

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

Vol. XXVI No.1

February 2000

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

May 5,6 & 7, 2000

Charlottesville, VA

Sept 29 – Oct 1

Elkins, WV

Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

R & A News <http://members.aol.com/RandANews/news.html>

American Rhododendron Society <http://www.rhododendron.org/>

U VA Science & Engineering Libraries <http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm>

MAC's SPRING 2000 MEETING by Jeanne Hammer

Don't miss the MAC Spring Meeting, scheduled for the typical peak of rhododendron and azalea bloom in Charlottesville, Virginia. The dates are May 5-7, 2000, and the meeting site is the Holiday Inn at 1901 Emmet Street (Rt. 29N). Registration materials will be mailed by early March.

MAC has not met in Charlottesville since 1991 when the late (and greatly missed) Terry Sheuchenko organized the meeting. I wonder how many of us who attended managed to keep Leach's 'Tow Head,' the dinner favor dubbed "Pinhead" by Austin Kennell, alive in our garden. Mine certainly did not survive long. Be that as it may, Toby Zakin, who is co-planner of the Spring Meeting, and I look forward to welcoming you back to Charlottesville.

Friday evening's program will be in Alderman Library, so please plan on arriving at the Holiday Inn by 6:30 p.m. for the shuttle bus. The University of Virginia Library is the home of the ARS archives, and highlights from the Rhododendron Collection, supported by an endowment established by MAC members, will be shown. We will also see an overview of the computer database of rhododendron hybrids and cultivars created and maintained by Bob Murray in support of Jay Murray's work as the Royal Horticultural Society's North American registrar for rhododendrons. The Murrays are the 1999 ARS Gold Medalists, a tribute to their dedication in documenting a comprehensive record of hybrids and their parentage.

On Saturday we tour the beautiful gardens of Martha Derthick, Ted Peters, Dr. Jay Gillenwater, and Don & Polly Hirsch. The Derthick and Hirsch gardens are both in-town and feature Dexter and Gable hybrids. The Derthick garden was originally

the late Warren Cloud's, who bought the property in the late 1930s and had begun planting rhododendrons and azaleas by the 1940s or 1950s. After his death, the garden was neglected and overgrown for a number of years until acquired and reclaimed by Martha Derthick, who also has added her own touches to it. Ted Peters, Martha Derthick's next door neighbor, has invited MAC members to tour his garden while we are at Martha's. His one-acre garden was started 35 years ago by his late mother, Gladys S. Peters. While the predominate plants in the Derthick garden are



Jeanne Hammer reviews plans for Spring 2000 Meeting with the MAC Board. Left from Jeanne: Ray Brush, Frank Pelurie, and Ron Brown.

evergreen rhododendrons, the Peters garden is heavily weighted with azaleas. Mr. Peters notes that the peak bloom in his garden is the weekend before the MAC spring meeting and welcomes anyone who would like to visit the weekend of April 29-30.

The Hirsches started their garden in 1967. Many of their now majestic hybrid rhododendrons and azaleas were grown from cuttings contributed by charter

MAC members, while many of the species were grown from seed.

Dr. Gillenwater's garden is west of town, over a decade old, and features Hachmann hybrids. Those of you who toured it in 1991 will be struck by the changes. In addition to the maturity of the rhododendrons, which were young plants then, Dr. Gillenwater has added five greenhouses (one with orchids), a two-acre pond, and a sunny rose and perennial garden between the house and pond.

Lunch on Saturday will be in the garden of historic Pavilion VII at U.Va. and tours of the Pavilion gardens will be offered. Saturday's after-dinner speaker is Maud B. Henne, executive secretary of the American Conifer Society. Mrs. Henne lives east of Charlottesville and nurtures a "collector's garden" of rare dwarf and miniature conifers started by her late husband, Reinhard, in 1985.

A flower show, plant auction, and seedling and book sales are also part of the program. If the weather cooperates and the deer don't munch too much, the Flower Show has the potential to be spectacular. Please mark May 5-7 on your calendar, and plan to bring at least several of your best trusses for the Flower Show competition.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Welcome to new members:

Ms Patricia Albertson, Richmond,
VA 23233

Barbara K. Brouse, Williamsburg,
VA 23188-7897

Mrs. William Burton, Goochland, VA
23063

James Deady, Richmond, VA 23236
Mrs. H. Chesley Decker, Kinsdale, VA
22488

Mr. & Mrs. Frank Digney, Midlothian, VA 23113

Mr. & Mrs. Stuart Gilchrist, Irvington, VA
22480

Barbara & Raymond Lewis, Melfa, VA
23410

Mr. & Mrs. O.R. Messe, Hague,
VA 22469-9601

Kathy Van Mullekom, Daily Press Garden Editor,
Newport News, VA 23607

Dr. B.V. & Frances Neal, Newport
News, VA 23606

N. Norris Post, Creedmor, NC 27522
Dr. & Mrs. Leon Swell, Richmond, VA
23229

Mr. & Mrs. August Thieme,
Richmond, VA 23233

William L. Westbrook, Fair View
Nursery, Wilson, NC 17893

DECEASED MEMBER

Stu Franklin, who many of you will remember from the Roanoke Meeting, died on December 11, 1999, at the age of 79. MAC sends condolences to his family.

ARS NEWS

Bruce Briggs died February 4, 2000. Briggs pioneered tissue culture of woody plants and guided Briggs Nursery of Olympia, Washington. His company was the largest producer of rhododendrons in the world. Briggs was known worldwide as a speaker and established generous grants for nursery research and education.

WINTER IN THE NORTHERN NECK - by David Lay

Until late January here on the western shore of the Chesapeake, the winter has been exceptionally mild with three days after New Year going over 70 degrees F. *Viburnum bodantense* 'Dawn', *Chimonanthus praecox* 'Luteus', *Jasminum nudiflorum* and *Prunus mume*—the Japanese apricot—came into full bloom. Branches were brought into the house and filled the kitchen with delicious fragrance. What a cheerful pink and yellow preview of spring!



The end of January, of course, was a jolt with temperatures never rising above freezing for several days and snows. The ground could use considerably more of the latter, as slowly melting snows are still needed to replenish ground water after three years of significant drought. Our good shallow wells here and at the old nursery that used to have 15-20 feet of water now have less than half that amount. This is despite a hurricane that dumped over 15 inches of rain last fall. It shows how much of a tropical downpour runs off and is never absorbed by the ground!

Despite the mild fall and early winter, deer vandalism in our garden is at an all-time high. Deer are creatures of habit with clearly gourmet tastes. The evergreen azaleas along our driveway have been browsed with a vengeance this year, and for the first time deer have boldly helped themselves to evergreens on the riverside of the house. Two weeks ago in broad daylight my wife surprised a doe and fawn, scarcely three feet tall, leisurely defoliating Robin Hills and Linwoods on the railroad tie terraces thirty feet from our living room window. Even an old variegated euonymous nearly shoulder high now resembles *Ilex verticillata* without berries.

Our yard's conversion to a four-legged gourmet's paradise began four years ago when we had our last winter with significant snowfall. Clearly the burgeoning deer population in the "No-Hunting Permitted" retirement neighborhood were then hungry and they began foraging for the first time in 15 years inside the lath house at the nursery sampling Glenn Dale azaleas. The new taste treat was to their liking and in the milder subsequent years they have returned late each fall to their same old haunts. Gradually and perversely they have moved down the hill and driveway and closer to the house.

The death of our last Newfoundland dog and the increasingly arthritic behavior of our aging Labrador are probably contributing factors in our present dilemma, but I am now experimenting with a newly concocted deer repellent on the Gumpos and Polly Hills that remain. With mortar and pestle I have ground to dust a 1/4 pound of dry Piquin chili peppers, reputedly more the 150 percent hotter than Jalapenos. This was then mixed with tabasco, deer off, and wilt proof. The whole was then filtered through cheesecloth and sprayed on our azaleas. I only hope these deer haven't immigrated from Louisiana and have Cajun taste buds! Stay tuned!

A LETTER FROM THE ARS PRESIDENT

December 28, 1999

To: ARS Chapter Presidents and District Directors
Please pass this information on to your members.

We have recently received inquiries from several of our members regarding the allocation of ARS dues, and additional questions regarding local representation at Board meetings. We thought we should take this opportunity to address these issues which are of concern.

The total cost per member to operate the American Rhododendron Society is \$27.73 (\$29.73 for Canadians due to the additional postage for the Journal). Of the \$28 for individual membership dues, the ARS receives \$22 and sends \$6.00 to the chapter. The \$5.73 to \$7.73 deficit per member is offset by: (a) the generosity of some members who voluntarily purchase memberships at higher premiums; (b) donations from members to the General Fund; (c) advertising in the *Journal*; (d) investment income; and (e) generous donations from chapters and districts from the proceeds of ARS conventions and conferences.

It has been suggested that the ARS should return more than \$6.00 to each chapter from individual member dues. Since we already operate at a deficit of \$5.73 to \$7.73 per member, returning more to each chapter would only increase that deficit.

Each chapter of the ARS is represented at the semi-annual Board Meeting by a district director elected by the presidents of the chapters in that

district. It is recommended that chapters at least partially fund the expenses incurred by the District Director in the fulfillment of duties. (See Policies of the Board 6.1.16) At least one district uses the proceeds from regional conferences held in that district to reimburse the District Director's expenses. In the event a District Director or the Alternate is unable to attend a meeting of the Board of Directors, the District Director shall arrange with the Executive Director for a representative to attend. (See Policies of the Board 6.6.13)

It is important that all members know of the successful fund raising efforts of our Executive Director, Dee Daneri. Through the generosity of Dr. John and Ann Root of Bellingham, Dee has secured a grant in the amount of \$ 4,000 for the purpose of creating 10,000 full-color membership brochures and 10,000 decals which will be presented as a small gift to each ARS member. Dee also submitted and was successful in receiving a grant of \$19,750 from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust for the purpose of creating 300,000 special plant labels, sponsored by the American Rhododendron Society. These will be attached to rhododendrons for the retail trade and for use by chapters having public plant sales. The grant will also be used to create 100,000 culture pamphlets for distribution to garden centers wherever rhododendrons and azaleas are sold. Your help will be solicited in the distribution to Canada, Great Britain and the U.S. Also, a new and much needed special capital equipment fund has been established by a gift of \$2,000 from Dick and Dee Daneri. This fund provides an important protection to insure that the office of the ARS continues at full performance.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the special support which many members have given this year by including extra donations with their renewals. Almost \$7,000 has been received to date from these personal donations to the General Fund. These gifts will also be used toward education and membership development.

We of the ARS Staff and Board extend to you and all members warm wishes for a relaxing and happy Holiday Season and for a peaceful and prosperous New Year 2000.

Sincerely,
Lynn Watts, ARS President

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

We haven't done much wandering around the garden the last few weeks due to the snow and ice.

The rhododendron leaves are curled and hanging each morning but straighten out as the temperature rises except for *R. fortunei* and its hybrids that hang their leaves all winter. The only flower color here in early February is from early daffodils, pansies, and violas peaking through the melting snow. Shrub color is provided by the bright red nandinas, blue conifers, yellow variegated conifers and the wine winter foliage of *Pieris japonica* 'Dorothy Wycoff'. *Jasminum nudiflorum* started to bloom before "winter" arrived mid January but closed down temporarily (I hope). Here in central Virginia the witch-hazels, early viburnums and *Corylopsis pauciflora* have not yet opened though I'm sure you are already enjoying these and more further east.



A surprise in the garden is *Serissa foetida*, a plant given to me several years ago by Barbara Hall. Though many think of this as a tender indoor plant Barbara grows it in the garden. The first year I grew it indoors but as indoor space is limited it was moved outdoors. The *Serissa* has grown vigorously, almost too vigorously so I have had to restrain it! A potted cutting left under our deck (the deck is about 5ft above ground level) has survived three winters including this one.

As has happened each winter we have lived here, a large flock of robins arrived, this year on February 1. They don't appear to be looking for food but are here to frolic in the stream. It seems strange for birds to be bathing in sub-freezing temperatures but they certainly seem to be enjoying it. What was unusual this year was that one of the robins had a bright yellow breast instead of red and a lighter gray back instead of the deeper gray/brown normal color. We were able to observe it closely as it landed on our deck railing just a few feet from where we were looking out. I tried to go for the camera but when I moved it flew away.

Hoping for a wonderful spring with no voles, no deer and no late freezes.

FRANK PELURIE RECEIVES AWARD

Frank Pelurie was the recipient of a Certificate of Acknowledgment to Non-Members for Horticulture on September 15, 1999.

Mr. Pelurie has made significant contributions not only to the Charleston community, but also to West Virginia and Virginia in the areas of propagation of native species, conservation and horticulture education. He has devoted a major portion of his career, as a professional and as a dedicated volunteer, to the protection of our natural environment and has

frequently assumed leadership positions that have brought environmental sensitivity to the formulation of public policy.

Mr. Pelurie's activities that qualify him for receipt of this award are as follows:

1. Mr. Pelurie was the first director of the West Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. He was hired by the national office of the Nature Conservancy to organize our state chapter and remained as director for five years.
2. Mr. Pelurie worked for the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources as a specialist in wetland mitigation. He was instrumental in the 1980s as a proponent of wetland preservation during major highway planning in West Virginia. He helped to reduce the impact of loss of old wetlands during Interstate planning.
3. Mr. Pelurie was instrumental in mapping hiking trails in West Virginia, especially the Allegheny Trail (a branch of the Appalachian Trail) in the eastern part of West Virginia.
4. Mr. Pelurie was on the Board of Directors and is currently Vice-President of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. He is an active member of the American Conifer Society, Holly Society of America, and Royal Horticultural Society.
5. Mr. Pelurie was involved in a project that propagated, donated and planted a collection of approximately 150 Glenn Dale Azaleas at the James Madison University Arboretum. This particular group of azaleas was close to being lost through mislabeling and other problems. There was a research group formed five years ago to identify the Glenn Dale azaleas and through many people's efforts this azalea is now preserved.
6. Mr. Pelurie is actively involved as a volunteer in sponsoring workshops for the MAC Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, the West Virginia Master Gardener Association and garden clubs statewide in propagating native azaleas and firs.
7. Mr. Pelurie was instrumental in the organization of Hungry Beech Preserve. Hungry Beech is a habitat of 124 acres of forested hillside and meadows, the primary feature is nearly 40 acres of cove hardwood and oak hickory forests. There are large American beech and white oaks over 13 feet in circumference. An 80 acre buffer zone of second growth forest and ridge top meadows protect the area. There are also over 80 species of spring flowering plants and hiking trails viewing sandstone outcrops.

NEW ARS DECAL ENCLOSED

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

Memberships and renewals should be sent to Ray Brush, Treasurer, PO Box 266, Madison VA 22727.

Annual membership dues are \$28 per year.

Miscellaneous inquiries may be sent to the editor (address below) for forwarding to proper individual.

Sandra McDonald, Ph.D., Editor
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