

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

Vol. XXXIX No.2

June 2012

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Fall 2012

to be determined

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/

BLACKSBURG MEETING WAS A PRIMETIME GEM!

by William Bedwell

The weekend of May 18-21 in Blacksburg was most certainly one of the finest MAC Meetings ever. I thought it sounded good in the meeting notice, but it surpassed all expectations. It is such a shame that only 29 people attended, but that was partly because of sickness and conflicts. It was a truly fine weekend of superb talks, exceptionally outstanding garden tours and a grand finish on Sunday, topped off by a colorfully landscaped route home via the Blue Ridge Parkway where there was beautiful *R. catawbiense*, the gorgeous *R. calendulaceum* in all its wonderful colors, and *Kalmia*, all in full bloom. Those *R. calendulaceum* have grown into glorious specimens and so easily accessible, growing by the road, often with shoulders to pull off. The plants were given enough room to fully develop into those fine specimens. This was the first time I have seen them with that much of a show along the Parkway.

Friday brought us a most fascinating talk by Dr. Erik Nilsen that covered the extensive amount of information he has discovered since telling us years ago about beginning research into the variations of rhododendron leaf curling in cold weather. We have all seen this phenomenon but it was so interesting to find out variations of meaning behind it. It is amazing how many ways he has expanded and extended this research over the years. Many people were making notes.

Flower Show: Ben Dukes from Portsmouth won the entire flower show. We do not have a

Sweepstakes winner, but he definitely won that. He



Best-in-Show, azalea spray, possibly Williamsburg, entered by Ben Dukes. Photo by D. Hyatt.

was the only contestant and we were so grateful for his participation. I think all entries were unknown, but Don Hyatt identified the Best Azalea and Best in

Show as 'Williamsburg', partly because of the flower shape resemblance to 'Wakaebisu'.

Business Meeting: Not much happened that I recall. I was approved for another term on the Board. [Sandra McDonald and Jay Gillenwater were also re-elected.] Sorry I did not make notes. I am a terrible reporter. I rely on memory and that gets less reliable and / or less detailed as the years go by. Too many old details cluttering it.

Auction: The auction went well despite the limited crowd. It was a good venue for the auction. They announced at the ARS-ASA Convention in Asheville that Transplant Nursery raised plants for the Convention but they raised a lot more than the Convention bought. So Jay bought them at very low prices for MAC sales. I think he went to Georgia to get them. The auction plants were in medium large pots and were 18-24 inch azaleas. There were many unusual Satsukis, some rhododendrons, and some nice deciduous azaleas, such as 'Camilla's Blush'.

Tours: All of the tour gardens were grand and included a detailed bus tour of the Virginia Tech campus where I saw so much more than ever before. Then we had a tour among the beautiful residential houses in Blacksburg.

Holly Scoggins, the energetic and enthusiastic young woman who is Director the Hahn



Holly Scoggins speaking to MAC members. Photo by D. Hyatt.

Horticulture Garden at Virginia Tech provided a most interesting and entertaining tour, then let us roam around. There is a lot more to it than you first notice, and the shade garden is a spectacular one-of-a-kind because of the age and picturesque beauty of the old trees that were used for a canopy over the most romantic shade garden.

The Niemiera garden is a fascinating showcase of how it is possible for a collector of interesting

and unusual trees and shrubs to fit all those plants into a well designed and most attractive landscape on a city lot. The enthusiastic commentary of Dr. Alex Niemiera made the tour most enjoyable and all those forms, textures, and foliage colors were a treat for the eyes.

The enthusiasm only grew to soaring heights when we got to the Elissa Steeves garden where we ate our box lunches after finding one of the many garden seats that were scattered in nooks all over the place. If ever there were a fun garden that one is it. E l i s s a ' s e x t r a o r d i n a r y enthusiasm spilled forth as she led the extensive tour after



Cement leaves in Steeves garden. Photo by D. Hyatt.

lunch. It is no wonder this garden has won national awards. Then on Saturday night, Elissa shared more of her stories and garden experiences in her talk, that continued on afterward with people gathered around her table for more conversation. After many of the people had cleared out except for the huddle around her table, I spotted Gray Carter sitting alone at the next table. I went over and Gray said he was trying to absorb her exuberance!

The final tour garden was originally collected and planted by MAC member Myron Shear, who won the MAC Best in Show at one of our Chapter's largest flower shows back in 1983. The current owners, urged everyone to help identify some of the plants and I think some were identified. Many had finished blooming but many others were in bloom. With all those years of growth, these were some of the largest rhododendrons we have seen in recent years of touring member gardens. It was called the Weiner / Erichom garden in the meeting information.

Already, this had become the best MAC Meeting in many years, but the the crown jewel of the meeting was the fabulous Sunday brunch at Chateau Morrisette, close to the Blue Ridge Parkway near Floyd, VA. That, in itself is worth a day's journey to enjoy. It was not far from Blacksburg, and that

morning we hiked, or slowly made our way in my case, up the mile trail to the summit of Buffalo Mountain where Paul James pointed out little wildflower gems among the rocks. The view was just as spectacular as promised. That walk produced the appetite to gorge on the buffet brunch. Then quickly joining the Blue Ridge Parkway north for the journey home, it was not long before we were quickly treated to many, many very large old *R. calendulaceum* in full bloom and loaded with flowers. All the wonderful colors were there. It is a shame that some deprived people went other places or straight on home. I got home about 7:30 that night and never got hungry enough to eat more food for the that most satisfying day. I think my body appreciated the workout on that one mile mountain climb that seemed like five miles at time. I have felt better ever since.

FROM THE GARDEN IN CROZET by Lloyd Willis

Today is June 12 and there has been a heavy rain since late last night. We have been blessed by good rains all spring, so much rain that the plants in pots have had little need for watering.

Another blessing this spring has been a fewer than usual number of deer in Crozet. Less than a half mile from our house there have been multiple construction projects. Some folks believe one of the large projects with its fencing could be slowing down our Crozet deer visitors.

We usually lose 10% of our hostas to the deer and only about 1% of our hostas are currently missing. The *Hosta* 'Fire and Ice' has been in the garden three or four years now and we are looking forward to adding more of them.

For the past five years the deer have eaten 98 - 99% of the daylily buds. So far this year we are only missing about 10% of the daylily buds. The daylilies 'Stella de Ora' and 'Happy Returns' are in bloom now and a few Mary Todds are open with hundreds of Mary Todds buds ready to open. The daylilies will get their third week of Liquid Fence as soon as possible after the rain stops.

We continue to get good results with *Rhododendron* 'Vulcan', a clear red with no blotch. It is in our yard and large specimens have also been easily moved to the nearby homes of our two daughters. It is the first rhodo that catches your eye as you get to the top of our drive way.

Something else unusual has happened this spring: All the plants purchased at the Spring MAC Meeting (27 was the number) have been planted in the nursery beds. Usually they sit in pots for at least a year before getting planted. I think it had something to do with one of the grandson's (Silas - age 4) statement, "Grand Dad, Is it because you are old that you are not planting these plants?"

TWO MAC MEMBERS GET AWARDS AT ASHEVILLE MEETING (quotations from *Rhododendron.org Web site*)

2012 Gold Medal Award: Donald W. Hyatt

You are a Renaissance man. You have had a love of rhododendrons and native azaleas since childhood. You hybridize, distribute seed, photograph, paint, and share your rhododendron knowledge through your successful website and as a much-sought-after international speaker. You are a contributor to the ARS Journal, Azalean, and Chapter newsletters. You have served the Society and your Chapter in many capacities, including Chapter President and District Director. You have been instrumental in publicizing the plight of the azalea collection at the National Arboretum, where a generous grant was put in place to save the azalea collection. For your valuable and endless contributions, the American Rhododendron Society is pleased to present the Gold Medal to Donald W. Hyatt.

2012 Silver Medal Award: James S. Brant

For over a decade, you have focused your determined leadership on projects to protect and enhance the value of exceptional groups of North American azalea species in the Southern Appalachian Highlands. Your efforts helped obtain an aerial photograph of Gregory Bald for use in future comparisons and a mower for restoration of that bald, with spectacular results. You coordinated groups of ARS members and others to protect special azaleas found on Hooper Bald from competing vegetation. You also organized planting of nearby Huckleberry Bald with seedlings of exceptional forms of native azalea species. You have taken the botanical exploration a step further into conservation and preservation of these fascinating plants and made them more accessible to future visitors. For your outstanding contributions, the American Rhododendron Society is pleased to present the Silver Medal to James S Brant.



Rhododendron in Beal Garden. Photo by D. Hyatt.



MAC members listening to Elissa Steeves in her garden. Photo by D. Hyatt.



Phil Wilkinson and Ben Dukes in Steeves' Garden. Photo by D. Hyatt.



Buffalo Mountain hikers. Photo by D. Hyatt.

ARS-ASA CONVENTION IN ASHEVILLE



Don Hyatt receiving Gold Medal from Don Smart and Ann Mangels at Asheville Convention.. Photo by W. Bedwell.



Jim Brant receiving the Silver Medal from Don Smart and Ann Mangels at the ARS Convention in Asheville. Photo by W. Bedwell.

CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION AT ASHEVILLE MEETING

The Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society on behalf of the Azalea Society of America and the American Rhododendron Society presents **The Southern Highland Reserve** in appreciation of their work toward conserving and promoting the native



John Turner, Southern Highland Reserve director. Photo by W. Bedwell.

flora of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Since nine or more species from the genus *Rhododendron* make up an important and beautiful component of that flora, your mission is of great interest to all our members. We especially appreciate the help of the Southern Highlands Reserve Director, John Turner, with the 2011 "Great Azalea Planting". Over 800 seedlings of *Rhododendron calendulaceum* were planted on Huckleberry Ridge and Hooper Bald in the Nantahala National Forest.

The Southern Highland Reserve generously started the seeds our members had gathered on Hooper Bald and raised the azaleas to planting size. These plantings will go a great way toward helping preserve the germplasm of this great native azalea from the Snowbird Mountains of North Carolina.



Plaque hanging at SHR. Photo by D. Hyatt.

Signed: John Migas, President, ASA; Don Smart, President ARS; and Lloyd Willis, President, Middle Atlantic Chapter ARS. May 5, 2012.

The Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society on behalf of the Azalea Society of America and the American Rhododendron Society presents **Duke Rankin**, National Forest



Don Smart and Jim Brant presenting Certificate of Appreciation to Duke Rankin. Photo by W. Bedwell.

Service, for your ever-willingness, helpful enthusiasm and leadership in the Hooper Bald Project, we recognize you with this Certificate of Appreciation. You worked tirelessly with us through many phases of this endeavor, especially coordinating the various government agencies that were involved. Our project was successful because of the liaisons you created. We were always able to count on your guidance, wisdom and sweat equity!

Signed: John Migas, President, ASA; Don Smart, President ARS; and Lloyd Willis, President, Middle Atlantic Chapter ARS. May 5, 2012.

WINDBEAM WAY WANDERINGS by Doug Jolley, April 2012

The winter of 2011-2012 was unusual in a mild way and April 2012 was unusual too. Contrary to the 2012 calendar, April was six weeks long this year; at least that's how it seemed. By the month's arrival, the lawn mower had cut the grass twice and the only white in the landscape was provided by *Rhododendron* 'April Snow'. With March temperatures in the 80's, *R. dauricum* was past prime by March 14. One MAC plant sale plant that performed admirably was *R. 'April Rhapsody'*. It was finishing by the onset of April.

Spring wildflowers also were at least three weeks ahead of schedule. I can't recall seeing *Trillium*

grandiflorum in full bloom during the last week of March. Normally, April 21 is the peak *Trillium* weekend. In the herb garden, borage was in bloom on April 1. In the vegetable garden, the kale and swiss chard sown beneath row cover in August, were still productive as April came to a close.

Only cold weather late in the month brought blooming more into normal sequence. A light snow and then three successive nights of frost brought the early show down to earth. Any blooming plants on April 22 were frozen. *R.* 'Ginny Gee' and *R.* 'Gable's Early Bird' changed from mounds of color to brown masses of ruined flowers. Anything still in bud survived. As April ends, the bloom sequence is back to normal here. Some new hybrids to bloom for the first time include: Bolt Mountain Flame Azalea crossed with a [*R. austrinum* × *R. calendulaceum*] × [*R. austrinum* × *R. calendulaceum*] and a cross of 'My Mary' × 'Yellow Delight'. The native azaleas are on schedule and May looks to be a banner month in the garden.

DEATH OF FORMER MEMBER



Evelyn and Williamson Watts. Photo by S. McDonald.

M. Williamson Watts, a former MAC member from Madison County, Virginia, died on November 23, 2011. Williamson and his wife Evelyn attended many MAC meetings. Their daughter Caroline Watts was also a MAC member for a time.

WARMEST U.S. SPRING ON Record: 2012 (information from Scientific American, June 7, 2012 - online)

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=warmest-us-spring-on-record-noaa>

U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that so far this year has

been the warmest year the U.S. has ever seen since record keeping began in 1895. We have had the warmest spring and the second warmest May. Temperatures are the warmest on record for the contiguous U.S.

The meteorological spring, which runs from March through May, was 57.1 degrees F, 5.2 degrees F above the 20th century long-term average and 2 degrees warmer than the previous warmest spring in 1910.

Alaska's spring months were 2.7 degrees F cooler than average and 10.5% wetter and snowier. Drought spread over Hawaii though it was not exceptional.

HAMPTON TORNADO by Sandra McDonald

At 8:13 p.m. on June 1, a surprise tornado came through our neighborhood in Hampton. The weatherman on TV had been going on and on about the possibility of tornadoes in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, but I did not hear any warning about us. If there was a warning, it was probably very brief.

The tornado came on shore a couple of blocks down our street, and made its way diagonally through the neighborhood, and was doing a lot of damage one block from us. Many trees in the neighborhood came down with a lot of them hitting roofs. I have seen probably a couple dozen houses with blue tarpaulins on their damaged roofs.

Electric power was out for about 24 hours and Verizon phone service and DSL at least 2 ½ days. The trees took down lots of lines in addition to the damage done to homes.

The tornado was not a very strong one, but did about 4.3 million dollars in damage. There were no serious injuries.

Notes from the ARS Annual Meeting, Asheville, North Carolina – May 4, 2012 by Ann Mangels

The Annual Meeting of the ARS was very well attended, with all officers and districts represented either by directors or alternates. District 9 was well represented in the annual roll call of attendees by members of Mason Dixon, Middle Atlantic and Potomac Valley Chapters. Having a joint meeting with the Azalea Society of America created a larger than normal number in attendance. Future meetings between the two plant societies may be planned. Some of the discussed highlights include:

1. As mentioned previously, the Board has discussed the need/value in holding two Board of Directors meetings in a face to face venue. Cost to attend is a concern,

especially to directors who do not have the support which District 9 so generously donates for this expense. It was moved to hold one electronic and one face to face board meeting in 2014. Evaluation of this process will be conducted.

2. Jay Murray, Registrar of Plant Names for the Genus *Rhododendron*, will be stepping down from her position and Michael Mills of the Philadelphia Chapter, will assist in the transitioning.
3. Walter Przypek has had to step down as Chair of the Program Library. Don Hyatt will continue to copy disks for distribution to chapters.
4. The Resource Development Committee has been renamed "Fundraising". Say it like it is!
5. Flyers about the fall conference in Nanaimo, BC are available for distribution to all chapters. The next Annual Meeting in Spring, 2013 will be held in Olympia, WA and the fall meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia.
6. Laura Grant, Executive Director, reported there are 156 new memberships since last fall, and there are now 3152 members in the ARS. The Briggs Membership Growth Contest will continue this year – chapters with a 10% increase in memberships will receive a flat of Briggs plants.
7. There was considerable discussion about Student Memberships. They will be offered at \$10.00 which includes electronic issues of the JARS, and \$5.00 going to the home chapter.
8. Laura also would like some additional "web spiders" who can answer questions that come to her and she distributes to members in the appropriate section of the country. (As an aside, we've done this, and it's fun. The questions are usually very basic.)
9. Bill Mangels reported a drop of \$33,000 in general funds. The Long Range Planning Committee will undertake to brainstorm how to add to the bottom line. Bill also mentioned that the endowment funds increased by \$36,000 during the year which included \$4400 in gifts and the remainder in appreciation. Endowment grants were approved by the Board to Norfolk Botanical Garden (\$2000), Portland Parks and Recreation (\$2000) Georgia Mountain Fair (\$1750) The Holden Arboretum (\$2750) and Bayard Cutting Arboretum (\$1500). Also \$10,000 was allocated into the general fund.
10. Most District Directors had submitted reports which were included with the "prework" sent prior to the meeting. We all basically share the same concerns and several updates were reported. One director requested that all previous gold and silver award citations be available to view; another has written an article on "Why be involved with the ARS" which will be published in the JARS; it was moved that membership lists include all names of members to more accurately reflect the size of membership;

several alternate district directors were present and introduced as replacements for present directors; the UMD garden was mentioned as a tribute to Ed Reiley; examples of programs and activities which have increased membership were discussed; offshore memberships are growing very well. It was a worthwhile discussion.

11. There were a few changes to wording in two Policies of the Board regarding the Research Foundation. The ARS policy regarding proportional voting (11.6.1) has also been removed. A similar policy appears in the By-laws and will have its first reading in Nanaimo to remove it.
12. The electronic Journal is going forward and at some point members will be able to opt out of the written (mailed) version. There will probably be a reduction in dues for those who receive it electronically. Offshore members will be encouraged to use that system for delivery. Costs for mailing to foreign countries are very high.
13. There are now 35 years of JARS available for reading online. They are found on the website under archives.
14. The Speaker's Bureau needs the names of volunteers who may be interested. Bill Stipe chair of committee, feels the list for the Pacific Northwest is adequate, but needs names in other parts of the country. If you know anyone who may be interested, please contact either me or Don Hyatt, new DD.

Last, and most important to District 9, was the Annual Business Meeting, held at the time of the ARS banquet. Awards are given at that time to nominees who have been awarded Gold and Silver Medals by the ARS Honors Committee. It was an honor for me to be able to help Bill Bedwell present the Silver Medal to Jim Brant from MAC, and also to help Richard Mohr present the Gold Medal to Don Hyatt of PV. Both of these gentlemen are so worthy of their receiving these highest ARS awards. Congratulations to them and a thank you to the committees who worked so hard in preparing the nominations for them.

As I've said before, it has been a privilege serving as our District 9 Director and thank you for giving me the opportunity to do so. Don Hyatt, new DD, and David Banks, Alternate DD, have a well run organization to work with and both will contribute greatly to it. I look forward to seeing you all many times in the future.

REMEMBER ALL NEWSLETTER PHOTOS CAN BE SEEN IN COLOR AT OUR MACARS.ORG WEBSITE

HELP NEEDED

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

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 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.

Sandra McDonald, Ph.D., Editor
Mid-Atlantic Rhododendron News and Notes
4302 Chesapeake Ave
Hampton, VA 23669