

# MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| May 13-15, 2005    | District Meeting Westminster, MD   |
| Oct 21-23(?), 2005 | Breaks Interstate Park, VA-KY  |
| May 12-15, 2006    | Joint National Meeting of ARS & ASA<br>Rockville, MD. (District 9 is sponsor.) |

### Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| American Rhododendron Society        | <a href="http://www.rhododendron.org/">http://www.rhododendron.org/</a>   |
| MAC Website <b>NEW!</b>              | <a href="http://www.macars.org/">http://www.macars.org/</a>   |
| U VA Science & Engineering Libraries | <a href="http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm">http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm</a> |

## SPRING MEETING-DISTRICT MEETING IN WESTMINSTER, MD

Our MAC Spring Meeting this year will be a District Meeting hosted by the Mason-Dixon Chapter in Westminster, Maryland. The theme is "Springtime in District Nine". You should have already received a meeting announcement. Friday evening C. J. Patterson, a retired nursery woman who worked at the Rhododendron collection of the Arnold Arboretum, will speak on Rhododendrons for All Seasons. Saturday features Truss and Art Shows and garden tour of four gardens: Ray Miller, George Brubaker, the Kelleys and the Reileys. There will be a plant sale, a silent auction, and a live auction. On Saturday evening the banquet will be followed by a talk by Ed Collins about the Cowles' Hybrids and the Propagation of Native Azaleas. Sunday morning will feature an East Coast Native Rhododendron Workshop presented by George McLellan and Don Hyatt.

MAC will hold a business meeting at a time to be determined during the District Meeting to vote on a bylaws change and to elect officers and three directors for the next two years. Try to attend so you can cast your vote.

Potomac Valley Chapter will have a field trip to the Charlottesville and Roanoke areas on May 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. MAC members have been invited to join in. Don Hyatt is organizing the trip, but plans are not final yet. Monticello and Paul James' garden are two of the locations that will be visited. You will receive more information about the trip, but in the meantime, if wish to participate, contact Don Hyatt at [don@donaldhyatt.com](mailto:don@donaldhyatt.com). or by regular mail at 1948 Lorraine Ave, McLean, VA 22101.

## DEATHS

Betty Kennell, widow of MAC and ARS past president Austin Kennell, passed away in November of 2005 and was cremated according to her wishes. MAC members will long remember her cheerful disposition and good humor in going along with Austin and his interests. (Photo on page 5.)

Lorraine Lapsley died January 27, 2005, after a long struggle with emphysema. Services were private. Elmer Lapsley's address is: 501 Oak Avenue, Waynesboro, VA 22980. (Photo on page 5.)

## NEW MEMBER

Welcome to:  
Flint Engleman, Ruckersville, VA 22968

## FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

There isn't much to write about in the garden at this time of the year. The snowdrops, daffodils and winter jasmine were in bloom until mid January when the temperature plummeted to 10°F. Yesterday the entire garden was encased in ice, for the second time in a week. It was pretty to look at and we enjoyed it because we didn't have to go out in it. Today the sun is shining and the ice is melted, can Spring be far behind?



Jane McKay

Now I'd like to mention one of my pet peeves and that is the lack of publicity given to our favorite

plants! I subscribe to quite a few garden magazines, among them *Horticulture*, *Fine Gardening*, *Virginia Gardening* and *Carolina Gardening*. I cannot remember when I last saw an article featuring rhododendrons and/or azaleas. Other members of the Ericaceae clan are also ignored. How often do you see high bush blueberry, *Kalmia*, *Pieris*, *Enkianthus*, or *Oxydendron* featured? Do many people even know *Pieris* is deer resistant? When articles are written about shade loving plants it's mainly hosta and ferns that are discussed. Enough said, I could go on and on but you get my point. What can we do, maybe if we all contact the magazines we subscribe to and complain it will help, we can only try.

Last year I decided to stop propagating azaleas, rhododendrons, *Pieris*, holly, etc. until all the plants I have in pots are either planted or brought to auctions or plant sales. I did hold to my decision, but I decided to stick a few cuttings of special coleus that I grow in containers for summer color in the garden. The coleus quickly rooted and I potted them. Before long they grew too large to fit under my light system so I cut them back. I couldn't throw away all those great cuttings so I stuck them. What I mean by sticking cuttings of coleus is putting them in water and they root in less than two weeks. Now the original cuttings are again too large and the second group is getting too tall. This could really get out of hand!

### **REPAIRING ISABEL'S DAMAGE** by Sandra McDonald

Nearly one year and four months after Hurricane Isabel hit in September 2003, we are just about ready to repair and replant the garden. Help for major construction was in short supply for a long time after Isabel because so many people had major repairs, and we were not able to hire a construction firm to repair our bulkhead until after a year had passed. Finally, in late September of 2004, a firm was able to get started on our project. The time estimate was six to eight weeks, but of course we didn't take that too seriously. I was just hoping that the work would be finished soon enough so that we could get a lot of our planting done before winter set in. But that was not to be, and it was the dead of winter, January 8<sup>th</sup>, before they finally closed the big hole in our brick wall through which they had been driving their heavy equipment. At that point I figured they wouldn't be driving around in our back yard any more.

All through the fall I watched with bated breath while a big front end loader and a smaller bobcat worked in a very limited space in our back yard. They had to truck in huge granite boulders to use as rip-rap and place them on the waterfront. I was very nervous trying to do anything out there because of the dinging of the backup bells. I saw one of my tall deciduous azaleas which I thought well out of the way start swaying when the bucket on the back hit it. Luckily, I found only a few damaged branches broken off there from that and previous hits. The machine did break off and kill a 15 foot *Cryptomeria* though.

Eventually, the crew poured a cement sidewalk, put up a replacement chainlink fence, filled in with sand and soil the areas that had washed away, and finished by redoing the brick walls at each end and the large hole in the brick wall they had originally broken out to get their equipment into the yard.

The soil is compacted almost like a cement parking lot where they had been working, and I am wondering if we can get any good plants established there. They did smooth the soil out somewhat and plant grass seed, much of which was washed away by a real gully-washer that we had right after they planted the grass. However, a lot of the grass is coming up, so I guess there is hope. Ken is still working on filling in little holes in the grassy area to try to even out the surface like it used to be. (We don't want any sprained ankles here.)

Our irrigation system on one side of the yard was broken because the pipe linking it to the water supply went across the waterfront and was destroyed. We still have the plumber due to come out and put in another one so we can again have water on that side of the yard. In the meantime, we must be a little careful about putting plants in the plumber's way.

As much as we love azaleas and rhododendrons, we will be limiting the number that go in the back yard near the water. We still have some dead skeletons of these plants to cut down. We left them up to keep the construction people from damaging the good plants that were left.

Some of the plants that survived the salt water inundation were camellias, daylilies, live oaks, yuccas (if they didn't wash away), and southern wax myrtles (if they didn't wash away). One rhododendron that survived amazingly well was *R. hyperythrum*. It was not inundated, but did get a lot of salt spray. Some other rhododendrons a bit further

away from the water were killed by salt spray. A few larger hollies survived, but the younger ones that had been in the ground only a few years died. The deaths of these hollies were strange. The small ones that were inundated seemed to have bark split, not from cold weather, but from the salt.

We have purchased a number of camellias to put nearer the water since they survived so well. Ken had dug up one large one which was in the path of the front-end loader and it is fine and now needs replanting. However, he asked the construction crew to move two other large ones. They did all right. They broke them off right below the surface with hardly any roots, so those two are already dead. Now

going on at the same time. I have a number of my seedling azaleas and rhododendrons at home now, ranging in size from small (and large!) plants in trays to six foot to 10 foot tall plants. These plants are sitting around in the yard wherever we could find space to stash them. And space was very limited since at least a third of the backyard had heavy equipment moving around in it. Finding space for these is going to be tricky. I think I will take a chance and put some of them in places where the older rhododendrons and azaleas were killed or hurt if the situation is somewhat away from the water. Many will go to the discard pile as I select out the better plants.



McDonald's waterfront repairs: new seawall, brick wall, fence, and sidewalk. Photo by W. Przypek.

we have a chance to try some of the newer camellia varieties.

I had dug up all my daylilies because even though they came back after Isabel, they were in the way of the heavy equipment. I did get some of them replanted at least before the really cold weather hit.

We have a number of wax myrtle plants that we had found growing wild at the nursery, so those were potted and some of them will have a new home on the waterfront.

As many of you know, Ken retired from the nursery in late fall of 2004, so we had lots of things

We have a bit more space since the day after Christmas when we were hit with eight or so inches of heavy, wet snow. The snow broke about a dozen branches off our live oak trees with a few of them falling on mature 50-year-old evergreen azaleas and breaking off some of the main stems. There will be some space in those locations since the azaleas are not as large now. The tree man still has to come and prune off the branches properly where there are ugly bad breaks. He is usually careful, but we could still lose a few

more plants when he visits.

Gardening is never boring trying to work with the various challenges that Mother Nature sends us. Mike Andryczyk told me to look at this as an opportunity to try new plants!

#### **CONTACTING ARS HEADQUARTERS VIA EMAIL**

Anyone sending a message to an addressee at arsoffice.org should place ARS at the beginning of the subject line in the message heading. Some message have been filtered out by virus and spam

blocking software in the server that processes ARS traffic.

### **POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER NEEDS CUTTINGS** by Jane Goodrich

The Potomac Valley Chapter would like cuttings of Gable Rhododendrons for the John C. and Margaret K. White Horticultural Center garden. Title of Margaret White's home has been transferred to Fairfax County and will be administered by Fairfax County Park Authority, but Margaret still maintains a life estate in the property and no development will take place until she vacates the place. PVC is interested in cuttings of the following:

David Gable × Essex Scarlet (has the David Gable blotch)

Smirfort (better than its sibling Katherine Dalton)

Best in Show (Shamenek named in the Gable Woods)

If you have these or any other unusual Gable hybrids, please contact Don Hyatt by email at [don@donaldhyatt.com](mailto:don@donaldhyatt.com)

Or you may email Jane at [rgoodr1809@aol.com](mailto:rgoodr1809@aol.com).

More information about Margaret White's property is online at: <http://www.tjhsst.edu/~dhyatt/azaleas/other/mwhite.html>

### **SUCCESS KEEPING DEER OUT**

On February 6<sup>th</sup> the *Daily Press* had an article about Jim Orband, the York County Extension Agent, being successful keeping deer out of his garden. He grows hostas, aucuba and other plants that deer like by using Liquid Fence purchased in concentrate form which he mixes with water and sprays after any rainfall that amounts to an inch or more. He uses the product year-round.

He has successfully used the product for four years. He doesn't put the vile smelling product directly on his plants, but rather he sprays it on bricks, telephone poles, rocks and other inanimate objects. Or he may spray it on the north side of a dogwood trunk and the south side of a pine tree trunk. He establishes the scent in the areas where deer will come.

Be sure to wear gloves when mixing the product or your hands will stink for days.

**RHODODENDRON HYPERYTHRUM** by Sandra McDonald

*Rhododendron hyperythrum* has had a reputation for being a good heat tolerant plant to use when creating hybrids for use in the southern parts of the U.S. One very nice hybrid of it that I registered is named 'Hyper George' since it is a cross of 'Loderi King George' and *R. hyperythrum*. It has put on a great performance without fail every year since the early 1980s. The species itself survived salt spray in the back yard rather well during Hurricane Isabel.

Bill Bedwell has pointed out that *R. hyperythrum* hybrids are also nice in the winter. He has one that is a cross of *R. maximum* and *R. hyperythrum* which has nice reddish buds. (Photos on page 5.)

### **ANOTHER REPOSITORY**

The North Carolina State University Libraries is now the repository for Azaleas Society of America papers. The summer 2004 issue of *The Azalean* had a story on this new project which included a photo with MAC president Jeanne Hammer in it.

As most of you know the American Rhododendron Society archives and manuscripts are housed in the collections at the University of Virginia libraries. Having both these collections only a few hours driving time apart should be a boon to future researchers.

### **SUDDEN OAK DEATH (SOD) AND FIRE**

*Science Magazine* had an article (vol 305, p. 1101, 20 August 2004) about fighting *Phytophthora ramorum* (SOD) with fire. While so far this disease has mainly affected the west coast, red oaks in the east are known to be susceptible to it.

New findings are that controlled fires may provide a way to limit the spread of the pathogen. Fire ecologists have collected data from California state agencies on the pathogen's presence at different sites in California, as well as historical data on forest fires. They discovered that the disease was much less prevalent in areas which had burned since 1950, where you almost never see infections. There is speculation that plant defenses against pathogens becomes weaker in older, unburned stands and production of some defensive chemicals declines in older plants. Careful prescribed burn experiments may be helpful in to see if this approach is effective.



Lorraine Lapsley with husband Elmer, 1998.



Austin and Betty Kennell, 1998.



*Rhododendron* 'Hyper George' in the landscape. Photo by S. McDonald.



*Rhododendron* 'Hyper George' closeup. Photo by S. McDonald.



*Rhododendron maximum*  $\times$  *R. hyperythrum*. Photo by Bill Bedwell.



*Rhododendron maximum*  $\times$  *R. hyperythrum*. Notice the attractive reddish buds in the winter landscape. Photo by Bill Bedwell.



