

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

Vol. XXXXII No.3

September 2015

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

October 23-24, 2015

Courtyard Marriott Richmond North,
Glen Allen, VA

April 20-24, 2016

ARS ASA Convention, Williamsburg,
Virginia

Rhododendron website addresses:

American Rhododendron Society

<http://www.rhododendron.org/>

ARS Store Order from Amazon thru this site

<http://arsstore.org/>

MAC Website (UPDATED REGULARLY)

<http://www.macars.org/>

UVA Special Collections

<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/>

Old Quarterly Bulletins & JARS

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/>

Rhododendron Blog

www.rhododendron.org/blog/

Friends of the National Arboretum

<http://savetheazaleas.org/>

FONA's Save the Azaleas and Boxwood site

Our 2016 Convention site (NEW)

www.arsasaconvention2016.org

FALL 2015 MAC MEETING IN GLEN ALLEN, VIRGINIA by Barbara Hall, Meeting Co-Chair.

IMPORTANT: Registration information, including a schedule of events, meeting registration form, and hotel registration details, will be mailed to you in September. Also, the information will be posted on the MAC/ARS website. Please keep in mind that October 2nd is the hotel's cut-off date for making room reservations at our special reduced rate.

FALL IS THE IDEAL TIME FOR PLANTING AND SPRUCING UP THE RHODODENDRON GARDEN, so this meeting will give you an excellent opportunity to obtain plants and learn about some novel ways to make additions to your garden! Be sure to mark the dates of October 23 – 25, 2015, on your calendar now so you won't miss the Middle Atlantic Chapter meeting in centrally located Glen Allen, Virginia which is just south of Ashland on the northern side of Richmond. The Courtyard Marriott Richmond North/Glen Allen has given us a very reasonable room rate of \$99 per night (plus tax) which includes a hot buffet-style breakfast.

Friday evening's festivities will begin with "happy hour" during which there will be an auction of a few very special plants. This will be followed by a buffet-style dinner in our meeting room so

you'll have plenty of time to relax and visit with old friends and new acquaintances before the evening's program begins! This dinner is optional so, if you prefer, you may elect to eat on your own at one of the many nearby restaurants.



Yungman garden sculpture.

Our Friday evening speaker will be Karel Bernady with his presentation, "Grafting Rhododendrons for Problem Solving." The Greater Philadelphia Chapter began its Plants for Members Program in 1986 with a goal to encourage its members to try new varieties of rhododendrons, many of which were not available in commerce. When Karel began to manage the program in 2003, he documented the rooting performance of the various cultivars attempted. This experience led to consideration of grafting as a possible solution to the propagation difficulties with some varieties. Karel will highlight the process of grafting rhododendrons with unrooted understocks and the lessons learned.

Saturday morning we will gather for a hot buffet breakfast which is complimentary with your guest

room. Next we will carpool to nearby Colesville Nursery for an opportunity to purchase Japanese maples, rhododendrons, azaleas, hostas and other plants to compliment your garden. Then we will enjoy a tasty box lunch prepared by Suzanne's Homemades.



Karel Bernady teaching a grafting class. Photo by Don Hyatt

Back at the hotel after lunch, amazing artist Rachel Yungman will do a demonstration on making concrete leaf and orb garden sculpture. She will have several examples of her work which will be available for purchase.

You'll have a chance to refresh before the evening's activities begin. During "happy hour", there will be time to purchase books from MAC's extensive "traveling bookstore." After a buffet-style banquet, our keynote speaker will be Mike O'Hara with a presentation on the Jim Barlup hybrids. His program will begin with the presentation that Jim Barlup gave at the Victoria BC convention entitled "It's all in the Family" which shows the good parents behind many of Jim's hybrids. Mike will discuss Jim's efforts to help east

coast hybridizers add color to the hardiness of our plants. Jim has been producing East/West hybrids since 1995 and Mike is test growing over forty of Jim's hybrids in his Zone 6B garden. After Mike's program, you'll have an opportunity to purchase plants during our always popular P4M (Plants for Members) activity.

On Sunday morning, we will enjoy breakfast together again before adjourning. Please plan to join us in Glen Allen for what promises to be a fun and informative week-end.

SOME THOUGHTS ON JIM BARLUP AND HYBRIDIZING by Don Hyatt

At the 2015 MAC Fall Meeting, Mike O'Hara, will speaking to us about the hybrids of a leading West Coast hybridizer, Jim Barlup. This article will give a little introduction about Jim and his work, but it is also designed to encourage interest in hybridizing among our members.

When I joined the ARS in 1968, MAC was my base chapter, but I maintained an Associate Membership in MAC after the Potomac Valley Chapter formed. Many people were breeding azaleas and rhododendrons at that time. The McDonalds at Le-Mac Nursery were developing new azaleas for the trade as well as treasures for discriminating hobbyists. Doc Tolstead was pushing hardiness limits in Elkins, WV. Some big name hybridizers were originally MAC members, too, including Joe Gable, George Ring, Augie Kehr, David Leach, and Fred Galle.

Anyone who joined MAC prior to 2007 will never forget Harry Wise. How I miss him! His warmth and enthusiasm was renowned, and his sense of humor an absolute delight. Harry was extremely generous, and gave away seedlings at almost every meeting. If he visited your home, people often discovered that as his car pulled away, he had left behind a flat or two of his seedlings for you to adopt. The ARS really needs more people like Harry!

As for me, I started hybridizing while I was still in college. I made my own crosses, often using pollen from truss show winners, but I also purchased seed from the ARS Seed Exchange. As my garden filled up with rhododendrons, I should have saved the best and discarded the rest but instead I cut way back on hybridizing. I run our local Potomac Valley Chapter ARS seed exchange now, but as each year passes I find that I am growing fewer seedlings myself and

that is sad. Having seen what others can accomplish on small tracts of land like the late Bob and Audrey Furman on Cape Cod and Jim Barlup in the suburbs of Seattle has rekindled my interest. I encourage others to join with me to renew the hybridizing craze in our region. There is much that can be done to develop hardy rhododendrons with vibrant colors and stunning foliage qualities like the plants we admire in those West Coast gardens. Raising seedlings is great fun, and the excitement of seeing those first blooms is incredibly rewarding. Let's get involved!



Jim Barlup and 'Sun Blush'. Photo by Don Hyatt.

Jim Barlup has introduced close to 200 exciting new hybrids to date, so I was completely surprised



Jim Barlup's 'Northwind'. Photo by Don Hyatt.

the first time I visited his place. I guess I was expecting to see an extensive test on many acres but instead he lives in a typical suburban home on a modest city lot of less than $\frac{3}{4}$ acre. The front yard

is elegantly landscaped with large rocks and a few of his favorite rhododendron creations under tall Douglas fir trees. His backyard is where he does all the hybridizing. It is a fenced area of perhaps $\frac{1}{3}$ acre with just a few large rhododendrons in the ground and all of his other plants are in pots, neatly arranged in rows or in cold frames. He has eliminated all grass.

Jim has a small hoop house toward the back edge of his property that I call "hybridizing central." He brings potted plants with buds into the structure in early spring, and lets them open there so he can make his crosses. That keeps those plants away from the bees and inclement weather while he makes the crosses, and he can be sure of the parentage of each cross. Sometimes he crosses plants in bloom, but he also saves pollen from prior years that he can use in breeding. Jim keeps excellent records and in some years he might make more than 100 crosses! Not all crosses succeed, of course, but knowledge of failures is very helpful for planning.

Jim started hybridizing in 1975 and originally was breeding for rhododendrons with yellows, orange, or peach flowers. The devastating winter of 1987-88 where temperatures ranged from 0 to 10 degrees for about ten days caused him to lose 70% of his seedlings to the cold. After that disaster, he started using some hardier Eastern hybrids to breed with the more tender plants developed on the West Coast. Of course, using one hardy parent doesn't guarantee that every seedling will be hardy. Most hybridizers rely on harsh weather conditions to help eliminate the seedlings through natural selection.

Even though we often assume a hybrid will not succeed just by looking at the pedigree, that characteristic may not always be true. Several people are reporting success with his lovely yellow 'Windsong' but it was derived from very tender parents. The reality is that we just don't know if a plant will succeed until we try growing it in our climate.

A light yellow Jim developed has gorgeous foliage and he named it 'Sun Blush'. It is a cross of ('Scintillation' \times 'Recital') and has never had any winter damage. It certainly looks like it would have potential in our area and I want one! Another one of his hybrids that came from a 'Scintillation' cross is 'North Wind'. It has huge blush white trusses and a deep red blotch.

At Meerkerk Gardens on Whidbey Island, WA, this year's show stopper was Jim's 'White Ginger', a cross of ('Phyllis Korn' × 'Trude Webster'). It has huge white flowers with some red spotting in the throat. Both parents grow for us and I do have a rooted cutting that I hope succeeds. Barlup's 'Orange Prelude' was also stunning with enormous, heavy textured blossoms that are deep orange with some yellow and pink undertones. It came from a very complex cross with little in its background that might provide heat and cold tolerance but I would certainly give it a try. I never give up on a plant until I have killed it at least three times!

It is true that we are all getting older but I think it is never too late to start hybridizing. I think back to the story of Charles Dexter who was told at the age of 59 that he had a bad heart wasn't expected to live very long. He retired from the textile industry and moved to his 100 acre farm on Cape Cod to await the inevitable demise. Then he got interested in breeding rhododendrons and started raising as many as 10,000 seedlings a year. I have little doubt that his avid interest in rhododendron hybridizing and the anticipation of the next season's first blooms had something to do with the fact that he lived to be 81 years old!

Consider taking the hybridizing plunge. For help, check out a series of short articles Jim Barlup wrote titled, "Tips for Beginners: Hybridizing Notes" starting in the Spring 1996 Issue of JARS (Vol. 50, No. 2) and continuing through Fall 1997 (Vol. 50, No. 4). These are online at the Virginia Tech Digital Library and Archives:

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/> Just put "Barlup" in the Advance Search box and click on Go. Learn from a master!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR APRIL 20-24, 2016 CONVENTION IN WILLIAMSBURG from Don Hyatt

When our District hosts the ARS/ASA Convention in Williamsburg from April 20-24, 2016, we will need lots of help. Please volunteer. Signup sheets will be available at the fall meeting.
Co-Chairs:

Rick Bauer

Don Hyatt

MAC ELECTION

At our Spring Meeting in Raleigh- Durham, Jay Gillenwater was elected MAC President, Jeanne Hammer Vice President, and Teri Bennett was added to the board to take Jeanne's place. There will be a short election at the Fall Meeting to add two more Directors, Lloyd Willis and Margaret Willis.

DEATHS

Former MAC member Elizabeth (Betty) Wise, 97, passed away July 16, in Raleigh, N.C., at Brookdale Sr. Living Facility, where she resided since 2007. She was the widow of long-time and very active MAC member Harry Wise. Harry died on January 18, 2007.



Betty Wise on the Scheuchenko bench at JMU Arboretum in 1998.
Photo by S. McDonald.

Betty was born in Clarksburg, WV, and graduated from Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Va. in 1939. She married Joseph Phillip Ast III the next year and they had three children. After being widowed in 1947, she married Harry Lawson Wise in 1951 and resided in Charleston, until Harry's death.

Betty liked tennis, swimming and other sports. She also enjoyed painting and was a member of the Allied Artist and Watercolor Society.

She was a recipient of the "Emily Smith Medallion Award" for distinguished community service in 1970.

She is survived by her daughter, Nancy Hood Ast Wise Smith (Charlie), Raleigh, N.C.; and her son, Joseph Phillip Aust IV (Kathleen Kelly) Charlottesville, VA. Betty had four grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; one great-grandchild and many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her daughter, Elizabeth (Susie) Fleming Ast Wise.

Many of us will remember Betty and her warm and welcoming ways to newcomers in the chapter and her showing up in a clown wig with Jean Buschmann at one of our social hours and plant auctions! She was very supportive of Harry during all the time he spent working in MAC, hybridizing, going to ARS conventions and MAC meetings.

IN THE CROZET GARDEN by Lloyd Willis

This article is being written on July 30, 2015. In the past two days we have had at least four good rains. During the previous three weeks, we were without a single good rain—the rain danced all around us. The soil was cracking and the plants were looking water stressed.



Lloyd Willis

After the four good rains, joy has returned to the garden. Every plant looks taller, cleaner, and no longer water stressed.

My main garden project for the past month involved an oval mound in our driveway—maybe at its maximum 10 feet wide, 20 feet long, and 2 feet tall. There has been grass on this mound at least 40 years. I added a weeping Japanese maple about five years ago, six English boxwoods about two years ago, and a hundred tiny clumps of dwarf mondo grass one year ago. Over the past month, I removed all the regular lawn grass (translation: crab grass and weeds) and added over 1000 clumps of dwarf mondo grass plus mulch to the mound. Once a day, the mound is checked for weed seedlings that need to be removed. When the mondo grass fills in, the plan is to add one rhodo to the mound (one of the smaller Yaks). This fully landscaped mound will be, in my mind, quite a nice addition to the garden.

So where is the humor in this article? About two weeks ago, there was a voicemail message from one of the grandsons—Michael, age 11. Michael said "Grand Dad, I am ready to join the work force and I would like to be employed by you." Michael added "If you hire me, I can bring my brother Jacob (age 9) to also work for you." Michael and Jacob were hired by me and wages were set as suggested by their Gramma Margaret (also known as Mrs. Willis). Their first day of employment was set for the coming Thursday at 10 am. Both grandsons showed up with sunscreen and bug spray applied.

Our first job together was to enlarge a hosta bed. I dug around the edge of the bed and they lifted the excess grass and soil into three gallon buckets. We then placed the soil into low places in the yard. That finished we switched to weeding. Both grandsons were happy, active, and quite gregarious. I should mention that they were also good help. Both were also quite happy to have a snack break after an hour. Then we worked in the shade for almost another hour with never a break in the conversation. I was getting a little tired when I noticed I was hearing only one grandson's voice instead of two. When I turned around, Jacob was sitting on the ground with both hands full of weeds he had pulled—he was sound asleep. I woke Jacob and fed both boys a snack. Jacob and Michael were then able to ride their bicycles home. Thus ended Michael and Jacob's first day of employment.

WINDBEAM WAY WANDERINGS SUMMER

2015 by Doug Jolley A plethora of rain and an abundance of *Rhododendron maximum* flowers have made for a memorable summer. Instead of watering plants, and on more than one occasion, Davetta and I have repaired a washed out driveway and have watched the creek side hayfield become a muddy pond. Simultaneously, the *Rhododendron maximum* in West Virginia has been outstanding. The season of bloom begins in early June here at our garden (elevation of 850 feet) and extends through the month of July in the mountain counties (elevation above 3000 feet). Following a bitterly cold winter the floral display this summer is a testimony to the hardiness of this plant.



Doug Jolley



Jim Barlup's 'Windsong'. Photo by Don Hyatt.



Jim Barlup's 'Orange Prelude'. Photo by Don Hyatt.



Rhododendron maximum, Cranberry Glades. Photo by Doug Jolley.



New MAC President Dr. Jay Y. Gillenwater at summer board meeting. Photo by S. McDonald.



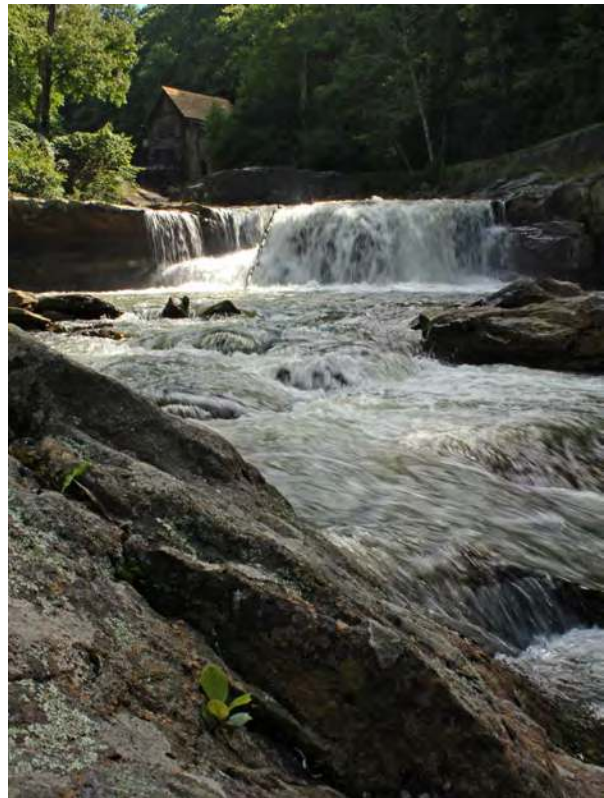
New MAC board member Teri Bennett with Sharon Horn during lunch break at summer board meeting. Margaret and Lloyd Willis are in the background. Photo by S. McDonald.



Rhododendron maximum at Hominy Falls on July 1. Photo by Doug Jolley.

The grist mill at Babcock State Park in Fayette County is one of the most photographed subjects in the United States. With streams running full this summer I thought that a photography visit would be in order. While positioning myself on a streamside boulder, I noticed a lone rhododendron seedling growing from a crack in an otherwise barren rock : another example of determination. Also of note is that *Rhododendron catawbiense* also grows in the park.

The summer native azaleas also have done well. As August nears, the Plumleaf Azaleas (*Rhododendron prunifolium*) are in full regalia and the butterflies are most appreciative. The one summer blooming native azalea to have been somewhat adversely affected by the bouts of high water was the Sweet Azalea (*Rhododendron arborescens*). This azalea grows exclusively at streamside sites. On a few occasions I encountered plants partially covered with debris deposited during periods of elevated water levels. Overall this was a



Rhododendron seedling at Glade Creek Mill, Babcock State Park. Photo by Doug Jolley.

great summer to see our summer azaleas at home and on the road.



Rhododendron cumberlandense. Photo by Doug Jolley.



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



Jim Barlup's 'White Ginger'. Photo by Don Hyatt.



Jim Barlup's hoop house for hybridizing. Photo by Don Hyatt.



Jim Barlup with some of his many hybrids. Photo work by Don Hyatt.



Rhododendron prunifolium. Photo by Doug Jolley.



Rhododendron prunifolium and swallowtail butterfly. Photo by Doug Jolley.



Hominy Falls and *R. maximum*. Photo by Doug Jolley.



R. arborescens at the New River Gorge. Photo by Doug Jolley.



R. arborescens habitat at the New River. Photo by Doug Jolley.



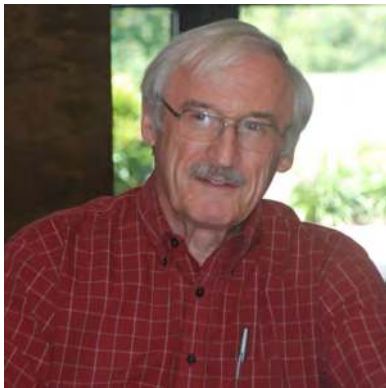
Cranberry Glades *R. maximum*. Photo by Doug Jolley.



VP Jeanne Hammer, District 9 Director Dave Banks, and Treasurer Debby Sauer. Photo by S. McDonald.



Treasurer Debby Sauer. Photo by S. McDonald.



Board member Glenn Kauffman. Photo by S. McDonald.



Secretary Doug Jolley. Photo by S. McDonald.

Taking care of business at the MAC ARS Board Meeting

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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