

# MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

May 2,3&4, 1997 (District meeting sponsored by Mason-Dixon Chapter)	Sheraton Baltimore-North Towson MD
October 3-5, 1997	Sheraton, Fredericksburg, VA
Spring 1998	Harrisonburg, VA
Fall 1998	Coastal area
November 5,6&7, 1999 (Eastern Regional Meeting -host MAC)	Williamsburg, VA

**SPRING MEETING** - MAC members are urged to make a good showing at the upcoming District Meeting May 2 through May 4 at the Sheraton Baltimore-North in Towson, MD. Jeff Beasley's talk on "Native Azaleas" should be informative since the Beasleys have been specializing in these plants for many years. Please respond to your meeting announcement when you receive it. Bring your trusses for the flower show.

**FALL MEETING '97** - Dr. Douglas Jolley has been working on a meeting in the Fredericksburg area in the same motel where we met several years ago. He is looking into some interesting programs for us as well as the usual fall foliage show, auction, P4M, seedling sale, etc. There should be lots of plants.

**DEATHS - Catherine Marie Schultz** of Baltimore, Maryland is reported as deceased with the return of her copy of the newsletter.

Walter Przypek lost his mother, **Nellie Przypek** of Massachusetts January 23 after a long illness. Our sincere sympathy is extended to Walter and Sybil.

**Dr. Martha Roane** of Blacksburg died December 31, 1996. Martha was a long time member of MAC. She had written a key to the native rhododendrons and also co-authored a publication about rhododendron diseases. She and her husband Curtis Roane collected, identified and prepared two manuscripts on the

fungi of grasses and one has just been printed in *The Virginia Journal of Science*. One of her rhododendron projects was supported by the MAC. She was a retired adjunct Professor of Plant Pathology at VPI & SU and was the recipient of many honors from the scientific community, the church and scouting. She was also a dedicated Scouter. The Chapter extends deepest sympathy to her husband Curtis and family.

**GREAT LOSS TO PLANT WORLD** - For members who may not have heard, renowned plantsman **J. C. Raulston**, age 56, died in an automobile accident Saturday night, December 21, 1996, when the car he was driving slipped across the center line and hit a car with two teenagers head-on on U.S. 64 outside of Ramseur, NC. The accident also killed the driver of the other car, Jonathan Daniel Bass, 17, of Bear Creek. There was no indication of alcohol involvement.

Many of you may know of Dr. Raulston who started the North Carolina State Arboretum in Raleigh, NC and brought it to the impressive status it holds today. He achieved international recognition for his work there, where he was a professor of ornamental horticulture at NCSU. He promoted the introduction of countless garden worthy well-adapted plants into the nursery trade. Since 1976 more than 9,000 plants from 55 countries have found their way to the arboretum

for trial. As a result of his energy and vision, more than 60,000 plants of more than 1,000 plant families, including fruitless sweetgums, hybrid hollies and Mexican redbuds, were distributed to nursery growers around the world. Others were given as cuttings from arboretum plants. He is widely credited with introducing more plants into culture than any other single person in the world. Dr. Raulston had been a speaker for at least two ARS conventions.

Dr. Raulston has sent students around the world. They can be found as public and private arboreta directors, landscapers, nursery owners, garden writers, plant explorers and propagators.

A memorial service was held at NCSU's McKimmon Center on January 19.

**TERRY SHEUCHENKO MEMORIAL STATUS REPORT** - MAC is still planning a memorial for the late MAC president Terry



Sheuchenko in the Healing Garden at Children's Medical Center at Kluge Children's Rehabilitation Center. The CMC and UVA in a

collaborative effort for wide financial support are working on this project through winter and spring of 1997. A landscape architect has completed the design. MAC's plans are for a sundial and possibly a teak bench for the garden in memory of Terry.

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

Winter has settled in after our January "Spring". A thin layer of snow covers the garden and the woods and the rhododendron leaves are tightly curled each morning. The garden catalogs have been arriving for weeks so late afternoons find me making "want" lists. After last summer's water bills we agreed to slow down the expansion of the garden, but like New Year's resolutions we know



Jane McKay

we will go overboard again this year. I also decided last summer to stop growing from seed and almost true to my promise I am only growing one azalea cross, **but** I just sent in a seed order to the Rock Garden Society.

We finally finished our leaf shredding and composting. The garden is covered in oak leaf mulch and the ample fall rains give us hope that our plants went into this winter in the best possible condition, so as always we look forward to a beautiful and colorful spring.

There are very few birds at our feeders this year, but each evening we watch a huge flock of turkey vultures circle the area for an hour or so and just before dark roost in the trees across the road.

We see **Austin and Betty Kennell** each day, sometimes more than once! They appear in a Padows Ham and Deli commercial on NBC television in the Charlottesville area.

**THE GARDEN IN MID-WINTER ON THE NORTHERN NECK** - by David Lay

Thus far, this has been a relatively mild winter. Here in the western shore of Chesapeake Bay our lowest temperature reached only +8° F in January and there has been no significant snowfall though rain has been above normal. Even so, many of the buds may have been zapped on some of the rhododendrons we were foolish enough to buy mail order from the West Coast years ago when we didn't know any better. Lem's Monarch will again be truss-less. It has bloomed adequately only every third or fourth year and should be replaced. Most of the buds on Trude Webster still feel firm, but I have my fingers crossed as 6 to 8° F has been the danger point for us in the past. We would never remove Trude, however, as the eight-foot plants near the front of the house are a glorious sight with volleyball-sized trusses of lush pink in early May. We can live without full trusses every second or third year. Anna Rose Whitney and Halfdan Lem appear to have fine, firm buds.



David Lay

As this is written, the second week in February, the only colorful hints of spring in our garden are *Jasminum nudiflorum* and *Chimonanthus praecox* 'Luteus', a fine bright yellow-blooming shrub with delicious scent. We have just ordered an additional plant from Woodlanders. The fragrance of this wintersweet is strong only just as the buds open. Our *Hamamelis* have been brought out by a recent warm spell. The yellow-flowered 'Arnold's Promise' and 'Pallida' and the coppery-red-flowering 'Jelena' have been the top performers here. For best effect, witch-hazels should be planted where they can be easily seen and against a dark evergreen background, especially where they can catch late afternoon sun. We made the mistake of planting a couple of 'Arnold's Promise' where you cannot see them from the house or from the driveway because their view is blocked by big rhodos! Two of our largest witch-hazels have not bloomed this winter and many of their browned leaves have never fallen. Perhaps this unattractive effect was produced by extra new growth brought on by last year's heavy rainfall and a too-heavy hand with Osmocote! Those of us getting on in years should resist the temptation to push small shrubs to greater size with fertilizer!

**THE GARDEN** - by Sandra McDonald



Here on the coast we have had a fairly mild winter so far with a couple of quite cold spells. Witch-hazel is blooming as well as *Prunus mume* and wintersweet. Some of the early blue species crocuses have been blooming for a couple of weeks. The old-fashioned red-flowering quince in also almost open. A couple of flower buds on *R. mucronulatum* are opening much too soon for me. Buds on the early daffodils are fat, as are most buds on the deciduous azaleas, evergreen azaleas and rhodos. Spring is promising to hit with a bang when it does come.

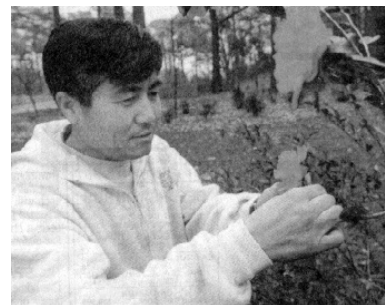
**SPECIAL GENES TRIGGER COLD TOLERANCE** - From a note in the February, 1997 *Niagra Newsletter* published by ARS District #12.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin, Madison have found two sets of genes that help plants survive cold temperatures.

In studying potatoes, Jiwan Palta, a horticulturist in the University's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, found one set of genes that was responsible for allowing the plant to tolerate frost before it had acclimated to cold temperatures, and another set that allowed it to acclimate to temperatures below freezing.

Wisconsin potato plants are unable to acclimate to cold temperatures and die at 28 degrees, but potatoes native to the Andes acclimate in 10 to 14 days, doubling or tripling their hardiness so that they can survive temperatures as low as 14 degrees.

Researchers in Palta's lab have found that a fat molecule, linoleic acid, increases as plants build up tolerance to freezing. They now believe that this increase in linoleic acid is a genetically important trait that could be transferred to frost sensitive plants of many types to make them more cold tolerant.



Kunso Kim

**IN THE NEWS - MAC member and Curator of Plants at**

Norfolk Botanical Garden **Kunso Kim** was featured in *The Daily Press* on January 5 in an article about the *Camellia* collection at the Garden. He has spent much of his time the past two years working to document and map the *Camellia* garden.

**BACK TO THE FORTIES** - *The following is another article in our series which was discovered by Dr. Doug Jolley and is from The Home Garden, probably 1944, though there was no volume or page number listed on it.* (Editor's note: Mayflower or *Epigaea repens* is in the Ericacea family as is *Rhododendron* and is also a woodland plant of interest to many MAC members.)

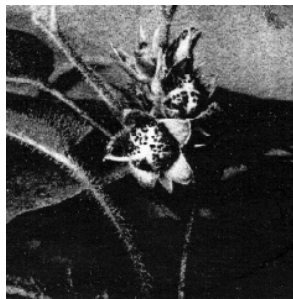
**HOW TO GROW MAYFLOWERS FROM SEEDS OR CUTTINGS** - by Robert S. Lemmon

Of course, you couldn't get actual figures on it, but it's a pretty safe guess that four out of every five attempts to transplant trailing arbutus from the wild end in dismal failure. This *Epigaea*

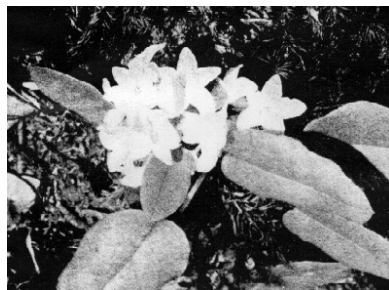
*repens* - they call it mayflower in New England - is not only insistent on having an extremely acid soil and just the right sort of exposure. At least equally important to its welfare are the microscopic fungus growths on its roots, called mycorrhiza by the scientists, which even careful transplanting often throws off balance.

The real answer to establishing trailing arbutus in a wild-flower planting is to use pot-grown plants propagated from either seeds or cuttings. These when they have developed a spread of 4 or 5 in., will almost always take hold if given a very acid, leafmoldy, well-drained site that in summer is shaded for the greater part of the day.

The small seed-bearing fruits, which are borne only in female plants, ripen about the same time as the wild strawberries. Separate the seeds from the pulp by rubbing between thumb and fingers, and sow immediately under glass in a shaded coldframe, using a mixture of 2/3 finely sifted oak leafmold and 1/3 clean sand, and barely covering with the same mixture.



Seed pod on *Epigaea repens*



*Epigaea repens*

Germinating can be looked for in 3 to 8 weeks; the hotter the weather, the longer it will take the tiny, very slow-growing seedlings to appear.

Keep the flat regularly but moderately watered until freezing weather, then mulch it lightly with dead oak leaves and leave the sash closed and shaded until spring, watering lightly in midwinter if the soil seems really dry. When the seedlings are 1/4 to 1/2 in. across, usually 10 to 11 months after sowing, transplant to 3 in. pots, using the same soil mixture and being especially careful to keep the root-ball as nearly intact as possible. The young plants should be kept shaded until the following spring, when they should be large enough to set out in their permanent places. In all

watering operations, be sure to use only non-alkaline water; rainwater is ideal. Lime in any form is one thing that trailing arbutus just won't tolerate.

Plants can be started rather easily from midsummer cuttings- a particularly useful method when you want to propagate an individual with especially fine flower color or form. Each cutting should consist of the tip growth of the current season plus at least 1 in. of last year's wood. One good method is to wrap all of the old growth, and perhaps an inch of the new, in a wad of fresh sphagnum moss which is then bedded in sand and never allowed to dry out. By the following spring the sphagnum will probably be thickly interlaced with very slender white roots. The new plant can then be set out, sphagnum and all. Incidentally, no leaves need be removed when preparing the cutting, nor is "tipping" of the young growth necessary.

Whether from cuttings or seeds, be sure your plants get a thorough wetting, either by rain or artificially, once a week through the first full growing season after they are set out. A light winter mulch of dead oak leaves will help keep their foliage.

#### **GARDEN TIPS FROM HERE AND THERE - POSSIBILITIES TO DETER DEER:**

- Blinking Christmas tree lights around your garden from dusk to dawn.
- A transistor radio playing in the garden during the night with stations switched occasionally.
- An inexpensive motion detector with a built-in doorbell.
- Dog hair in the garden and human hair in mesh bags in the trees.
- Electric fencing built in a staggered pattern. Breaking up the straight line of fencing confuses deer making it hard for them to figure out where to jump. Dense shrub roses planted inside the fence periphery enhance the effectiveness.
- Twelve foot high fencing made of woven wire mesh, woven wire or plastic mesh.

#### **RABBIT DETERRENTS:**

- Dried sulfur or wood ashes around the edge of the garden.

#### **MOLE DETERRENTS:**

- Castor oil mixed at the rate of 3 parts castor oil to 1 part dish detergent. Dilute 4 tablespoons of the above mixture in a gallon of water and soak the tunnels and entrances with the mixture.

**ORGANIC FERTILIZERS** - Information from Texas A & M University

Fertilizer	%N	%P	%K	Remarks
Blood	10	1.5	0	A very rapidly-available organic fertilizer
Bird guano	13	1	13	Partially decomposed bird manure from islands off coast
Bone meal, raw	4	22	0	Main value is nitrogen since most of the phosphorus is not soluble
Bone meal, steamed	2	27	0	As a result of steaming under pressure, some nitrogen is lost, but more phosphorus is soluble for use by plants
Cocoa shell	2.5	1	3	Primarily a conditioner for complete fertilizers
Cotton seed meal	6	2.5	2	Generally very acid; useful in alkaline soils
Hoof and horn meal	14	0	0	The steam-treated and ground material is a rather quickly-available source of nitrogen
Cattle manure	0.5	0	0.5	Improves soil structure
Chicken manure	0.9	0.5	0.8	Careful! Burns plants easily
Horse manure	0.6	0.3	0.6	Improves soil structure
Sheep manure	0.9	0.5	0.8	
Sewage sludge	2	1	1	Examples of activated sludge are Milorganite (Milwaukee, WI), Hu-Acinite (Houston, TX), Chicagrow (Chicago, IL) and Nitrogranic (Pasadena, CA)

**HELP NEEDED FROM THE MEMBERSHIP-**

Vice-President Doug Jolley is looking ahead as the chapter nears its 45th birthday. On May 24, 1952 forty-nine charter members met and signed a document of intent to start the Middle Atlantic Chapter. In September of 1952 the ARS approved the charter.

Doug thinks it is time to step back and ask ourselves what are we doing as a chapter; what activities should we continue to do; what should we try to improve; what should we eliminate? Are there any preferences on meeting locations? Should we try other locations and if

so which locations? Are there special topics we should cover at our meetings and learn more about?

Our present committees are:

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Nominations      | Long Range Planning    |
| Honors           | Ratings                |
| Research         | Newsletter             |
| Video Library    | Publications/Extension |
| Publicity        | P4M                    |
| Alderman Liaison | New Member Welcome     |
| Flower Show      | Equipment              |
| Membership       |                        |

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Area  
Finance Committee      Budget Committee  
Species Study Group  
Committee for Meetings, which changes with  
each meeting and meeting location.

Would you like to be active on any of  
these committees? Do we need any new  
committees? Should we eliminate any of these?

**Who wants to become more active in  
our organization? Doug wants your input.**

**Contact:**

**Douglas Jolley**

**Box 69**

**Flatwoods, WV 26621-0069**

**Telephone: 304-765-2608 (home)**

**304-765-5551 (office)**

**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 \$25 per year.

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

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