

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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February 2012

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

May 4-8, 2012 ARS/ASA Convention, Asheville, NC, Asheville
Crowne Plaza Resort
May 18-20, 2012 MAC Spring Meeting, Blacksburg, VA

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/
Old Quarterly Bulletins ARS	http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/
Rhododendron Blog	www.rhododendron.org/blog/

NEW ADVENTURES IN THE OLD NEW RIVER VALLEY

by Sharon Horn

Reserve the third weekend in May, May 18-20, 2012, to join members and friends of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of ARS for "New Adventures in the Old New River Valley". We will visit new gardens, hear new speakers, and explore new natural areas during our weekend in Blacksburg, Virginia.

We will begin the weekend on Friday evening with guest speakers from Virginia Tech with updates on their current research projects and the Hahn Horticultural Garden. The evening program will be followed by the always tempting new plant selections of the Spring Plant Sale (remember entry is based on your registration order) and the also always tempting Book Sale.

Saturday morning we will board buses to travel to several private gardens in Blacksburg, including the nationally recognized garden of MAC member Elissa Steeves. Elissa's garden has been featured in articles in *Southern Living* and *Horticulture*, and while she admits that she planted her first azaleas and rhododendrons too deeply, her garden features many choice plants and original design features. After returning to the hotel and getting ourselves "spiffed up", we have our social hour and the always competitive Plant Auction. (Please bring a plant for the auction if you can.) Our evening speaker will be Elissa Steeves' presentation on "Aging Gracefully as the Garden Matures" - a topic most of us can relate to!

Elissa is a Virginia Tech horticulture major and taught horticulture at the high school level for (in her own words) 100 years. She has been a guest speakers at many gardening symposiums, including Longwood Gardens in February 2012, and since retirement, she now devotes her time to gardening, plant collecting and garden travels.

New to the weekend plan will be an optional tour on Sunday morning to Buffalo Mountain Natural Preserve in Floyd County. Buffalo Mountain has several rare plants and an extensive natural plant community. The views at the summit are spectacular, but many of the unique plants can be found at the lower elevations. We will have lunch at Chateau Morrisette, and then we will travel north on the parkway to explore several interesting areas.

Please make plans to join us in Blacksburg, Virginia on May 18-20, 2012 for new adventures and visits with new and long-time MAC friends!

GOOD NEWS TO SHARE

by Lloyd Willis

The MAC group received high praise for their hosting of the Fall 2011 ARS Eastern Regional Meeting held in Richmond. After the last session on Saturday night, several persons expressed their thanks to the chapter and gave praise to the chapter for a job very well done. They noted their appreciation of all the effort that had gone into making a successful meeting. After the meeting, an email stated the following: "Please be sure to let

everyone involved know that they did a great job and they pulled it off perfectly!" It was quite nice to hear and see the words of praise. So once again thanks to all those who worked so hard to make the fall meeting a success.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S REPORT, FALL MEETING, ARS OCTOBER 21, 2011, RICHMOND
by Ann Mangels, DIRECTOR, DISTRICT 9

The Board of Directors meeting, sponsored by the Middle Atlantic Chapter, at its regular Fall meeting, proved to be successful as most eastern representatives were present and many of the western folks also attended. This was Don Smart's first meeting as ARS President, and from all indications we are in very capable and good hands.

There were several announcements made initially including a reminder that there is a new blog on our website, www.rhododendron.org. The new feature is called "All about Rhododendrons" – check it out! Concern has been expressed about the late delivery of the ARS Journal. If you do not receive your Journal within one month of its normal delivery time, it will be replaced free of charge. However, you must call Laura Grant at the ARS office.

Delivery dates are as follows: Winter issue: March 1st Spring issue: June 1st Summer issue: September 1st Fall issue: December 1st. Chapters need to send their annual reports to the IRS by January 15th. You will follow the same method of reporting as in the past.

Membership chairs: Please send Laura updates with emails and phone numbers of members quickly. The By Law section on recognition awards and honors committee has been rewritten to clarify procedures for granting the ARS Pioneer Achievement Award as well as including information regarding the Citation for Service/Award of Merit. These changes were read and approved at the meeting and will be adopted at the convention in Asheville. Also, the BOD asked the Digital Publications Committee to complete the publishing of the ARS Quarterly on the web. At present, issues 1 – 35 have been archived and available through the Virginia Tech Univ. Digital Library and Archive (DLA). The site was visited by more than 110,000 people during 2009-2010, especially since Google and other search engines rank the DLA very highly. The committee requested endowment funds with support from the Endowment Fund Committee to archive volumes 36-54 (1982-2000) electronically. The

award of \$2100 to the Digital Publication Committee was approved.

There was discussion concerning individual chapter's involvement with community partners. These could include co-hosting plant sales/shows; restoration of historic gardens; developing/maintaining new gardens; developing educational materials; hosting demonstrations; acting as speakers, etc. District directors were asked to question chapters in their districts as to what type of partnership activities they are involved with. These can be formally documented arrangements or occasional partnerships. One outcome of this type of activity is attracting new members. It was suggested that an article be written in the Journal relating successes and how involvement has strengthened chapters.

I have been part of an ad hoc committee to discuss the future of holding two ARS Board meetings/year as required by the By-Laws. The financial burden is heavy on some District Directors who do not receive adequate support from their districts for travel expenses. Options including telephone voice conference calls, computer video conference calls (something like Skype) or using video network software have been considered. These options all have serious drawbacks especially when you consider a typical meeting lasts from 8:30 until 5:00 or so. The Committee/Board will continue deliberating about this in Asheville. It may necessitate a By-Law change.

The electronic edition of the JARS is still a hot topic. The Editorial Committee is studying various means of transmitting Journals to the membership. One thing is certain, the printed copy will be available to all members desiring it. Unfortunately the USPO is slow and slower, and getting more and more expensive. Laura Grant reported that the readership seems to be enjoying articles more recently which have appeal to a wider range of gardening audiences. Other topics for future articles were mentioned.

There will be Vireya brochures available at the Philadelphia Flower Show – the theme will be Hawaii.

Treasurer, Bill Mangels, brought to everyone's attention that we are continuing to draw down on our General Account reserve and are now tapping into the Endowment Fund to support operation. This past year was the first time in Bill's tenure that that has happened. The Endowment Fund at the time of the meeting stood at \$642,000.

Walter Przypek has taken over the Program Library and is receiving inventory from Pearl Fong and her son following the death of Wing Fong.

Sandra McDonald reported that two new acquisitions from Jane Goodrich and Emil and Betty Hager have been added to the Rhododendron and Azalea Manuscripts Collection at the UVA Library.

Shirley Rock, Membership Chair, needs to receive newsletters from each chapter. Her email address is: samnjerryrock@frontier.com. She would like her committee to include members from all districts and welcomes volunteers.

Norm Beaudry reported a successful year with the Seed Exchange. He said that left over seed was contributed widely, including university graduate programs, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Rhododendron Species Foundation, etc.

Encouraging new chapter membership has been an ongoing topic, and much time was spent brainstorming ideas. Hands on activities, field trips, gift membership to the society, plant give aways, phone trees, and general educational planting programs were all mentioned, as well as having interesting and varied programs. There are presently 67 chapters in 36 different countries around the world, and growth in membership seems to be on the upside.

It was a long day and much was discussed and voted upon. I particularly enjoyed the accommodations for the meeting and general participation of all attendees. Again, thank you for supporting my participation on the board and if there is anything I can do for you or your chapter, please let me know.

OBSERVATIONS FROM OUR GARDEN IN CROZET, JANUARY 2012

by Lloyd Willis

'Gigi' is a rhododendron with slightly twisted leaves and pink flowers with lots of small black blotches. Our first 'Gigi' was purchased at a MAC Plants for Members Sale (P4M) in the early '80s as a quart-size potted plant. It grew into a nice size specimen plant that was at least 3' x 3' before we moved it into a "rhodo hedge". Sadly the next year was very dry and we lost that plant.

About six years ago I ordered four 'Gigi's' as rooted cuttings and after a year in the nursery bed they were placed in the full sunlight. Three of the four have survived and are now about 3' x 3' with a nice,



Lloyd Willis

rounded habit. It has been a good plant for us in central Virginia.

We have been growing Japanese maples for about 30 years and continue to add new Japanese maples each year. When I asked our fall speaker, Elizabeth Mundy, when she collected her Japanese maple seed, she said over the Thanksgiving break. So out I went on Thanksgiving day and noted several of our Japanese maples had really nice amounts of seeds, then decided a nap after the meal was more important than the seed collections. I remembered again on December 15th and found that 99% plus of the seeds were gone! Next year I plan to do better and start my seed collection on Thursday before lunch.

THE SEASONS FOR 2012

Information from Mid-Atlantic Weather Station Mailing List, 12-24- 2011 (MAWS)

SPRING EQUINOX: March 20, 1:14 A.M. EDT

SUMMER SOLSTICE: June 20, 7:09 P.M. EDT

FALL EQUINOX: September 22, 10:49 A.M. EDT

WINTER SOLSTICE: December 21, 6:12 A.M. EST

WHAT'S CAUSING ONE OF THE DRIEST, WARMEST WINTERS IN HISTORY?

summarized from a Scientific American article by Mark Fischetti, January 12, 2012
<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=whats-causing-dry-winter> with additional observations by Sandra McDonald

This year strange forces are controlling the jet stream which controls our winter weather. The jet stream has been kept at far northern latitudes by high pressure. So far the 2011-2012 weather has been warm and dry over the continental U.S.

The first week of January was the driest in history with more than 95% of the U.S. with below-average snow cover. This is the greatest percentage ever recorded according to NOAA. About half of the U.S. had temperatures at least 5 degrees F. above average. Europe had similar extremes.

Supposedly the Arctic Oscillation is responsible for this. The lower edge of the Arctic Oscillation is called the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO). These features influence the jet stream. A wikipedia article tells about the pressure pattern at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arctic_oscillation. Jeffrey Masters, a meteorologist who runs the Weather Underground Web site says, "The cause of

this warm first half of winter is the most extreme configuration of the jet stream ever recorded.” The jet stream was far north and fairly straight, preventing cold fronts from descending from the north. (Tracking began in 1865.) The weather pattern could still shift this winter.

All this brings to mind our own strangely mild weather this fall and winter. In the 37 years I have lived here in Hampton, this year was the first fall I ever lived through without a single frost or freeze. We can get a frost as early as October, and I have seen the first frost not happen until early December before, but this is the first time it did not frost in our yard until early January. Many locations in Hampton did have frost, as did some of the nearby cities, but here on the Hampton Roads waterway we did not have one. My *Impatiens* were still fine and succulent in the yard until January 4th and 5th when our temperatures finally dropped to 24 degrees F and killed them. Those are the only two really cold nights we had in January. In February we finally had a shift in the weather pattern and had cold nights on February 11th and 12th.

IT'S GOOD TO BE A GARDENER

An article in Science Daily on March 17, 2011, about health and attitudes of older adults who garden by Aime Sommerfeld and colleagues at Texas A&M and State Universities did a survey based on the Life Satisfaction Inventory. The five components of quality of life surveyed were: zest for life; resolution and fortitude; congruence between desired and achieved goals; physical, psychological, and social self-concept; and optimism. Other multiple choice questions were asked as well. They received responses from 298 participants who differentiated themselves either gardeners or nongardeners by answering the question “do you garden?”

Gardeners had higher positive scores on overall life satisfaction. More than 84% of gardeners agreed with the statement, “I have made plans for things I’ll be doing a month or a year from now” compared with 68% of nongardeners. Other differences were found in energy levels and levels of daily physical activity with gardeners coming out well ahead of the nongardeners.

More than 75% of gardeners rated their health as “very good” or “excellent.” They also reported eating more fruit and vegetables.

WINTER WITCH-HAZELS AND S'MORES by Doug Jolley

The Sunday (February 19) winter storm advisory mirrored the winter that we have had here in central West Virginia. While a friend from Pulaski, VA e-mailed me bemoaning his eight inch accumulation of snow, our four to six inch prediction yielded nothing but sunshine. This has truly been a Carolinian winter. The flowers of the native witch-hazel *Hamamelis virginiana* lingered into early December and by mid-month, the distinct fragrance of *Hamamelis mollis* appeared. This olfactory event always announces the arrival of the Oriental Witch-hazel season and this winter has been one of the best witch-hazel winters ever. Different varieties have been in bloom from before Christmas and continue to bloom unabated. Some of the outstanding performers this winter have included: ‘Cyrile’, ‘Barnstedt Gold’, ‘Diane’, ‘Luna’, and ‘Sandra’.

The deer pressure has also been light and barring any unusual late spring freezes, this looks to be a banner year for rhododendron and azalea bloom. All the ornamental Ericaceae are heavily budded and all should put on a show.

The mild weather has also allowed for some aggressive pruning to take place. Many of the closely planted items from MAC meetings have been moved, thinned out or removed all together. The tree seedlings planted twenty or more years ago have been limbed up or cut down all together. The resulting brush piles have provided the embers for roasting hotdogs and making s’mores. It has been a “rewarding” winter thus far.



‘Ginny G’ Photo by Doug Jolley

HELP NEEDED

Articles from the membership are welcome more than ever with the passing of Jane McKay and David Lay. Sandra McDonald

Memberships and renewals should be sent to our Membership Chairman Jeanne Hammer at 815 Porter St. Apt 301, Richmond, VA 23224.

Annual membership dues are \$40 per year.

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

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