

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 MEETINGS

October 23-24, 2020

Roslyn Retreat, Henrico, VA

American Rhododendron Society

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SPRING MEETING

Our Spring Meeting had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, as did countless other meetings including the ARS Convention in Vancouver, Washington. The ARS Convention has been rescheduled to April 27-May1, 2022.

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam ordered statewide closure of certain non-essential businesses and closed all K-12 schools for the remainder of the academic year on March 23. The closing order was later extended to May 8. The governor said we will be wearing masks for months to come.

IN THE CROZET GARDEN by Lloyd Willis

It is April 10, 2020, as I sit down to write this article. We are under house arrest by the two daughters. This has been the case for at least the last three weeks. At first we were allowed to walk the trails in Crozet Park but that is now frowned upon. We are to stay in the house or stay in the yard. For my sanity and that of Margaret, we are happy the yard is included. We are both well so far and the daughters are working hard to keep us that way. They have taken over the shopping and we usually have supper provided by one of them. We could certainly get used to having supper provided.

For a good part of the day yesterday and the day before, the wind was very strong. Margaret kept reminding me that she did not want me to be outside under any small trees much less any large trees. A sugar maple tree lost a large top limb which caught



in lower branches about six feet above the ground. We were able to pull that to the ground.

So what else has been happening in the spring garden? The first azaleas bloomed on March 26 and now most of the early azaleas are in full bloom. The first rhodo to bloom was Kimberly followed shortly by the ever favorite Taurus. A couple of the other varieties are now starting to open. One good thing about the shelter-in-place order is that we won't miss the peak bloom in our garden this spring. The wild violets have gone from a relatively small area (maybe ten by forty feet) on the property to an area ten times that size. When the blue wild violets are in bloom next to the bright yellow dandelions, the color combination is outstanding. Makes you forget that you have spent hours removing dandelions. In the past week, the fiddle heads of the ferns have gone from two inches to ten or twelve inches tall. Glad they are past the just out of ground stage when they look like something from a horror movie. Several of the hostas have gone from one inch to six or eight inches tall.



Rhododendron 'Kimberly'. Photo by Margaret Willis.

Currently I am spraying liquid deer fence every other day on any hostas over half an inch tall. One of the daughters gave me an almost full container of liquid deer fence after three of our grandchildren complained about the smell. Last spring we had over 200 Japanese maple seedlings in the yard. Maybe 100 of those are still with us. This spring's count is around 50 first year seedlings. It has been a nice start to spring except for the strong winds and the morning temperatures being in the low 40's and not being able to go to garden centers.

So where is the humor in this article? Well, Margaret really likes the wild violets in bloom. I decided to surprise her and make a bed around a dogwood tree--wild violets for her and red Japanese maples for me. I had put in about twenty clumps of the wild violets and four red Japanese maple seedlings when I was called to supper. That evening, I didn't get back to mulch the bed and didn't even think about spraying with liquid deer fence. The next morning on our walk when we came upon the bed Margaret was happy with the idea of the new bed. But she couldn't understand why I hadn't planted all the violets. All the large clumps of violets looked great but all the small clumps had been pulled out of the ground. It looked to me like I had a senior moment and forgot to plant any of the small clumps. Sure hope an animal dug them out and not a senior moment.

A TALE OF HOW HEIRLOOM DAFFODILS GOT INTO MY GARDEN- by Carol Segree

I was born in Washington, D.C., but my parents moved to Bedford County near Lynchburg, when I was two years old. The original homestead was about 100 acres and had an abandoned, collapsing house at the foot of the mountains. This house had been built by an English family and was apparently rather exclusive for its time--indoor plumbing with a bath tub. The mountainside garden was terraced with rock walls and planted with thousands of daffodils. As children we would pick the flowers and often dug the bulbs to plant in my mother's garden. I have some leucojums in my garden from this garden, but don't have a photo.



There was another house in better condition near

the top of the mountain on an adjacent property. It was also built by an English family. I believe it was



still occupied by elderly people when I was a child. During the Depression, the CCC camps built a road near the top of the mountain range just below this house which was later purchased by the paper mill, which demolished the house because they were afraid of unauthorized people using it and starting fires in the mountains. Some years ago my brother purchased that property. When I visited one spring he took me and my mother on a tour of the mountains. When we got to the location where the house was built, we saw hundreds of daffodils in bloom. Of course, I said, "let's go get a shovel." So we did and the rest is history.

I am still amazed that these bulbs have survived probably for more than 100 years, certainly more than 70 years, with no care. The double ones often don't open up well and the single ones are not unusual, but they are very special to me.

PEP TALK FROM JUNE WALSH, ARS MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN

Twenty years ago, at the "turn of the century", those of us in the tech industry were concerned about our computer readiness for January 1, 2000. Would our networks crash making communications, product delivery, our computers inoperable? How would we recover quickly if we had a 'crash'? People's jobs, livelihoods and well being were at stake. We made it because for months we had run our computers forward beyond the 'drop dead' date to test them. We made plans for failure and recovery, some of those plans we put into action, some of them went on the scrap heap of experience.

Covid-19, 20 years later, did not give us an opportunity to 'ramp up' for its world-wide effects and damage, so we improvise, we help our shut-in or

quarantined neighbor. We walk singly in our neighborhood. We work in our gardens and chat with neighbors, walking singly, across a fence and space gulf of 6+ feet. We volunteer in the community where it is safe for ourselves and others. We make the milk and coffee last just a few days longer.

All of this is being done by our chapter members, our chapter Boards of Directors and most importantly by our Chapters' Newsletter editors and web masters.

Many of our Chapters' newsletter editors and web masters are still hard at work keeping their chapters' members together with newsletters, beautiful pictures, human interest stories, Rhodo stories and highlights, pest notes and weed stories. There are no meetings or interesting speakers, or garden visits, no potlucks or cookie exchanges, but the telephone trees are still calling members to remind them that though there is no meeting they are still in our thoughts and we are hoping to see them soon.

Part of our chapter's glue and society's bond has been temporarily broken; no chapter meetings, no celebration of our 75th year Convention. Make the best of what we will have left of 2020 by reaching out to members to remind them of their value and friendship.

June Walsh is a member of the Eureka Chapter in California.

EVOLUTION OF A GARDEN by Barbara Hall

Like many hobby gardeners, I have developed "obsessions" for different groups of plants over the years. Because our home is located on a lot with mature trees (mostly oaks, pines and dogwoods), the garden has always been, of necessity, a dry shade garden. Between Al and me, I admit that I am the "plant nut", but he puts just as much effort (and often more physical labor) into our garden, although I often refer to it as "my" garden. My initial interest was native plants and then I expanded into rhodos (mostly evergreen azaleas.) Once the rhodos matured, I found that there were other shrubs and understory trees that mixed in well, especially Japanese maples which are attractive year round.



As space became in shorter supply and the large plants lost some of their lower branches, there was a new area along the paths that could be planted with perennials. Once again, I have developed new favorite plant groups...hostas, ferns, *Epimedium*, *Asarum* (heart leaf or wild ginger), *Podophyllum* (may apple), *Polygonatum* (Solomon's Seal) and a



Front garden. Photo by Barbara Hall.



Pink azaleas. Photo B. Hall.

number of unusual plants, especially species and cultivars from Asia that seem to do well here. I particularly like plants with variegated or gold

foliage which gives a nice accent with the green background.



Beautiful view of Al and Barbara Hall's garden looking down from above. Photo B. Hall.



Native azalea in the Hall's garden. Photo B. Hall.



Side garden. Photo B. Hall.

During this particularly stressful time, it is nice to be able to stay home and wander through the garden, getting joy each day from seeing what new plant has emerged or what's blooming. I hope that all of you are enjoying your gardens as much as we're enjoying ours!

WINDBEAM WAY WANDERINGS, May 2020
by Doug Jolley

Warm winter weather continues as warm spring weather. This year the early rhododendrons bloomed for weeks on end. *Rhododendron dauricum*, *R. 'Gable's Early Bird'* and *R. 'Cornell Pink'* never



Gable's Early Bird. Photo Doug Jolley.

experienced below freezing temperatures for their entire bloom period and they flowered for weeks. *R. 'Bubblegum'* is becoming a

favorite of the very early bloomers. It is another successful P4M plant. Finally, during the second week of April, frosty forecasts threatened tree peonies and early lepidotes. After gathering copious amounts of our vegetable garden floating row cover



R. dauricum. Photo D. Jolley.

and frost blankets, at risk plants were covered. The effort was well worth exerting as no casualties were realized among those protected. The largest beneficiary was a mature lepidote in full bloom. This unnamed seedling was obtained from a visit decades



R. mucronulatum 'Cornell Pink'. Photo D. Jolley.



R. 'Bubblegum'. Photo D. Jolley.



Unnamed Seedling from Doctor Tolstead. Photo D. Jolley.



R. 'Landmark'. Photo D. Jolley.

ago to the late Doctor Tolstead of Elkins, WV. At the time of the visit, he was still fully into his hybridizing efforts. Without fail this is a deep pink beacon in the early garden.

One treasure which resides in a shade house, *Pieris floribunda*, did not require frost protection and it has become an icon of the shade house garden. For years we tried growing this plant from seed but without



Pieris floribunda by *Rhododendron* foliage. Photo D. Jolley.



“Floating Row-Cover Village”. Photo by D. Jolley.

success. Even some “rescued” plants ultimately withered. Finally, an unusually robust seedling was



‘Dexter’s Champagne’. Photo D. Jolley.

planted in a flat and placed deep beneath a large rhododendron. It was always alive when we examined it year after year. After it reached over

one foot in height and sported flowers, we moved it to the shade house and today it still grows contentedly in its original flat, deeply rooted. It is now over two feet tall and three feet wide and blooms heavily from mid-February well into May.



Trillium sessile. Photo D. Jolley.

The native spring wildflowers were in full bloom by the end of March instead of the usual mid-April. One of my favorite trilliums is *Trillium sessile*, sessile trillium. Often striking foliage accompanies strap-like maroon flowers. It slowly self-sows and now a myriad of more trilliums accompanies our rhodos.



Louisiana Waterthrush on *R. maximum*. Photo D. Jolley.

Rhododendron maximum has lately been a native species of interest among some society members. Many other interesting plants and songbirds associate themselves with *R. maximum* as well. One warbler arrives in West Virginia in late March and early April is a prime time to visit the rhododendron thickets it calls home. The Louisiana Waterthrush is always a harbinger of spring along shady, rhododendron lined streams throughout most of the state. The bird has a



Rhododendron maximum at Camp Creek State Park in West Virginia. Photo by Doug Jolley.



Tree Peony. Photo D. Jolley.

bobbing habit and even at a good distance, the small bird bobbing along streamside rocks and vegetation, betrays its identity. Flowering season is not the only time to enjoy the environs of the Great Rhododendron.

May is fast approaching and the big-leaved rhododendrons are beginning to awaken. This Dexter's Champagne should be a sight.



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

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.

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