

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

Vol. XXVII No.2

May 2001

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Aug 18, 2001	MAC Board Meeting, Charlottesville, VA
Nov 2-4, 2001	Donaldson Brown Conference Center, Blacksburg, VA
Spring 2002	Culpeper area
Oct 2002	Holiday Inn, Bluefield, 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>

SPRING MEETING by Sandra McDonald

The weather was delightful for an early spring meeting in Gloucester, April 20 – 22. There were 131 attendees at the meeting at the new Comfort

On Saturday we visited the spectacular gardens of David Peebles, Barbara and Alton Hall, Dean and Cam Williams, and Art and Betty White. Early azaleas were the predominant plants blooming in most of the gardens, but there were many other special things to see.



Barbara Bullock (in front of Glenn Kauffman), Barbara Hall, Ken McDonald, and Bruno Kaelin in the Hall's garden. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

On Saturday evening we had an excellent dinner at a church hall, followed by plant and book auctions. Barbara Bullock rounded out the evening with an excellent presentation on the National Arboretum, its azaleas, and its history.

We had the usual flower show, seedling sale, and book sale. Proceeds were \$311 for Austin's books, \$755 for all the plants, and \$129 for seedling sale (to go to the ARS Research Foundation).

Sunday morning featured an auction and garden tours of several other local gardens. Thanks to all who worked to put on this meeting and everyone who came to enjoy it.

Inn. The motel's lack of large meeting rooms and a restaurant necessitated other plans, but they worked out very well. After touring George McLellan's lovely garden late Friday afternoon, we went next door to the Ware Neck Yacht Club and had our barbecue dinner and speakers Don Hyatt and Bill Bedwell, both with excellent slides of their trip last year to gardens in Ireland and England.

NEW OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

New officers and directors were elected at the May meeting.

President Frank Pelurie
Vice President Jeanne Hammer

Secretary Joanne Ortiz
Treasurer Debby Sauer
Directors exp. 2004: Teresa Brents, Jane McKay,
Bill Saunders

BRONZE MEDAL



Jane McKay and Alton Hall. Photo by Sandra McDonald.



Austin Kennell and grandson Michael Sanders waiting for dinner!
Photo by Sandra McDonald.

At the meeting in Gloucester, the Middle Atlantic Chapter presented F. Raymond Brush the Bronze Medal in recognition of his active participation and service to the Chapter for many years.

Ray and Betty Brush came to us on Ray's retirement from the American Association of Nurserymen where he had been corporate secretary. He had also been active in the International Plant Propagators Society. He is a horticultural graduate of Michigan State University.

Ray and Betty have been active in the chapter holding the offices of Secretary and Treasurer at

various times and with Ray holding the office of Treasurer for many years. Ray computerized chapter membership, financial, and budget records for greater ease of handling and understanding.

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

This spring in the middle of MAC has been typical if gardening here for only nine springs qualifies me to judge. We have had one or two frosts, several threats of frosts, drought and 'unusual' excessive heat. All in all a pretty good spring. The oak and maple seedlings along with numerous other weeds overwhelm me. The cuttings I rooted last fall are still in flats in the basement waiting to be potted. The annuals we bought for summer color are only half planted, as I said a typical spring.

The garden is lovely this first weekend in May. Several rhododendrons are blooming for us for the first time, Dexter's 'Tripoli' - red, 'Phyllis Korn' - cream, Hachmann's 'Daniela' and 'Fantastica' - both deep pink white-centered, and 'Anita Gehrich' - also deep pink white-centered, special because we knew the lady.

There is so much beauty in the garden I don't seem to be able to focus on any one thing. The daffodils were gorgeous, the clematis are just beginning, *Arisaema sikkokianum* froze but hope it will come back next year, *Arisaema ringens* bloomed for the first time. WOW! The new growth on the *Pieris* froze but is now sending out new shoots. *Pieris* 'Mountain Fire' and *P.* 'Valley Fire' are just that, on fire. Dwarf conifers are in new growth and lookin' good. Japanese maples lush and lovely.

Have I ever met an azalea I didn't like? Maybe one or two. There are so many favorites, I'll just mention a few. Ho Oden, an oldie, long listed as a Kurume now in *R. mucronatum*. Do I care? No, it's still beautiful, white, hose in hose, rays of lavender-pink, deeper blotch. Where to buy it, I have no idea. If you want cuttings come and see me. Huang 2-1-22, a P4M purchase, I suspect came from Paul James' garden, delicate white pink ribs, a little tender here but special. Red Wing, a memorial plant given to me more than forty years ago, a 'hot house plant', not to be grown outdoors on Long Island, so I planted it outdoors. P.S. I still have several plants. Cuttings from the original are doing well in Virginia. Two other azaleas 'you can't grow' but doing well 'Mme. Pericat' and Linwood 'Janet Rhea'.

I love Hosta but grow most in pots as they are also loved by voles.

We rarely talk about lepidote rhododendrons in Virginia, too hot for a lot of them. I do grow a few that do well, *R. carolinianum*, 'PJM Elite', Weston's 'Pink Diamond', *R. mucronulatum*, and Roslyn Nurseries 'Floda'. I agree they do lose their flowers to late frosts some years but not always. Some that bloom later and avoid the frost are 'Pride of Split Rock', 'Carolina Rose' and 'Joseph Dunn'.

Enough of my rambling. It's time to move the sprinkler and plant the rest of the annuals.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

Harry E. Coor,
Gary Glontz, Roanoke, VA
24014
V.A. & I.S. Rasper,
Williamsburg, VA 23188
Linda Reynolds, ,
VA 23225

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Norma Brown was in an auto accident which necessitated hip surgery for her in April.

ANOTHER USE FOR OASIS

The March, 2001, *Avant Gardener* reports that oasis (used in floral arranging) can be cut in cubes, soaked in deer repellent, and hung on plants or skewered on stakes. This is reported to be very effective in northern Europe. A popular repellent there is made of 2 pounds of bloodmeal and 1 cup of ammonia in 2 gallons of water. The cubes should be re-soaked weekly.

A POEM by Glenn Kauffman

Rhododendron mucronulatum

Precocious buds defy the elements.

A few warm days,
and pale-pink, tissue petals
test their metal
'gainst equinoctial winds.

That battle lost,
blasted blossoms
stem clinging,

huddle against the cold.

But the evanescent wisps of pink
amid drab winter, portend a better day.
And they laugh last

As sibling buds survive the April freeze
to flower a proper end to winter,
and dance pink preludes to the spring.

3/23/01

THE GARDEN by Sandra McDonald

What a dry, dry spring! I am only inside because we have been having a few misty sprinkles today. It's not enough to do any good yet, but it does make the garden foliage messy to handle.

I have been working in the yard nearly every afternoon since the MAC Spring Meeting trying to catch up from the four years of garden neglect when I was doing the *Holly Journal*.

One project is cleaning up my 'plant prison', the pot holding area under our seldom used clothesline. I probably threw out around 40 pots of dead things and really haven't made a dent. Many were seedlings awaiting judgement. The bigger plants greedily took their space. I am planting a few of the better plants as room can be made. Clearing out the shaded-out, dead lower branches on azaleas and rhododendrons and limbing up larger bushes and trees of a size that I can handle is another project. I have some old azaleas to dig up and/or sacrifice, 'Snow', 'Marjorie Ann', and 'Sweetheart Supreme'. It is a shame to have to sacrifice big old azaleas, but it is impossible to dig them because of intertwined tree and shrub roots. A count of the old Le-Mac Pericat 'Marjorie Ann' azaleas on one side of the yard came to over 15 plants. There are more on the other side, so there are probably nearly 30 total. That is a lot of 'Marjorie Ann' for an approximately one-half acre lot. I want to get rid of a few of them to make room for some different things.

I have an in-ground plant of 'Dream Sherbet' that put on a good show this year and after I clear out the big 'Snow' and 'Marjorie Ann' and I will put a Gartrell and some 'Dream Sherbet' siblings near it. The colors harmonize well.

An awful lot of *R. austrinum* seems to have appeared in the center of the back yard. They are blocking too much of the view of the harbor. They put on a spectacular show, but grow too tall for that area. I shear them back to hinder them a bit, but that is not good enough. I will keep only a few of the better ones – the pure yellow is prettier than the yellow and orange. I dug up a few, but need to dig more while they can still be moved. The *R. austrinum* has smothered out some of the less robust *R. calendulaceum*.

The big, beautiful, red unknown rhododendron that won the truss show last year just bloomed. I surely wish I could figure out what it is since it does spectacularly. There is a large plant of 'Belle Heller' × 'Janet Blair', a cross made in 1976, right next to it. It is performing well, too. The more I see really big rhododendrons, the more I like them and the less I care for the medium sized, very symmetrical ones. It is nice to be able to put dwarf or small plants under the tall ones. I like legs.

Chrysanthemums treated with growth retardants don't appeal to me either. They are too uniform.

In all this clearing out work I have come to the conclusion that the rhodos can take heavier shade than the azaleas even though some of the smaller growers do get shaded out. The rhodos survived better crowded together under the clothesline than the azaleas did. They did get watered by an automatic sprinkler the last couple of years and loved that. I think that is how the azaleas died. The rhodos just overgrew them because they so enjoyed finally getting more water.

It's time to do my annual path widening. More pruning! I never thought I would be so hard-hearted as to be able to lop off branches of rhodos and azaleas so casually.

Ken came out and helped with the pruning on the weekend. He limbed up one of the big *Ilex integra* plants for me using a pole saw. We worked really hard while he was out. We even went into the neighbor's yard and pruned a few limbs on our holly and her dogwood. She is elderly, can't hear, and has a nurse so we just went ahead and did it. We also pruned a few of her small dead limbs since her yard man doesn't take care of little things like that.

I pulled some of her English ivy off our brick wall. It keeps climbing and trying to get on our side. Its roots even go into the mortar and crack the wall. I fight English ivy on both sides. I don't see why some people like it so much. About the only way to keep it in check is with a lawn mower or weed killer, and I'm not sure about the lawn mower. It is going up two of the neighbor's trees and will eventually kill them. I might put a little Roundup on the part of it that is on the lower part of our wall.

The neighbor on the other side likes ivy, too, but she tries to keep in on the ground and mows around it. However, hers creeps into my vinca which is bad enough by itself! Pulling English ivy out of vinca is interesting. The ivy comes out easily, but I really have to keep a watchful eye out for it because besides creeping over on us from both sides, the birds drop a few seeds around and we have seedlings coming up, too.

I used some orchid mix to repot some poor neglected vireyas that haven't been repotted in probably a dozen years. It is a wonder they were alive. I e-mailed E. White Smith at Bovees to see what he used. The vireyas lived in the mist house at the nursery.

A great white native azalea purchased as *R. alabamense* is blooming. It blooms later than the other *R. alabamense* I grew from seed and has foliage when it starts to bloom. Also the pale yellow hybrid Paul James found in the hybrid

swarm near his home is very pretty. I rooted it from a spray he had in a flower show.

We cut down a couple of mature in-bloom *Styrax americanus*. It suckers and I am tired of fighting them. I still like my *Styrax obassia* which is trained as a small tree. It has not tried to sucker like the other one yet.

Some of the early midseason azaleas had a problem with the buds not opening this year. I am hoping it is the drought and not a new disease. We dug out more 'Hinodegiri'. The yard is looking better already! Now if we just start getting some rain.



Doug Jolley auctioning off one of Austin Kennell's donated books. Photo by Sandra McDonald.



R. austrinum, Best-In-Show. Photo by Sandra 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. Telephone numbers and towns are listed below.

MIDDLE ATLANTIC CHAPTER OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Memberships and renewals should be sent to Jane McKay, Membership Chairman, 3 Cobb's Ct., Palmyra, VA 22963.

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
Mid-Atlantic Rhododendron News and Notes
P.O. Box 268
Hampton, VA 23669