru this site

<http://arsstore.org/>

MAC Website (UPDATED REGULARLY)

<http://www.macars.org/>

UVA Special Collections

<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/>

Old Quarterly Bulletins & JARS

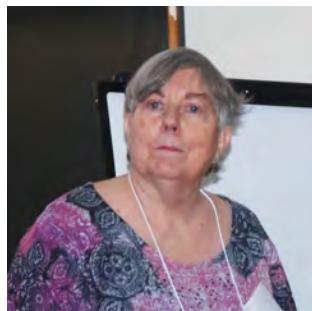
<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/>

Rhododendron Blog

www.rhododendron.org/blog/

FALL MEETING

Thirty-two people attended the MAC meeting at Roslyn Retreat Center in Henrico on Saturday November 9th. President Theresa Brents held a brief meeting welcoming everyone and making announcements. **MAC is in need of someone to volunteer to fill the secretary vacancy.** Teri Bennett, who had just become secretary, passed away unexpectedly. Contact Lloyd Willis if you can help out.



President Theresa Brents

Lynn Cameron gave a presentation about the Shenandoah Mountain Proposal. This 90,000 acre area is being proposed as a National Scenic Area which will permanently protect its current state as one of the wildest, most scenic parts of Virginia. People will be able to hunt, fish, hike, camp, canoe, backpack, view wildflowers, birds and wildlife, ride horses, do rock climbing and a few other things. Roads will remain open.



Lynn Cameron

This will require an act of Congress, but if it gets passed, it will protect the water supply, outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, cultural heritage, and the tourism-based economy. Mining, drilling, fracking and pipelines will be prohibited in the area. Lynn even had a slide of Dave and Sharon Horn whose farm backs up to this area. For more information see: www.friendsofshenandoahmountain.org

During break between our two talks there were many P4M plants available that Jeanne Hammer and Sharon Horn had been taking care of.



Sharon Horn and Jeanne Hammer with some of the P4M plants they and their committee provided. Photo by S. McDonald.

David Taylor was auctioneer for our plant auction. Don Hyatt provided descriptions of some of the more rare plants.

The plant auction was followed by Don Hyatt's talk showing the many beautiful gardens on tour at the convention in May in Pennsylvania. Don's talks

are always amusing and his photography is excellent.



The Azalea Woods at Winterthur. Photo by Don Hyatt.



Longwood, the conservatory with azaleas, hydrangeas, and other plants. Photo by D. Hyatt.



Wyn Eden, a private garden with 15,000 hostas. Photo D. Hyatt.



Tyler SW58-A-300-2753-1200. Photo D. Hyatt.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER

Michael Trent, King George, VA 22485

DEATHS

BENNETT, Teri L., 61, of Powhatan, passed away Sunday, March 24, 2019. Teri was a long-time MAC member and had just become MAC secretary. She is survived by her sister, Gale B. Washburn; brother, Mark Bennett and his wife, Sally; four nephews, Paul, Kevin, Ian and Craig; and many close family and friends. Teri graduated from Virginia Tech in 1980 and was an avid traveler and plant collector. A memorial service was held on Tuesday, April 16, 2019, at 3 p.m. at New Life United Methodist Church, 900 Old Hundred Rd., Midlothian, Va. 23114.



Teri Bennett

ROOTING DORMANT AZALEA CUTTINGS

by Don Hyatt

For many years, MAC members have appreciated the generous donation of plants from Jay Gillenwater that supported our plant sales and auctions. Thank you, Jay! As we look for new people to assist with propagation in the future, we should encourage our members to propagate a few plants. Some rhododendrons are more difficult to root than others, including many of the large leaf elepidote rhododendrons. Professional propagators at Van Veen Nursery in Oregon do a fantastic job with them and many chapters are now using their facilities. Deciduous azaleas are even more difficult, and Vivian Abney at East Fork Nursery in Tennessee

does a fantastic job with those. She offers tissue culture plants of many superior clones now. Evergreen azaleas are very easy to propagate so we hope you will try to root a few of those.



'Dreamsicle' - 2018 ROY Award Winner. Photo D. Hyatt.

Mid to late summer is usually the time when most commercial nurseries root azalea cuttings. The truth is, they can be rooted at almost any time of year. I have often rooted cuttings from flower show sprays since that way I was sure to get the variety I wanted. Now that cold weather has moved in and garden chores are waning, this is also a great time to root dormant azalea cuttings. It is certainly better than shoveling snow!



Preparing hardwood cuttings. Photo D. Hyatt.

My first major attempt at rooting dormant cuttings was for the 1982 ARS Convention in Washington, D.C. The Potomac Valley Chapter would be hosting that event, and in January 1981, our committee realized we did not have any convention favors. Rather than purchasing plants, I offered to try rooting azaleas for the meeting. I immediately started gathering cuttings of Joe Gable's azalea hybrids from our members since we

were featuring his contributions to the ARS at our convention. I started the cuttings under fluorescent lights in my basement in much the way I raise seedlings. By spring I had on the order of 1500 rooted cuttings to transplant and grow on for our meeting.

Since that time, I have realized that I can take broken branches damaged by heavy winter snows and ice, and use that plant material for dormant cuttings.

Even if a branch has become quite desiccated, it will often refresh by making a fresh cut at the base, sticking the stem in warm water, and covering the top with a plastic bag to increase



Cuttings enclosed in plastic bag. Photo D. Hyatt.

humidity. The tissue usually plumps back up in a day or two and if it revives, it can often be used for cuttings.

The process I use for rooting dormant cuttings is basically the same as what I do for rooting cuttings in the summer. For containers, anything will do. The key is to find a pot size that will fit inside a clear plastic bag so you can make a "mini-greenhouse." I fill the containers with my standard potting mix: 1/2 Peat, 1/4 Sand, 1/4 Perlite. The medium should be moist but not wet since excess moisture encourages fungus diseases and rotting.

Since azaleas are shallow rooted, I make short cuttings, only about 1 to 3 inches long. I also remove any flower buds since attempting to bloom will use up energy that could be put into forming new roots. I also remove any leaves on the stems except the top whorl. To further discourage fungus and insect pests, sometimes I "sterilize" the cuttings by soaking them for 5 minutes in a solution made of one part Clorox and ten parts water. Then I rinse the cuttings well to remove the Clorox water and allow them to dry in the

air for a few minutes. That will kill potential insect pests like white fly or caterpillar eggs that might hatch in the plastic bags over the winter.

Next, I dip the end of each cutting in a rooting hormone such as RootTone or Dip 'N Grow, and insert the bottom inch into the potting medium. When the container is filled with cuttings, I label the variety and enclose the pot in a plastic bag to make a mini-greenhouse. That will keep humidity high while the cuttings root so they will require no care from me.

Finally, I place the pots of cuttings under fluorescent lights with "long day" conditions, 16 to 24 hours of light every day. New growth will be encouraged by those long days. Placing pots on a



Potted liner ready to go! Photo D. Hyatt.

north or east window sill with good light will work, too, since days are getting longer. Avoid places with excessive sun since bags can become overheated which can kill small plants.

Cuttings should break dormancy in 4 to 8 weeks and at that time they are usually forming new roots.

On cold, winter days, it is fun to look in on my "babies" to see if they are beginning to grow. I shake the condensation off the plastic bags and let it rain on the cuttings inside. If I see dead leaves or rotted cuttings, I will open the bag and remove that. Sometimes I will leave a flower bud or two on a couple of cuttings just to see the flowers. The blossoms will not be great but it often helps me verify that the variety was correct.

There should be no need to water the pots for many months since the condensation on the bag continues to recycle moisture inside that tiny greenhouse ecosystem. I keep containers under lights during the rest of the winter and early spring. In late spring, I start opening the bags slowly over a period of several days to allow cuttings to get accustomed to lower humidity levels. That helps harden off the plants before I begin repotting them into individual pots.

Before summer has arrived, I have moved the cuttings into 3-inch or 4-inch pots and have given a few doses of weak fertilizer. Avoid high concentrations of fertilizer since it can burn those tender new roots. By late summer, plants get no more fertilizer as I want them to stop growing and harden off before frost. Cold frame protection that first winter is helpful, but dormant cuttings are often large enough by fall to make it on their own over the winter. For the 1982 ARS Convention, I had all those rooted cuttings in 3-inch pots with no greenhouse space where I could winter them over. I clustered trays together in a sheltered spot and mulched the area with oak leaves hoping they would survive on their own outside. They did, and we had quite an array of rarer Gable azaleas to give away as banquet favors at our convention.

If you have a rare azalea variety, try rooting some cuttings from it this winter so you can share the plant with other MAC members and friends. If some of your plants get damaged by winter storms, don't let those cuttings go to waste. Use that plant material for cuttings as well. If you find success with evergreen azaleas, and I hope you do, then try experimenting with large leaf rhododendrons and even deciduous azaleas. Most of our gardens have plenty of weeds but rarely do we hear people complaining about having too many azaleas and rhododendrons.

If you want more information and pictures about the propagation process, I prepared a PowerPoint show called “Propagation from Rooted Cuttings” that I have distributed at various meetings and workshops I have given. It shows details on how to root evergreen azaleas, deciduous azaleas, and rhododendrons. That PowerPoint show is posted on the ARS Store website at the link below. It can be viewed online or downloaded to your computer. I also created one on “Propagation from Seeds” which is posted there as well. If you are not raising plants from seeds, please experiment with that, too. One day, I hope to make a third PowerPoint in this series I will call “Propagation by Grafting.” That will be another good wintertime activity for me. Good luck rooting some azaleas!

ARS Store Downloads:

<http://arsstore.org/programs.php#anchorDOWNLOADS>

NEW RHODODENDRON GARDEN PLANNED AT VA TECH by Jeanne Hammer

In early 2018, Scott Douglas, director of the Hahn Horticulture Garden at Virginia Tech, reached out to MAC for advice on selecting rhododendron cultivars to add to the Hahn Garden. MAC member Paul James agreed to be MAC's liaison to the Hahn Garden and will be assisted by Elissa Steeves and Richard Wroncy. Paul has broad knowledge of rhododendrons and lives in fairly close proximity to the Hahn Garden. Elissa Steeves and Richard Wroncy also live in the area. During a couple site visits and discussions the project grew to include creating a rhododendron garden from scratch on the grounds of the Veterinary Medicine School. Paul is donating some large, mature rhododendrons from his own garden for planting in the Hahn Garden and took cuttings this fall for rooting to start the new plantings at the Veterinary Medicine School.



Hahn Garden horticulturist Lisa Lipsey and Paul James.
Photo by Elissa Steeves.

WINDBEAM WAY WANDERINGS, November 2019, by Doug Jolley

Remarkably, the garden is ready for what winter will offer. Very little rain fell here from late July through much of September. With no mowing chores on the agenda, Davetta and I were able to concentrate our efforts on late season pruning, weeding and other garden maintenance duties. Two truckloads of raked white pine needles recently served as icing on our garden cake. Additionally, our area was frost free into early November and weeks of mild weather provided a stimulus to get things done.



Fall foliage was a disappointment not only here but throughout much of West Virginia. Some of our rhododendrons however are quite attractive right now. One lepidote from John Bushman is not only dependable for flowering but it is very showy for months at year's end. *R. 'Faisa'*. Photo by D. Jolley *Rhododendron 'Faisa'* is quite dapper with new flower buds, clean foliage, and a hint of fall color. The Girard evergreen azalea varieties have been mainstays of our garden and they begin winter with foliage color ranging in hues from red to bronze and even near black.



I was fortunate to be able to travel to visit and address the New York Chapter, ARS in October. Saturday evening, I visited Bruce and Mary Ann Feller. On previous visits to the Feller garden, I always thought Bruce's sign referring to the “Two Achers” was whimsical. Now the whimsy is turning prophetic. Sunday morning included a walk about Planting Fields Arboretum and a chance to see my favorite conifer the Sargent's Weeping Hemlock. The weeping hemlock in our garden seems infantile when compared to those at the arboretum. The dahlias and

chrysanthemums there were at peak flowering and finally the chapter meeting topped off a full day.



Weeping hemlock at Planting Fields Arboretum with nearby construction. Photo D. Jolley.

The new 2020 Farmer's Almanac is on the end table; time to see what winter predictions are being offered.

DISTRICT 9 - DIRECTOR'S REPORT, August 27, 2019, Mason Dixon, Potomac Valley and Mid-Atlantic Chapters (*This report was received in October, after our September issue was already out.*)

At the time of this writing, in our mid-Atlantic Region, this summer's high heat and humidity has broken, at least temporarily. District 9 is alive and active thanks to some new members joining, but unfortunately and sadly, long-standing members are aging and a number of those once quite active and participating, are missing from recent meetings and activities. Ray Smith of Mason Dixon has taken it on himself to publish a draft "Treatise of Membership ideas" which the Executive Committee has reviewed and is preparing to act upon. We'll keep you posted on results. I'll be happy to share it with those who may be interested.

The Mid-Atlantic Chapter will have had their Spring Meeting (they have 2 meetings each year) and their Fall Meeting is now scheduled for one day, Saturday, November 9th at the Roslyn Center in Richmond, VA possibly a joint session with the Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASA and including a tour of the Cosby Garden. Members continue to support the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, the Hahn Garden at Virginia Tech and the James Mason University Arboretum and to assist in maintaining the "balds" in the Appalachian Highlands. With respect to this last item, Jim Brant and George McLellan of MAC, and Don Hyatt of Potomac Valley and Rick

Bauer of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASA as well as current National President of ASA, have been working feverishly with Stevenson Moffat of the Nantahala National Forest Management Team of the US Forest Service regarding management practices in the Highlands to protect ericaceous shrubs there, particularly our native rhododendron. We had gotten word the Forest Service was going to do a major "burn" in those areas including the "balds" that Don Hyatt and others have maintained and photographed so beautifully. This is most concerning.

The Potomac Valley Chapter held a workshop, as they do annually, to demonstrate propagation techniques for rhododendron cuttings to Chapter members, particularly for new folks. In mid-September, PVC will have their annual Chapter Picnic at Seneca Creek State Park including a Plants-for-Members sale and, on November 2nd, will hold their Annual Fall Banquet at Normandie Farm which usually hosts an outstanding speaker and presentation as well as presenting an unusual plant auction.

In mid-July Mason-Dixon also had its annual cutting demo geared to new members, followed a week later with the Chapter's annual cutting and plant auction, always an exciting event and fund raiser. Ray Smith, as usual, served as auctioneer. On Saturday September 21, 2019, Mason-Dixon will hold their annual Summer Picnic at the home of member Nettie Bernady in Hedgesville, WV with burgers and dogs, ice and drinks furnished by the Chapter and those coming will bring a dish to share. Sad news is that Harry Weiskittel, former owner of Marshy Point Nursery and Mason-Dixon Chapter member, passed away in early May after suffering from Alzheimer's Disease for several years. His son Austin tried running the nursery for a few years but ended up closing it, another huge loss to azalea and rhododendron lovers nationwide. Marshy Point was one of the east coast's major wholesalers of azaleas. Many of his cultivars were truly special. Paul and Carolyn Beck and Rick Bauer of the Northern VA Chapter of the ASA and Don Hyatt of Potomac Valley are working to catalog as many of those hybrids as possible. If interested, memorial gifts may be made to the Memory and Alzheimer's Treatment Center of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD.

Recognizing that there were no Chapters that had volunteered to host the ARS Fall 2020 Eastern Regional Meeting, Ann Mangels, immediate past

President of the ARS and Mason-Dixon Chapter member suggested Mason-Dixon take that on. It was readily agreed by the Mason-Dixon Executive Committee, meeting this summer, to do that hopefully with support from the Potomac Valley and Mid-Atlantic Chapters of District 9 and also possibly with the help of both the Susquehanna and Lehigh Valley Chapters which are nearby. It will be held in Gettysburg Pennsylvania at the Wyndham Hotel just off route U.S. Route 30, east of its intersection with U.S. Route 15. The dates are September 25, 26 and 27, 2020. The board will meet on Friday the 25th followed by evening festivities and the start of the plant sale. Further information will be published as soon as feasible.

The main attractions in Gettysburg are the Civil War Battlefield, an incredible round diorama about the battles there, the Eisenhower Farm and President Lincoln's Gettysburg address site. Also, the mountains and woodlands surrounding Gettysburg have large areas of *Rhododendron maximum* and Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia*). We invite you to come and see old friends, make new ones, look back into history, and talk and learn about rhododendrons in the relaxing atmosphere of Adams County, Pennsylvania where there are also some great antiques available at many locations. It might be a little early for Fall colors but it should be beautiful just the same. Please add this to your calendars and come and join us in Gettysburg!!!

Respectfully Submitted, Bill Meyers, Director, District 9.

IN THE CROZET GARDEN by Lloyd Willis

It is a Friday morning, November 22, 2019, as I sit down to write this article. In the past week, we have had full sunshine, dense fog, and a very cloudy day. During our morning walks on each of those quite different days, we found something of interest. As we walked on the full sunshine day, we kept hearing what sounded like rain. I looked at the rhododendron leaves for water drops but found none. The rain noise was being caused by hundreds of tulip poplar seeds hitting the fallen leaves. Today the rain noise was caused by falling



oak leaves.

The dense fog day provided wetness which gave shine to the rhodo leaves and provided a backdrop for a single twelve foot tall Japanese maple with yellow leaves in a group of six foot tall rhodos. On the very cloudy day, the red of the flower buds on the rhodo 'Taurus' as well as the smaller red flower buds of the azalea 'Hot Shot' provided the treat.

Something different in the garden this fall is the large number of Japanese maples with really dull fall leaf color. Some of the trees went from their usual green leaves to a very dull green dehydrated look over night. Mrs. Willis (Margaret) reminded me that it had often been very dry this fall and that there was a recent frost. Another something different this fall was a happier observation. We have six weeping Japanese maples, each less than four feet tall, in a semicircle. All summer long they were the same shade of green. However, I was very pleased that each turned a different fall color.

So where is the humor in this article? Crozet occasionally has bears visiting our trash cans. Recently, a mother bear and two cubs as well as a lone bear have been seen multiple times in our neighborhood. Grandsons Stuart (17) and Silas (11) started this fall season with a five foot tall pile of sugar maple leaves in the field behind our house. I have seen both these young men disappear into that pile of leaves. One afternoon after school, both grandsons were inside the leaf pile when they were joined by a large object moving quickly through the leaf pile. Stuart said at first he knew it was one of the bears in the leaf pile with them (a frightening idea to him and to Margaret and me). The large quickly moving object was a very fast running third grandson, Michael (15), who was returning from the Crozet Library. Stuart noted that he had never seen his cousin Michael run that fast and that he and Silas has never exited the leaf pile so fast. There is more to the story. Margaret and I were walking through an area of the yard this past week when we suddenly had a large object come running through the trees at our backs. Again, first thought—a bear. But again, grandson Michael, who thought it was terribly funny that he had frightened us.



Remember all photos can be seen in color and ENLARGED at MACARS.ORG. Click on Newsletter on left panel.

PHOTOS FROM DOUG JOLLEY'S GARDEN
photos by Doug Jolley



A Buschmann lepidote in Doug's garden.



Cornell Pink.



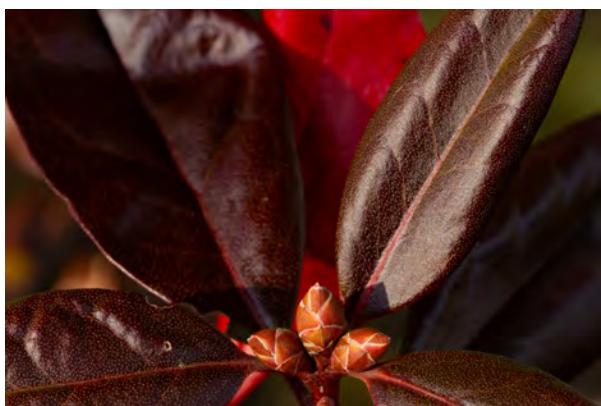
November pathway.



Doug's weeping hemlock.



Pieris in November.



Rhododendron 'Landmark'



Rhododendron smirnowii.

The American Rhododendron Society 75th Anniversary Convention



April 29-May 3, 2020, Hosted by ARS District 4

Heathman Lodge, Vancouver, WA

20/20 Vision will include these international speakers and more:

- Kenneth Cox from Glendoick in Scotland
- Lionel de Rothschild from Exbury in England
- Jens Nielsen, plant explorer from Denmark
- Steve Krebs and Juliana Medeiros from the Holden Arboretum
- Steve Hootman from the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Garden tours will include:

- Crystal Springs Botanical Garden
 - Cecil & Molly Smith Garden
 - Portland Japanese Garden
 - Lan Su Chinese Garden
 - Iseli Nursery
 - Woodburn Nursery
 - The Stewart Garden (formerly Dover Nursery)
 - Sebright Gardens
-
- Around the Sound [pre-tour](#)
 - Willamette Valley and Oregon Coast Excursion [post-tour](#) including members' gardens

Plus plant sale, photo contest, poster session, special clinics, plus:

ars75.org

Registration Now Open!

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. Telephone numbers and towns are listed below.
Memberships and renewals should be sent to our Membership Chairman Jeanne Hammer at 231 N Robinson Dr, Macon, NC 27551.

Annual membership dues are \$40 per year.

Miscellaneous inquiries may be sent to the editor (address below) for forwarding to proper individual.

Sandra McDonald, Ph.D., Editor
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