

# MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

Vol. XXXV No.3

September 2009

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Oct 23-25, 2009	Eastern Regional, Lionsville, PA
Nov 6-8, 2009	MAC meeting Hospitality House, Fredericksburg, VA
May 7-9, 2010	MAC Charlottesville, VA
May 14-17, 2010	Annual ARS Meeting, Long Island
May 20-24, 2010	German Rhododendron Soc., Bremen, Germany

### Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

<b>American Rhododendron Society</b>	<a href="http://www.rhododendron.org/">http://www.rhododendron.org/</a>
<b>MAC Website (UPDATED REGULARLY)</b>	<a href="http://www.macars.org/">http://www.macars.org/</a>
<b>U VA Science &amp; Engineering Libraries</b>	<a href="http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm">http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm</a>
<b>UVA Special Collections</b>	<a href="http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/">http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/</a>
<b>Henry Skinner Website</b>	<a href="http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/collections/projects/rhodo/skinner/">http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/collections/projects/rhodo/skinner/</a>
<b>Old Quarterly Bulletins ARS</b>	<a href="http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/">http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/</a>

### MAC 2009 FALL MEETING

It's time to reserve the dates of November 6-8 for the MAC Fall Meeting in Fredericksburg. Celia Dollarhide and her committee: chairman Lloyd Willis and Margaret Willis, Sharon Horn, Theresa Brents, and Jim Brant have been working hard on the arrangements.

Ian Robertson is the Friday evening speaker. He will talk about "A Rhododendron Adventure Story." He has a book coming out next spring *Six Thousand Years up the Garden Path.*



Since gardens in early November can be tricky and they couldn't find one to suit they opted for the National Museum of the Marine Corps at Quantico which opened off I-95 several years ago. It traces the history of the Corps with interactive exhibits, innovative technology, sights and sounds. [www.usmcmuseum.org](http://www.usmcmuseum.org).

According to AAA: "National Museum of the Marine Corps: the building's stunning design captivates visitors as they enter by way of

Leatherneck Gallery, where aircraft hang from the ceiling. Adjacent to the gallery, the Legacy Walk contains a timeline and leads to areas depicting various actions the Marines have been involved in. Visitors learn about Marines in boot camp, WW II, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Also discussed is the role of Marines in the global war on terrorism."

The museum exhibits utilize amazing technology with sound effects to tell the Marine story.

There will be two workshops in the afternoon: Adam Downing, Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Agent, will give a talk on Major Forest Health Threats which will encompass pests, diseases, and development; and Doug Jolley who will give a session on garden photography.

Adam Downing has served as the Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Agent for Virginia Cooperative Extension's Northern District, a 19 county area of the Northern Piedmont, since 2001. He volunteered with the US Peace Corps in Kenya as an agro-forestry extension agent. He holds a B.S. Degree in Forestry from Purdue University and a M.S. Degree in Forest Resources from Penn State University.

In his current position, Adam's mission is to guide landowners, decision-makers, and the general

public to make best decisions regarding the forest and natural resources resulting in environmentally sustainable management, growth, and quality of life. His office is in Madison, Virginia.

We all know Doug Jolley and his wonderful photography and should be able to pick up some valuable tips and information from him when he talks about photography on Saturday afternoon.

The Saturday evening speaker will be George McLellan who will talk about "A personal journey through the garden focusing on plants other than rhododendrons to give us interest all seasons." George with all his experience in garden design can give us a lot of good information and beautiful slides.

### **FROM THE WESTERN SHORE OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY** by David Lay

Here on the western shore of Chesapeake Bay it has been a very wet summer. In late August everything is green and growing rapidly, especially the weeds! After two very dry years and a winter with almost no snow, May, June, and July rainfall was nearly double normal. August we have recorded close to eight inches.

Many of the rhodos and azaleas we cut back drastically in the past two years have bushed out beautifully. A 12 foot Anna Rose Whitney is no longer a sprouting stump but a respectable and branched three feet. All of which



David Lay Photo by W. Przypek.

proves that even the most crowded and overgrown garden can be brought back in shape if you are ruthless and have the good luck to have lots of rain.

Another bonus this year is lots of long new cutting wood though you probably will take cuttings a little later than normal because the wood is so soft. Also, I have found that less vigorous side shoots root better than the lush straight up new growth.

This year despite the rain we have had no leaf gall on the 'Glacier' plants by the house. We have always had a lot because of drip from the roof but

last summer when we cut the azaleas drastically we raked out all the leaf-gall and old mulch and laid down all new mulch, Leaf gall spores obviously succumbed to the new hygiene.

We have also had a lot of pruning done gratis because of the heavy rains. Our many limbed-up oaks have dead branches in their canopy. This dead, rotting wood absorbs water, gets heavy, and then comes crashing down with very little wind or warning. We have piles of it around and one 10-foot limb as thick as my leg shattered on the walkway to the front door scarcely ten minutes after I walked in with the groceries.

### **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

Audrey Alexander, Chapel Hill, NC  
Mike Kane, Virginia Beach, VA  
Benjamin Taylor, Yorktown, VA

### **HUMOR FROM LLOYD WILLIS**

When Margaret Willis tried to make reservations at the motel in Roanoke for our Spring Meeting and get the special rate for the Rhododendron Society she was told after a long wait, "Sorry, we do not have a special room rate for the Rodeo Society." We need to make ourselves better known.

### **FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC** by Jane McKay

In the Spring of 2008 I declared 2008 as a Rhododendron year in my garden. This year I named 2009 as an Azalea year, unfortunately I have to split this year and also classify this year as a 'Critter year'. Over the years we have had and mostly still have lizards, skinks, frogs, toads, snakes, turtles, moles, voles, chipmunks, squirrels, rabbits, opossum, raccoons, skunks, fox, deer and once even a bear passed by. I live in a gated community and hunting is not permitted here. When we moved 16 years ago houses were few and far apart. Since then more and more homes were built on fairly small lots, my property is somewhat over an acre and one of the larger



Jane McKay

properties around here. The animals have increased at will but the natural food supply has diminished therefore gardens are invaded. This is the story we hear more and more.

Squirrels have always tried to drive me crazy here and in New York by de-potting plants as quick as I pot them. They devise ways to get into bird feeders and tear berries off plants before they even ripen. This year they have devised a new trick. I love coleus and plant big pots of them throughout the garden. This year they have been tearing the coleus plants off at ground level and just leaving the tops of the plants laying on the ground.

Hostas are another favorite plant and these have been attacked on two levels, voles at the roots and rabbits eating the tops. I conquered the voles problem by moving the hostas to large pots being careful a piece of hardware cloth (metal not plastic) over the drainage holes. To deter the rabbits I found a spray, non toxic, from 'Imustgarden.com' that has worked so far.

This area has been inundated with voles this year, everywhere I look I see vole holes, I don't think they have missed one square foot. I haven't seen a black snake here in a few years they used to help keep the voles under control, never thought I'd be happy to see a snake!

The lawn is like a mine field due to the mole tunnels but the Japanese Beetle population is way down. I don't know if the moles are eating the grubs but I'll put up with the lumpy lawn just in case.

Most of the garden is fenced with 7' welded wire and so far this keeps the deer out. Just outside the fence is a flat area about 25' wide with a stream at the far side. This area has long been frequented by the local deer. This year four bucks have decided to make this their home and I find them resting there most days. I can walk among them and they don't bother me. I will have to stop this practice once mating season starts as I understand bucks get cranky during that season. The does and the fawns have stopped walking through that area and stay more to the front of the house.

### **FIRE ANTS MOVING NORTH INTO OUR AREA (from VDACS)**

The red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*) has continued to spread and currently infests Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North

Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Puerto Rico. This stinging native of South America is also a concern for nursery shippers in infested states.

In 1989, the first fire ant infestation was detected in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Since that time, fire ant infestations have been confirmed in eight counties and ten independent cities. To date, all fire ant infestations appear to have been introduced into Virginia on nursery stock or other plant products from infested areas. With assistance from USDA, the Office of Plant and Pest Services previously attempted to eradicate each fire ant occurrence, but now that the pest is thoroughly established in the Tidewater area, VDACS will no longer treat infestations within the quarantine area.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) announced a quarantine on the movement of regulated articles in the lower Peninsula and greater Tidewater areas of Southeastern Virginia to areas outside the quarantined localities for the purpose of preventing the artificial spread of the Red Imported Fire Ant to uninfested areas of the state. The quarantine applies to the counties of James City and York and the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg.



Identifying Fire Ants is difficult because they look much like ordinary ants. They are 1/8 to 1/4 inch long and reddish brown to black in color. Fire Ants are probably best distinguished by their aggressive behavior and characteristic

mound-shaped nests; when their mound is disturbed, thousands of ants will crawl out.

Fire ant mounds are found in warm, sunny locations such as landscape beds, lawns, around trees and shrubs, along sidewalk cracks and against buildings. If disturbed, these ants are generally aggressive and can inflict painful stings. Fire ants are invasive pests of growing concern in our state. If you suspect that you have discovered a red imported fire ant infestation, please use caution and contact your local extension office or the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at 804.786.3515.

More information can be found at the following link:

<http://vdacs.virginia.gov/plant&pest/fireant.shtml#what>

### **DR. JOHN L. CREECH: REMEMBERING A LEGEND** By Don Hyatt (*reprinted with permission*)

It is with great sadness that I learned of the passing of Dr. John Creech. He died on August 7, 2009, at the age of 89. As one of the preeminent Directors of the U. S. National Arboretum, he was responsible for many of the facility's salient features and I want to take a brief moment to reflect on a few of his many accomplishments.



Dr. John Creech at the National Arboretum Photo by H. Schepker.

Dr. Creech had a distinguished career as a plant scientist in the U. S. Department of Agriculture that lasted 33 years. From 1973 until he retired in 1980, he served as Director of the U. S. National

Arboretum. During World War II, he also served in the U.S. Army, but spent from 1943 to 1945 in a German prisoner-of-war camp. Always the horticulturist, he raised food on a plot of ground at the camp to help feed his fellow POWs. He was awarded the Bronze and Silver Stars for his valor.

In addition to 10 different plant collection trips to Asia focusing on the introduction of new plant material, some of his most notable contributions to the Arboretum included significant expansion to the Azalea collection, the creation of the National Herb Garden, and the establishment of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

I feel very fortunate to have been able to spend an afternoon with Dr. Creech at the National Arboretum during the 2006 ARS/ASA Convention we hosted in Rockville. I regret that I didn't have my camera or video camcorder with me to record every moment. I really appreciate the above photo taken by Dr. Hartwig Schepker that day. I will try to share a few of my memories on perhaps the final time Dr. Creech visited the Arboretum.

I have always attributed my interest in azalea hybridizing directly to Dr. Creech and I was happy that I had a chance to tell him so that afternoon. It was probably in the mid 1960's, before Dr. Creech



Creech Azalea Introduction: Mrs. L.D.J.

had become Arboretum Director, when my parents took me for the annual trip to see the azalea display. Dr. Creech had set up an exhibit of evergreen azaleas to explain about hybridizing and asked people to vote on their favorite seedling.

All of the azaleas were from the same cross, and I remember being enamored by the subtle variations in color, flower shape, and size. The flowers ranged from pale lavender to pure white, and some had occasional purple flecks. Every azalea was beautiful and it was hard to decide, but that was the point I

realized I wanted to make my own azalea crosses. The large hose-in-hose white must have won the popularity poll that day. Creech named it for the First Lady, 'Mrs. L.B.J.'

One of Dr. Creech's greatest contributions surely is the world-class bonsai display at the Arboretum. He was the one responsible for obtaining that initial collection of dwarf trees and viewing stones, and that soon led to the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, undoubtedly one of the finest collections outside of Japan.

That afternoon we walked through the Bonsai Pavilion including some of the "back rooms" while Dr. Creech shared so many marvelous stories. As we walked under the row of huge Cryptomerias flanking the main entrance to the Pavilion, he remarked how difficult it was to locate those matching specimens. He was glad to see that they were still growing so well.

We admired the various bonsai trees on display and he seemed to know each one personally. In work areas behind the scenes, he even recognized some of their original pots. He had a sparkle in his eye as he reminisced about so many little details during his tenure at the Arboretum.

Japan had offered the U.S. a collection of bonsai trees to honor our Bicentennial, so Dr. Creech and an assistant traveled to Japan to see that it became reality. Like any good plant collector, he brought back every plant possible on that trip, 53 bonsai, many of them centuries old, plus 7 viewing stones. Creech said there was no question that he would accept the priceless gift to our country, but he just wasn't sure how he was going to get them safely back to the United States.



Bonsai Specimen at the U.S. National Arboretum.

He told us it would be easier to be forgiven rather than to get permission from the government in

advance to do what needed to be done in order to guarantee safe shipment. Rather than packing the trees in crates and sending by standard methods that could damage them, he decided to charter a huge 747 jet and fly them home, first class. He had no idea how to pay for the shipping expense but he would worry about that later.

They first removed all the seats from the plane, then secured the bonsai to wooden pallets, and finally bolted them down so they wouldn't shift. By the time all the trees were loaded, there was no room for people so they curled up underneath the plants for the long flight home. The bonsai arrived in perfect condition but he admitted he was stiff. We thank you Dr. Creech! You will be missed!

### MAC BOARD DONATION

The MAC board voted to make another donation to support an intern at the U.S. National Arboretum for maintaining the azalea collections. Last year they made a donation of \$1500 to the USNA, for 2009 they approved a \$1400 donation and for 2010 will be making a \$1600 donation to Friends of the National Arboretum (FONA) for a total of \$4500 over three years.



Barbara Bullock, Azalea Curator at USNA. Photo by H. Schepker.

### MAC AUGUST 22<sup>ND</sup> BOARD MEETING

The MAC Board had its summer board meeting at which a review of the chapter budget is always the main agenda item. Upcoming meeting plans and other items are also discussed.

In addition to the budget item for an azalea intern at the US National Arboretum listed in the item above, we discussed several projects with the native azaleas in North Carolina and Tennessee. As some of you recall, the chapter got a grant from the ARS Endowment Fund to get a mower for Gregory Bald to help stop the encroachment of trees on Gregory Bald which had greatly diminished the acres of the native azalea swarm on Gregory. Using the mower, the

acreage has been increased from 14 acres to the current 22. In the past the size of the bald had been as high as 33 acres.

MAC made a \$2500 donation for an intern for the Gregory Bald project for 2008/2009 and budgeted \$2500 for this for 2009/2010. They also donated \$75.70 for volunteer food and \$281.87 for mower repair in 2008/2009 to clean up Hooper Bald. Volunteers, including Jim Brant, George McLellan and now volunteers from a couple of other organizations/chapters, are involved at Hooper Bald. They want to rent a grinder and truck and move the ground up trees and litter from one side of the road over to Huckleberry Knob on the other where the material will be used to mulch new azalea plantings. They will be working with the Southern Highlands Reserve (SHR) people who will be propagating some of the native azaleas from that particular area. The SHR people will be growing the azaleas from seed and plan to raise 1000 seedlings at no cost to plant at Huckleberry Knob.

In the 2009/2010 budget MAC is budgeting \$2500 for the Gregory Bald worker project and allocating \$600 for rental of the equipment needed for the Hooper Bald - Huckleberry Knob project.

Other items discussed at the board meeting were some smaller contributions, and of course plans for the upcoming MAC meetings.



Treasurer Debby Sauer contemplating a budget item.  
Photo S. McDonald.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** To see all photos in color go to our [MACARS.org](http://MACARS.org) website and look at the newsletter there.



MAC Board August 22, 2009



MAC Board August 22, 2009. Photo by S. McDonald.



MAC Board August 22, 2009. Photo by S. 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.

MIDDLE ATLANTIC CHAPTER OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS