

# 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

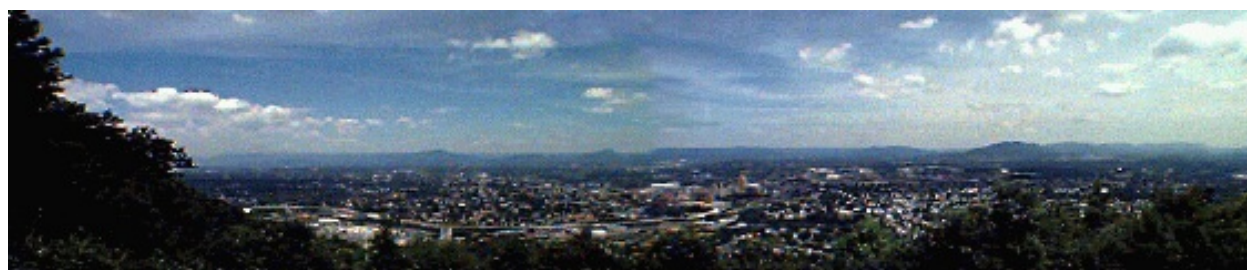
May 14-16, 1999                      Tanglewood Holiday Inn, Roanoke, VA  
November 5,6&7, 1999              Fort Magruder Inn, Williamsburg, VA  
(Eastern Regional Meeting: host MAC)

### Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

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

**American Rhododendron Society**    <http://www.rhodie.org/>

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



View of Roanoke. Photo by Jim Dixon on his Star City Landmarks web page.

### FROM THE PRESIDENT by Doug Jolley

Knock on wood, but here in central West Virginia we are having our third mild winter in a row. Snow drops, hellebores, and witch hazels are blooming in abundance. With spring just around the corner Frank Pelurie and Paul James are planning an outstanding weekend for us in Roanoke. There will be some new wrinkles to the agenda so watch for the registration packet in March.

The spring *ARS Journal* will tout our fall Eastern Regional Meeting (Williamsburg) and registration for this will appear in the summer *ARS Journal*. Ray Doggett has ably chaired the planning committee and has secured Tony Avent, an outstanding plantsman, as our keynote speaker. Anyone wishing to volunteer their services during the Fall Meeting is urged to contact Ray. (804-642-9190)

Speaking of volunteers, anyone wishing to host a meeting or recommend a meeting site, please do so. Jeanne Hammer has volunteered to usher in the millennium, thus our Spring Meeting next year will be in Charlottesville, Virginia. After that our calendar is blank. May will be here before we know it. See

you in Roanoke!.

### MAC'S SPRING '99 MEETING by Frank Pelurie

Come to MAC's Spring '99 meeting in Roanoke, Virginia, and see for yourself what I can not even begin to describe. The dates are May 14 – 16, 1999, at the Tanglewood Holiday Inn in Roanoke. Meeting details, agenda and registration material will be mailed towards the end of March.

It has been quite a while since the Chapter's last meeting in Roanoke. Even then it was mind boggling walking around Paul James' garden. In the interim we have had the pleasure of seeing parts of Paul's garden and some of the outstanding plants through the slide programs he has provided at chapter meetings. But it is even more outstanding now. Over these past few years the plants in the garden have grown and many, many more have been added. Can you imagine having planted in your yard about 10,000 cultivars or species of all types of plants, many with multiple copies? Paul estimates the garden has, in species or cultivars, about 4,000 rhododendrons, 2,500 azaleas and 1,500 conifers and more. Now you can see the

whole thing at what should be the peak of rhododendron bloom for his garden.

Paul has also arranged for the Childress Garden, a French style house with a beautiful, well landscaped formal garden, to be open for viewing Saturday morning.

George and Helen Ring have offered to open their garden for visits, also. The setting is on top of a mountain, the view is beautiful, and George has managed to put a lot of plants in the ground in the few years that he has lived there. As you drive up the almost one mile long driveway to the house look on both sides of the road. The woods have been underplanted quite a ways in with rhododendrons and azaleas, many of which are unique, or uncommon relative to the many other gardens we visit.

In addition to the above there are a few other places to visit in the area: Explorer Park, a colonial theme park with reconstructed houses and other period structures, located just off the Blue Ridge Parkway within Roanoke; Virginia Western Community College Arboretum, a relatively small but well landscaped garden; award winning Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden with an outstanding view of Roanoke; and for something a little different, the Center in the Square, which includes the Science Museum of Western Virginia, the Roanoke Historical Society Museum, an art museum, planetarium, Transportation Museum (trains), and a performing arts theater.

On Sunday morning, after the short chapter meeting, there will be a guided field tour on the Blue Ridge Parkway visiting some of Paul James' special places.

Lunch Saturday will be provided by and at the Greenbrier Nurseries' new facility in Roanoke. This is an expansion of the same nursery we visited during the Chapter's Spring '96 meeting in Lewisburg, West Virginia. You will enjoy your visit.

There are two interesting programs scheduled for Friday evening. Ray Brush will present a program showing slides of plants and scenery taken on a recent trip to New Zealand, and Greenbrier Nurseries will wrap up the evening with a presentation titled "Cutting Edge Plants." Saturday evening's banquet speaker is Sandra McDonald. Sandra will talk and show slides of last summer's trip to Korea. This program has been given at least twice already to other groups with very favorable comments.

Lets make this a really big Flower Show. Start thinking about the plants you want to enter. Plan now to attend, mark your calendars for MAC's May 14 – 16, 1999 meeting.

#### **MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Welcome to new members:  
Glontz, Gary, Roanoke, VA 24014

Swartz, Norman, ,  
Stanardsville, VA 22973  
Wilson, Diane, Montpelier Station, VA  
22957  
Change of address:  
Haywood, Mavis, Tampa FL  
33612-6033

#### **DEATHS**

Jane McKay's mother died in New York in January. Deepest sympathy is extended to Jane and her family.

#### **ILLNESSES**

Russ Parsons had surgery in January.

**CHRISTMAS EVE ICE STORM IN THE MAC AREA** by Sandra McDonald. *This article was written for both the R&A News (the ARS on-line newsletter) and for Mid-Atlantic Rhododendron News and Notes.*

On Christmas Eve of 1998 many of our Middle Atlantic Chapter members were within a region that experienced a bad ice storm that came through Virginia, cutting a wide swath of damage from Richmond and a bit south, then eastward to the Chesapeake Bay. Trees in Gloucester and Williamsburg were heavily damaged or killed, including the 300-year-old Great Oak at Colonial Williamsburg which went down in the storm.

MAC members are a congenial lot, with many firm friendships within the chapter; we keep in touch. I eventually got in touch, either by telephone or by e-mail, with several of our members who were affected by the storm.

We were on the very southern edge here in Hampton and had no problem with the storm, not even power loss. We only had a little bit of ice on the grass making it crunchy on Christmas morning when I walked out to the garden to pick a few things for a table arrangement for the Christmas dinner table. The impatiens did die though, since Christmas Eve was our first frost of the season.

George McLellan in Gloucester was able to call me after a few days. He was without power five days and had some trees down, including seven Bradford pears that had split in half. Pine branches broke sounding like gunfire and came down like spears with the heavy, broken end first. I asked how he had fared with Christmas dinner. His sister who lives nearby and also lost power was able to cook on a modern metal fireplace a poached chicken, sweet potatoes, vegetables, and other accompaniments. George tried to light his wood stove when the power went out, but it started smoking up the house and he discovered that some determined starlings had filled 40 feet of pipe with pine needles before they built their nest on the top. George had to make do with his kerosene

greenhouse heater and let the temperature fall in the greenhouse.

I was not able to reach Barbara Hall in Gloucester until a couple of days later. Barbara and Alton had moved over to her mother's house when their heat and power went out, as her mother did have a couple of propane heaters. The Halls had a lot of damage in their garden with many trees coming down smashing fences, a neighbor's utility shed, and her rhododendrons, azaleas and other plants. Barbara discovered that many of the plants had broken off at places where there were borers, which would have killed the branch anyway. A pine tree fell in her lovely fish pond and killed seven fish, not by crushing them, but rather by the sap and needles which were somewhat soluble in the fish pond water and which turned out to be toxic to the fish. They had to get the limbs out and put in fresh city water with lots of aquarium de-chlorinating tablets in it. The Peggy and Charles McComb in Bena, Virginia, near Gloucester Point did okay. They had family over for a Christmas dinner of turkey breast cooked on the outside grill and and yeast rolls, also cooked on the grill with some other Christmas goodies. Charles thought the coffee was the best in years. It was old fashioned percolator coffee cooked on the wood stove. They use their wood stove a lot in winter anyway, so life was not too difficult.

Ray and Alice Doggett in Gloucester Point were without power for five and one-half days, but did have a fire place and gas logs to keep warm. The day after Christmas they had a dinner cooked by Ukrops Supermarket in Richmond. The only damage in the garden was a branch from their neighbor's tree that fell on their fig bush.

Harry and Esther Jordan, also in Gloucester Point, lost tree limbs, one of which fell on a 50 year old camellia smashing it. Their greenhouse was also crushed by a limb.

Several MAC members answered by e-mail and their answers follow:

On January 15, David Lay wrote:

Here in Kilmarnock at the mouth of the Rappahannock River on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay we were at the northern limits of the heavy icing. Our electricity was off for over 100 hours. We were expecting guests for dinner on Christmas day, but were able to phone a couple of them in the Washington, D.C., area and ask them not to come because of our power outage. We still ended up with twelve relatives and were able to prepare a big Christmas dinner of pan-fried oysters and ham on the gas-top stove. I was able to keep the fireplace going for the several days while the power was out and slept in front of the fireplace. My wife Mary Lloyd stayed with friends who had power. Since we live in the country and depend on electricity to pump

our water, we were not able to clean up the mess from the Christmas dinner for five days.

The pines along the road leading to our yard completely snapped the power line in five places. Fortunately, over the years we have removed almost all the pines from our 5-acre garden, leaving only hickory and oak which fare much better in ice. We lost no trees, but had about ten large oak limbs about eight inches in diameter come down – one branch about 20 feet long dangled precariously over the glass greenhouse behind the garage. I was fortunate to get a bucket-truck man to remove it, but he charged \$250 for a half hour's work. Obviously some people cleaned up literally and figuratively as a result of the storm.

We were glad that there was almost no wind for four days or damage could have been worse. I carried five trays of rooted azalea and rhododendron cuttings into the house but left 200 rhododendrons potted in quarts in the unheated greenhouse. So far all seem to have come through well and will be ready for the Eastern Regional Meeting Plant Sale in Williamsburg next fall.

On January 3, Bill Bedwell wrote:  
Happy New Year!

I have been getting up debris from the December 23-24 storm of freezing rain. There was little ice or sleet in Dinwiddie – almost all freezing rain that put a thick coat of ice on everything. In Dinwiddie (south of Richmond) electricity returned about 8 p.m. Sunday night December 27 – it was off just long enough for me to lose almost everything in the refrigerator. It was impossible to sleep the night of December 23-24 because of the frequent CRACK.....CRAAASH of trees and limbs. Power went out shortly after 6:30 a.m. on December 24 and the Crack...Crash continued as I left for Richmond about 2 p.m.

I was pruning some limbs that hung over the driveway when I saw a car traveling on the road in front of my house and I heard a Crack...Crash and saw the limb directly above the car. The limb broke out the rear window but the car kept on going. It spooked me enough to abandon plans of delivering some presents by car. I left Dinwiddie shortly afterward, having decided to move my Christmas Day hosting of my cousins, Gail and Pat, to Pat's condo in Richmond, where there was less ice and no power outage. I took all the food with me and cooked (heated it) at Pat's place Christmas morning. (I got a complete Christmas Dinner from Ukrop's and the turkey needed only 1.5 hours cooking to finish it.)

I ventured into the garden on Saturday, December 26, very carefully because of ice falling in the thaw. The temperature stayed in the 20s and 30s. There were a lot of limbs down but very little really bad damage to the rhododendrons and azaleas. Several

big limbs missed the house by inches. I was lucky, and so were all my neighbors.

January 10 and 14 updates from Bill Bedwell:

The big ice storm of December 1998 was yet another anniversary for me. The last comparable storm was thirty years ago, when my garden was a little less than three years old. Back then, with everything thickly coated in ice, there was wind the next night that caused even more damage than the ice storm itself. The garden recovered and I got a lot of free limb pruning to let in more light.

Looking around the garden yesterday in balmy mid-60 degree F. weather. I saw how few rhododendrons and azaleas took direct hits. And the trees are mostly okay too; they just had limb pruning. My beautiful plant of 'Wyandanch' is now reduced to a single pole with one scrawny and battered branch near the base; 'Scintillation' is beat up and lopsided but some parts are okay; 'Tony' was nearly wiped out. Some others are still covered with debris, but appear to be in fair condition.

One pine tree is down, battering some of the dwarf English boxwoods, but missing everything else because it fell in the path where the big hickory had already demolished everything in 1996. The huge white pine in back of the house at the entrance to the garden took yet another hit. I've lost count of how many times it has been damaged. Yet it still looks pretty good. All the big old limbs are gone, but smaller limbs began expanding after earlier damage and they give the tree a balanced look, if you ignore all the big stubs from former branches. This tree is slightly older than I am and is the last survivor of several young trees brought by my father from his native Grayson County in Southwest Virginia when I was a child. It is also one of the last remaining trees to give some afternoon shade to the garden since it is situated on top of the hill above the garden.

It appears that white oaks and sycamores had little to no damage, while willow oaks, red oaks, pin oaks, maples, red buds, and pines had lots of broken limbs. Surprisingly, my big *Magnolia grandiflora* had almost no damage. The falling pine limbs seemed to do less damage than the hardwoods, however, probably because their needles and twiggy, flexible limbs help break the impact.

My neighbor, fellow MAC member Bill Saunders, said he marked some trees that he planned to remove last fall, but the storm took down the ones he did not mark!

There was ice in Richmond too, with tree limbs down here and there, but it did not appear to be nearly as extensive as it was to the south and east of Richmond. An article in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* revealed they do not have a generally accepted method of measuring the extent of ice for comparison of one area to another. The power

company says the thickness of ice on power lines is a good indicator. The Petersburg area, Williamsburg, and the Gloucester areas were said to be among the worst hit.

*Cornus florida* should be added to the list of trees with least damage. I did not see any dogwood damage, but I saw many trees with limbs bent to the ground. Rhododendrons also have the same flexibility and I saw some well over seven feet tall that were bent to the ground with no apparent damage. Other tall ones, such as 'Cynthia', had one of several main trunks break about two-thirds of the way up (at about 9 feet above ground). Canadian hemlocks had no damage and seemed very much at home with the ice bending down their branches. Hemlock shade is too dense, but there is little damage from falling limbs, and they are pretty (the hemlock downside is the woolly adelgid insect is becoming a serious threat and hemlocks are an alternate host to the rust that is a serious pest on many deciduous azaleas). Virginia red cedar had moderate damage in my large trees but I recall younger trees getting extensive damage in past years.

January 6, from David Sauer:

Sorry not to have gotten back to you before now but it may have been on television that we have had a small ice storm. On Christmas Eve we got one hell of an ice storm that passed through Chester very rapidly, left a huge amount of ice, tore up everything, and moved on! However, I hear that Williamsburg was worse hit than we were.

We lost our lights at both the house and the studio. There were 12 trees and 2 power poles down on our road coming to the house. We stayed at the house because the gas logs halfway worked there and we also had the propane grill. And so with a battery of candles, a house that ran from 53 to 63 degrees F., and a squeaky transistorized radio for Christmas music, we enjoyed a beautiful, quiet, lovely Christmas sitting in front of the occasionally-on Christmas logs. I generally send e-mail Christmas greetings on Christmas morning, but not this year! This is your e-mail Christmas greetings. After six days we got light at the studio so we moved up there. We had everything in the studio, water, lights, heat, everything but a telephone. So we settled down to a rather civilized life. The lights at the house and therefore the ability to e-mail only came on yesterday. Let me be the last to wish you Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Not often do you get a speedy e-mail that is this late. I hope you had as charming and delightful Christmas as Debs and I.

January 8, from Debby Sauer:

Hi, Folks. I'm very glad to hear that you didn't get iced before Christmas Eve. Boy, did we get hit! I don't have the courage to count the trees down in the garden. To add to it, all of the fish froze, poor things,

the water drained from the lower ponds and their stiff little bodies were laying there! Horrors. After 10 days, the lights came back on. Virginia Power had to send a crew of four trucks and six to eight men with roaring chain saws to clear the road. There was no damage to the house, thank heavens. We had the gas grill with side burner outside, and I'm telling you, I can do some cooking on that rascal! The candles were lovely and we had heat, so we didn't have it as bad as those without heat. Running water and a flushable commode would have been greatly appreciated, however. What a pussycat I am, I'm told. Right. At the moment, I am cuttin' and haulin', as they say. 'Lem's Monarch' used to be a 5 feet × 9 feet spreader. At this time, it is 2 inches by 9 feet, but still a spreader! We lost 'Trude Webster', 'Atroflo', a few of the Greenwoods, and *R. vericosum*, or parts, thereof. I don't know for certain, because the wood is still laying on them. Happy New Year!

As you may deduce from the above garden tours in our ice belt will be different in 1999. There will be a lot more light in many Middle Atlantic Gardens in the spring. This will provide more challenges for our avid rhododendron and azalea gardeners who are mostly an optimistic lot. There should be lots more bloom in the year 2000 as a result of this massive pruning by Mother Nature.

#### NOTES FROM MAC SPECIES STUDY GROUP by George Keen McLellan

The Species Study Group had a successful and fruitful 1998 studying our native rhododendrons with five major treks and other shorter excursions. We logged over 6000 miles to eight different states and traveled from sea level to over 6000 feet to see our natives in bloom and harvest their seed. In all we were able to study fourteen different species in their natural settings.

The season started in late March when we traveled to Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Northern Florida, where we found *R. canescens* and *R. austrinum* in bloom. There were several short trips to local areas in Virginia to view the flowers of *R. periclymenoides* and *R. altanticum* in April before an early May trip on the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina where *R. vaseyi* and *R. minus* were found flowering at high altitudes. Further north in the Blue Ridge of Virginia and at a lower altitude spring was much farther advanced and *R. calendulaceum* was in full bloom and *R. prinophyllum* just opening.

A late May trip to West Virginia allowed a detailed study of *R. arborescens* in its mountain creek-side home. It was a joy to see the wonderfully fragrant, white flowered azaleas in their natural setting. Late June saw us taking our now almost

annual tour to the mountains of Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee where *R. catawbense*, *R. maximum*, *R. calendulaceum*, *R. viscosum*, *R. arborescens*, *R. cumberlandense*, and natural hybrids of several were in bloom. Then followed a mid July trip to southwest Georgia and a chance to see *R. prunifolium*, perhaps one of the rarest of our native azaleas, blooming on the sides of the canyons in Providence Canyon State Park. Here a side trip to the nearby Calloway Gardens where Fred Galle had made an extraordinarily large planting of *R. prunifolium* and other native azaleas was a real bonus. The final trip of the year was in the first week of October to revisit many of the sites and gather seed.

We hope 1999 will be as successful and already are planning some trips to forward our goal of putting together a definitive slide program on all our Eastern native azaleas. Some tentative trips are:

1. Mid/late April - northeast Georgia and Stone Mountain Georgia to see *R. flammeum* and natural hybrids of *R. flammeum* and *canescans*.
2. Early/mid May - Georgia/Alabama to see *R. alabamense*.
3. April - northeast Pennsylvania to see *R. canadense*.
4. Early June - West Virginia to see *R. prinophyllum*.
5. Late June - Annual tour of North Carolina mountains June 20/27.



Winner of Best in Show at the Fall Foliage Show, Bill Bedwell's 'Palestrina.'

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.

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