

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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September 2011

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Oct. 21-23, 2011	Doubletree Inn near Richmond airport (with ARS Board Meeting)
May 4-8, 2012	ARS/ASA Convention, Asheville, NC, Asheville Crowne Plaza Resort

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/

2011 FALL MEETING

The MAC Fall Meeting will be held at the Doubletree Inn near the Richmond Airport at 5501 Eubank Road, Sandston, Virginia, from October 21st to 23rd. The schedule and registration form appear on pages 149 and 150 in the Summer *ARS Journal*, and also on the MAC Web site at

<http://macars.org/fall2011schedule.html>

You can register for the meeting on the Web site and pay with PayPal. The speakers will be Elizabeth Mundy talking about her Japanese maples and her Acer Acres Nursery on Friday evening, and Tim and June Walsh from California speaking about "Highlights of West Coast Gardens" on Saturday evening.

We will have some ARS members from around the country since this is an Eastern Regional Meeting and will also have an ARS Board Meeting on Friday. This is a chance to meet some new rhododendron fanciers as well as visit with your old friends.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED VOTE ON BYLAWS AMENDMENT AT FALL CHAPTER BUSINESS MEETING ON FRIDAY, OCT. 21ST AT 7:30 PM

District Director Ann Mangels says that ARS chapters must amend their bylaws regarding chapter assets in case a chapter dissolves. The following amendment is proposed:

In the event of the dissolution of the Middle Atlantic Chapter, any ARS property in possession of said chapter shall be promptly returned to the Society. Any other monies and property of the chapter shall be disposed of in the manner specified in the Chapter Bylaws in a manner which is approved by the United States Internal Revenue Code for U.S. Chapters. Non-U.S. Chapters must comply with applicable country statutes and regulation. Disposal of the Chapter assets would be to the General Fund of the ARS or to a botany-related organization chosen by the Chapter's Board of Directors.

THE LEGACY OF THE MID ATLANTIC MEN: AUSTIN KENNEL, A Personal Reminiscence

By Barbara R. Hall, ARS Executive Director, 1989-1997

When I think of my dear friend, Austin Kennell, inevitably the American Rhododendron Society (ARS) comes to mind. Austin's love for and dedication to the ARS was such a large part of his life, second only to his family. His wife, Betty, was always by his side at Middle Atlantic Chapter (MAC) meetings...She was the original "dragee", a term Austin used to describe a spouse who attended the meetings but was only there because of the other spouse's interest in rhododendrons, not their own. Betty was always there to support Austin and she

helped out wherever needed, as did their daughter Gloria.

My first introduction to Austin was by letter... He sent me an official "welcome aboard" letter when I joined the MAC in 1983. The letter was so warm and inviting that my husband Al and I decided to attend the next meeting, even though we didn't know anyone in the chapter and we were novices when it came to rhododendrons. Austin was always pleased when he could convince someone to join the Society or become a more active member. I think that he came to think of me as his protégée.

I was impressed with Austin's ability to make friends with strangers. He used to say, "I never met a member of the ARS that I didn't like... There have been a few who I thought might have been in the wrong group though!" This was classic Austin Kennell humor! He also loved to joke about the differences in growing rhododendrons on the east and west coasts of the U.S... He compared both the plants and the planters. He would complain (tongue in cheek), "It's no use in me buying those west coast rhododendrons... They die as soon as they cross the Mississippi!" He also loved to poke fun at west coast gardeners by saying, "Those folks on the west coast aren't real gardeners... All they have to do is toss a rhododendron over their shoulder and when it hits the ground, it roots and grows. In the east, we really have to work at making things grow!"

When I met Austin in 1983, he had already been a member of the ARS for quite some time. He had become friends with many of the folks who we would consider pillars of the Society. He was an eminent member of the Middle Atlantic Chapter, doing anything from giving programs at chapter meetings and chairing committees to serving as chapter president. He was respected for his many contributions to the ARS on the Society level including writing articles for the *Journal* and serving on the ARS Board of Directors for many years. He chaired the ARS Honors Committee and was elected ARS Eastern Vice-President and ARS President.

Austin chaired the 1988 ARS Convention which was hosted by the Middle Atlantic and the other two chapters in District 9 and was held in Williamsburg, Virginia. This is where our close association began. In late 1986, I decided to take a break from working full time. This meant that I had some free time on my hands. Naively, I told Austin that I was available if he needed help with the convention. Immediately he

asked me to be the convention registrar and I agreed to take on that job. Since Austin lived in Crozet, Virginia, in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, it was difficult for him to get to Williamsburg frequently to check on things at the hotel that had been selected to be the convention site. Austin told me that it would be a big help to him if I would act as liaison with the hotel since I lived not too far from Williamsburg. Again, I agreed to do as he requested. As time went on, he continued to ask me to take on more convention responsibilities until one day he said, "You're doing everything anyway, so I'm going to give you the title of 'Convention Director'." That was Austin. He was a mastermind at delegating duties and talking folks into taking on jobs, but he also acknowledged their efforts and put the spotlight on them instead of himself whenever possible.

In the spring of 1987 a group of MAC members went to the ARS Convention in Eugene, Oregon. Austin was one of that group, as was I. After we had gotten settled on the plane, Austin made his way down the aisle and gave me a piece of paper with some writing on it. He said that he had written out the speech that would be the formal invitation to the attendees of the current convention to attend the convention in Williamsburg the next spring. Austin asked me to make the presentation for him. Initially I felt honored by his request. However, as I read what Austin had written, I realized that the flowery words were not my style and not something that I could see myself saying. I don't remember his exact words, but, as an example, there was something about the blood of the patriots running freely at Williamsburg, classic Austin, but not something that I would say. I finally mustered up my courage and told him that I just wasn't comfortable reading those words to the audience. His reply was, "That's OK, Say whatever you want to." Good 'ole Austin. He wasn't at all offended, and he was more than happy for me to make the invitation as I saw fit!

After many hours of hard work in 1987 and 1988, the time finally came for the 1988 ARS Convention in Williamsburg. At the opening program, Austin introduced me to the audience in glowing accolades that made it sound like I could do anything. Then he turned the podium over to me. I hadn't expected the excessive praise and was quite embarrassed by it, but I made a joke and then carried on with my responsibilities. Although I didn't realize it at the

time, this turned out to be my introduction to the members of the ARS Board of Directors. It paved the way for me to be presented with an unexpected opportunity the very next year.

In the early spring of 1989, the ARS Executive Secretary (the title was later changed to Executive Director) announced that she was retiring at the conclusion of the spring convention. Austin suggested that I apply for the job, which I did. He was my biggest supporter and worked very hard to gather the support of other Board members; I was selected to fill the position. The beginning of my time as Executive Director coincided with the beginning of Austin's term as ARS President. This was the beginning of the next chapter of our association and friendship.

Austin and I usually traveled together to the ARS Board meetings. I enjoyed his company, especially on the long flights to the west coast. I carried the materials for the ARS Board meeting in my carry-on luggage which made for a very heavy load for me. Austin loved to tell folks that he helped me with my bags, adding, "I carried her purse." By then he was getting a bit frail physically, so there really wasn't anything else that he could have done to help me. Still, it made it so much more pleasant to have an enjoyable traveling companion!

Austin was a "hands on" ARS President from the very beginning. He even made a special trip to see the new ARS office at my home, once I had everything in place. Throughout his presidency, we talked on the phone at least weekly and he truly seemed to enjoy his involvement. His correspondence with ARS members and chapter representatives was unequalled by Presidents who came before and after him. I know since I filed all of those letters! Thankfully, his wife, Betty, typed them for him, but he always remembered to send me a copy of his correspondence for the ARS files. Subsequent ARS Presidents had more of a "contact me if you need me" approach and no one (at least during my time as ARS Executive Director) seemed to enjoy being ARS President as much as Austin did.

Although Austin often poked fun at his gardening abilities, he had a lovely garden with an outstanding collection of rhododendrons, which he was very happy to share with others. However, he always said that the people were more important to him than the plants. I can attest to the fact that he was truly a "people person", especially if those people showed

any interest at all in rhododendrons! While President, he traveled to quite a number of ARS chapters to speak at their meetings. His many contributions to the ARS were honored posthumously when the ARS Gold Medal was awarded in his name and presented to his family in 2002. I was glad that Austin had finally received the recognition that I felt he richly deserved. If only he could have received the honor during his lifetime. I am sure that he would have truly appreciated the acknowledgment of his many years of service to the ARS, although he probably would have tried to hide his pride by joking about receiving such an honor. The Society and our chapter certainly miss his leadership, dedication, and service, but for me, most of all I miss my dear friend.

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY BOARD MEETING, MAY 11, 2011: REPORT FROM DISTRICT 9 DIRECTOR ANN MANGELS

The meeting began promptly at 8:30 a.m. with Ted Stecki presiding at his last board meeting. Ted described his concerns about the dropping membership in the ARS and discussion ensued regarding what new members want and need, educational opportunities and meeting activities. He also mentioned the critical situation at the National Arboretum with the possible demise of the azalea hillside.

Elections approved by the Board followed with the slate as follows: Don Smart, President; Western Vice President, Bob MacIntyre; Treasurer, Bill Mangels; Secretary, Kath Collier. Bruce Feller will continue as Eastern Vice President and follow Don Smart upon the completion of his term. As it goes with ARS presidents, a candidate has a two year term. Since Don Smart is from Washington State, the candidate succeeding him will be Bruce Feller, Eastern Vice President, and then Bob MacIntyre will follow him as the current Western Vice President. An ad hoc committee was formed to look at options for ARS board meetings (frequency, format, ways to reduce costs, etc.) From the East, both Bruce Feller and Ann Mangels are members. A report will be made in the fall.

The Asheville ARS/ASA Convention planning in spring, 2012 is going well, and costs are being held down. Among the options for attendees will be a "Judges Training" class at which time Bruce and Marianne Feller will teach about techniques in

grooming and selecting specimen trusses for show. Ray Smith (MD) had remarked that the Fellers had done such a nice program for Mason Dixon several years ago, and because of the difficulty tracking down judges during the first couple of weeks in May, additional judges are needed to help with our shows. The Fellers will not get into judging ethics and practices – just preparation for showing.

Laura Grant reported that Walter Przypek (MAC) has volunteered to replace Wing Fong to lead the Program Library. Don Hyatt (PV) has agreed to make DVD's, while other suitable programs are also being developed for chapter use.

The Endowment Fund recommended that grants be awarded to Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park, Oyster Bay, New York; Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society (B.C.) Memorial Park; and Humboldt Botanical Garden Foundation, Eureka, CA; and to Friends of the National Arboretum (FONA) for the preservation of the Glenn Dale azaleas. There was a caveat included with the donation of \$5000 that assurance of donated funds would be returned to the ARS in the event the arboretum elects to destroy the azaleas.

There is continued movement to consider an electronic edition of the ARS Journal. The costs associated with the publication/ mailing of the Journal in its present format are a significant portion of the annual budget. Further considerations for changes and/or distribution will be followed up by a committee, including Sandra McDonald from MAC. There is no move afoot to remove the delivery of the JARS away from its present form and that will be available to those who want it. There will be a chapter newsletter contest in an attempt to enhance local publications. There will be a judging committee. Chapter calendars, speakers' names, educational material, etc. are often included in newsletters, which are currently being delivered to members either by US Mail service or electronically. Dee Daneri was asked to write an article for the Journal relating to the process for nominating honor recipients, and Bill Mangels will write an article describing the procedure for writing grant requests. The proposed budget was accepted. Salary increases will be awarded to Glen Jamieson, Sonia Nelson and Laura Grant in the amount of 3% beginning September 1st.

The Annual Meeting was held in two sessions – on Thursday and Saturday nights. The annual roll

call of districts with members standing to acknowledge their attendance took place on the first evening. The following meeting included awarding of two Gold Medals: one to Kathy VanVeen and the other to June Sinclair. There were no Silver Medals given. The Pioneer Award was given to Edward John Pemberthy Magor. Don Hyatt and Dr. Hartwig Schepker were the two meeting speakers.

A large number of people attended the convention, which overflowed into several nearby hotels. The quality of tours and educational sessions were well handled, and cost related activities were kept to an affordable level. There was not a roster of attendees, but District 9 had a good representation present from all three chapters. If there are any questions or comments about this meeting, or if you have something you'd like to see discussed, please let me know.

HOOPER BALD PROJECT : THE GREAT AZALEA PLANTING! by Jim Brant

I hope you all can join us on Columbus Day weekend in the Nantahala Forest on Hooper Bald and Huckleberry Ridge. These are both on the scenic Cherochala Skyway one mile apart. The fall foliage should be in full color for your enjoyment while planting azaleas!

Mark your calendar -- we will be planting 700 azaleas in 4-6 inch pots on Huckleberry Ridge and 100 azaleas on Hooper Bald. These plants have been grown for us by the Southern Highlands Reserve from seed that was taken from the plants on Hooper Bald. This may be the largest amount of native azaleas to ever be plated in a native setting during one event.

**Our schedule will be as follows:

- | | | |
|---------|----------|---|
| Oct. 6 | Thursday | Bush hogging and laying out the planting area |
| Oct. 7 | Friday | Placement of azaleas |
| Oct. 8 | Saturday | Planting on Huckleberry |
| Oct. 9 | Sunday | Continued planting on Huckleberry and Hooper |
| Oct. 10 | Monday | Finish planting and clean-up |

As you can see we have a lot of planting to do so come early or late and enjoy the company and gorgeous scenery. We will have locals, boy scouts, college students, and plant enthusiasts there volunteering their time.

**These are some things you need to bring:

- Water

- Your own snacks and other foods for lunch (no restaurants close)
- Shovels and any other planting tools you use (the soil is not hard to dig in)
- Gloves, layered clothing and sun and rain protection

We will be able to car pool (trucks and SUVs preferred) up to Huckleberry Ridge.

We have permission to camp on Huckleberry Ridge and we have also booked rooms in Robbinsville at the Microtel. The address is 111 Rodney Orr By Pass in Robbinsville, (828) 479-6772. When you call you should ask for the Hooper Bald Project rates and call early to ensure your reservation.

Hooper Bald is located in North Carolina near the Tennessee border in the Nantahala National Forest, just off the Cherohala Skyway. From Robbinsville, follow US129N through town. Turn left onto Massey Branch Rd/NC143. Go straight until you reach a stop sign, turn right continuing on 143 West (Snowbird Rd/Cherohala Skyway). Continue to follow road, there will be signs pointing you to Joyce Kilmer and the Cherohala Skyway, go for 6.9 miles. At Santeetlah Gap turn left onto Cherohala Skyway to Huckleberry Ridge - which will be on your right near the 9 mile marker.

Please let me know if you can join us. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, Jim Brant

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BOY SCOUTS' WEBSITE ABOUT HOOPER BALD PROJECT

<http://nctroop404.org/boyscouts/hooper%20bald%20project%202011.html>

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC – by Jane McKay



The spring and summer of 2011 has been very different from other years. Normally I water continuously but there was only one two week period this year that I had to run the sprinklers. This area of Fluvanna County had enough rain to keep the gardens growing well, in some cases too well. The paths have narrowed so much that it is now impossible to walk through

without brushing up against the foliage and that increases the chance of picking up ticks. I do have to get busy pruning the plants along the paths back along with a lot of other pruning if I ever get some ambition. I recently had a cold which developed into bronchitis which is now gone but I have now become very lazy. I have so much to do outside that I don't know where to start so I don't.

I've mentioned in other Newsletters that I have a problem with voles. I have dug up almost all my hostas and now grow them in pots. I did have one large clump of *Hosta* 'Krossa Regal' in the ground in an area far from the others that was untouched by the voles but this spring they found the clump and started chewing. I dug up part of the original plant and potted it. Soon the potted plant sent up a flower stalk that kept growing and growing before blooming. I measured the stalk from the top of the root ball to the top of the stalk – it is 6'9" tall. A second stalk is 4'6". The soil I planted it in is just from a standard package of potting soil. No fertilizer was added.

Dues notices will be going out within the next few weeks, please pay promptly in order to avoid the expense of a second mailing. Thank you.

EARTHQUAKE, HURRICANE IRENE AND GREAT DISMAL SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE FIRE by Sandra McDonald

August brought almost unbelievable wrath of Mother Nature to our Chapter's area.

A fire was started by lightning in the Great Dismal Swamp on August 4th. This had engulfed more than 6000 acres by the time Hurricane Irene came in. It is apparently the largest swamp fire there in the records. We sometimes noticed the odor of a fire in the Great Dismal Swamp in the past here in southeast Virginia, but this one made air conditions very bad at times. The wind direction determined who got the worst smoke. The fire smelled a bit different from ordinary wood fires because there was a lot of peat burning.

The fire was visible from satellites. It got so bad that visibility was down to less than one eighth mile. Highway 58 was closed temporarily because of numerous accidents from the limited visibility.

The fire still smolders in the peat soil which is up to 1.5 feet deep. Although many fire fighters had been fighting this fire it was only about 35% contained before Irene dumped 10 to 15 inches of rain on the swamp, and put out the flames, but not

quite the smoldering peat. It is 90% contained as I write and should be out the first week in September. It has now consumed more than 6,358 acres

George McLellan previously explored for native azaleas in the swamp, especially along the Jericho Ditch. He found *R. atlanticum* in bloom early in the season and *R. viscosum* later around Memorial Day. He even found either a double or hose in hose form of *R. viscosum*. Wildlife at the refuge includes bald eagles, deer, bobcats, rattlesnakes, black bears, and at least 57 species of butterflies.

nuclear reactors at North Anna.. The quake was felt from Georgia to Canada. The Washington Monument cracked and spires fell from the National Cathedral. The earthquake was the strongest in Virginia since 1897. Many of us felt the quake since it really shook our houses. There have been 20 or so aftershocks since then, but few have felt them.

Hurricane Irene came ashore in North Carolina and came up the coast with the eye passing just east of Virginia Beach and the whole Hampton Roads area on Saturday evening, August 27th, around 8 to



Smoke from the Great Dismal Swamp fire as seen from I-664 in Suffolk on August 10th. Photo by S. McDonald

The smoke posed health risks from Suffolk to Gloucester County and beyond. Alerts were issued when needed ranging from orange to red to purple for some areas. The smoke went as far as the city of Richmond, and to the states of Maryland and Pennsylvania.

On August 23rd, a magnitude 5.8 earthquake took place in Mineral, Virginia, a town between Richmond and Charlottesville not too far from the

8:30 pm. A tremendous amount of rain, 6 to 15 or so inches, came ahead of and during Irene. In spite of Richmond being a good bit further west than we are in Hampton, they did have lots of wind and rain and trees down.

Power outages were wide spread with Irene with 1.2 million Dominion Power customers losing power during Irene. With Hurricane Isabel, 1.9 million

customers lost power and damage in Virginia was quite a lot worse.

Reports of hurricane damage of some MAC members:

Joanne Ortiz and Bill Saunders, Dinwiddie: 24 trees down

Bill Bedwell, Dinwiddie: limbs and debris, power out

Debby Sauer, Chester: about 14 trees down, power out, one tree grazed the eaves of the house and did some damage

Barbara and Al Hall, Gloucester: limbs and debris down in the yard

Theresa Brents far away from the coast in Stuarts Draft: one tree down

George McLellan, Gloucester: one small tree down and limbs and debris, power out until Tuesday, 11 inches of rain, garden didn't flood

Jim Brant: limbs and debris

Walter & Sybil Przypek, Yorktown: power out, small limbs and debris

Ken and Sandra McDonald, Hampton: small limbs and debris

Dave and Virginia Banks, Williamsburg: power out for two days, landline phone down, debris in yard

Charles and Peggy McComb, Bena: water came up in the yard and flooded the garden but didn't get into the house. The heavy rain may have saved many plants in the garden.

Ray and Alice Doggett, Gloucester Point: no water damage, just tree debris in the yard

The Mariner's Museum Park in Newport News lost its oldest tree, a 355-year-old white oak, in addition to about 40 other trees during Hurricane Irene.

The Norfolk Botanical Garden was closed for a few days for hurricane cleanup. They lost at least a dozen large trees and many more smaller trees.

MAC AUGUST 27TH BOARD MEETING

MAC held its scheduled August 27th Board Meeting at the Gordon Library in Charlottesville on a rainy, windy day as Hurricane Irene approached. Weather conditions were not too bad in Charlottesville, though they did hold down attendance of members from nearer the coast. District Director Ann Mangels and ARS Treasurer Bill Mangels made it to the meeting. Lloyd Willis presided as our new chapter president.



Secretary Doug Jolley. Photo by S. McDonald



MAC board members. Photo by S. McDonald



MAC President Lloyd Willis. 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.

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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