

MID- ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

Vol. XXI No. 2

June 1995

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Nov 10-12, 1995
Spring, 1996

Ramada Inn, Newport News, VA
Pipestem Park, Princeton, WV

FALL MEETING PLANS UNDERWAY - Sybil Przypek and Ray Doggett have been working on plans for the Fall Meeting. The featured speaker will be Dr. L. Clarence Towe, an expert on native azaleas. A trip to the Norfolk Botanical Gardens and other points of interest will also be on the agenda. Be sure to mark your calendar and reserve the weekend of November 10 to 12, 1995 for this meeting.

SPRING MEETING IN FAIRFAX HAS GOOD ATTENDANCE - The District Meeting hosted by Potomac Valley Chapter on May 5th and 6th was quite successful with many MAC members attending. Speakers, garden tours, plant sales and flower show were all great fun as well as educational. Our own Rosa Carter won Best in Show at the Rhododendron and Azaleas Show with a spray of 'Ormsby', a Robert Gartrell azalea. Ed Reiley won best Rhododendron with 'Harold Amateis'.

The garden tours included the beautiful McCrillis mature rhododendron and azalea garden, Jack Ayers garden, featuring many dwarf conifers as well as rhododendrons and azaleas, Jean and Norman Beaudry's garden in Bethesda with many rare treasures as well as large rhododendrons and azaleas, Meadowlark Gardens, which is a fairly new park, and the Louer's azaleas garden, featuring countless varieties of evergreen azaleas. MAC President Ray Doggett said he was in overload with the beauty of the gardens on tour.

Speakers were Hank Shannon of the Princeton Chapter who spoke about his trips to Germany and visits with hybridizer Hans Hachmann, and Richard Gustafson, also of the Princeton Chapter, who spoke about The Sandwich Club and showed slides of Dexter and related rhododendrons.

MAC held a seedling sale at which \$225.25 was raised for the Research Foundation. Potomac Valley Chapter had a P4M sale with many new varieties of rhododendrons, azaleas and companion plants available.

MAC had a meeting of the general membership on Sunday morning to hold its election. The officers elected for two year terms and directors for three year terms are:

President -	Ray Doggett	Directors:	Caroline Watts
Vice President -	Doug Jolley		Ronny Brents
Secretary -	Ray Brush		Jane McKay

Treasurer - Rosa Carter

The last page of this newsletter lists the telephone numbers for all officers and directors, including the directors still serving unexpired terms.

A bylaws change was also voted on at the meeting. The wording of Article 5 dealing with filling vacancies was changed from "The Board of Directors may elect a replacement to fill the remaining term of any vacancy" to "The governing body may appoint a replacement to fill the remaining of any vacancy until the next membership meeting at which time the vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term by a majority vote of the members present and voting." The motion to adopt the bylaw change was seconded and carried.

President Doggett reported that a memorial committee is being appointed to plan an appropriate memorial for our departed friend and President Terry Sheuchenko.

The next board meeting will be at Gloucester Point, Virginia, on August 12.

TWO BRONZE MEDALS AWARDED BY MAC AT SPRING MEETING -

MAC presented to Deborah Sauer a Bronze Medal Award in recognition of her service to the chapter over twenty years, her participation in many meetings, flower shows and board meetings. She served as flower show chairman several times, judged flower shows and compiled our Flower Show Book. She and David also generously opened their garden and home for numerous tours and meetings, including the 1988 National Meeting.

MAC presented to David Sauer a Bronze Medal Award in recognition of his service to the chapter over twenty years, for his slide presentations at meetings of collections of B.Y. Morrison's azaleas and other outstanding photography. He and Debbie have also generously opened their garden and home for numerous tours and meetings, including the 1988 National Meeting.

NOTES ON MEMBERS - Robert Porter received the Virginia Tree Farmer of the Year Award.

Austin Kennell received a letter from **Barbara Storms**, widow of former MAC member **Bill Storms** in which she said "Please convey my thanks to the members of the MAC for their kind contribution to the Endowment Fund in memory of Bill."

ALDERMAN LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA RECEIVES CONTRIBUTIONS -

The University of Virginia Library has received two gifts totaling \$75 for the Rhododendron and Azalea Fund in memory of Terry Sheuchenko.

MAC NURSERY UPDATE - by Doug Jolley

The delivery of 16 native azaleas to the James Madison University Arboretum and 15 azaleas to the Blue Ridge Community College in Weyer's Cave, Virginia brings the number of plants donated by MAC to 192. At last fall's meeting, the Museum of Frontier Culture in Staunton, Virginia received a number of native azaleas.

The plantings at West Virginia Wesleyan College and JMU have been particularly successful. The planting at WWC in Buckhannon, WV is located at the center of the campus and is adjacent to Wesley Chapel which is the visual landmark and functional center of the campus. The three year old planting consists of 34 species and hybrids of native azaleas and comes into full bloom at graduation time. All the progeny of the cross *R. atlanticum* x KnapHill 'Rosella' are particularly

attractive. The *R. calendulaceum* x *R. austrinum* cross and the native *R. prinophyllum* offer fragrance as well as beauty to the planting. All plants bloomed last spring after enduring winter temperatures which dipped below -20 degree F.

The JMU Arboretum has grown by leaps and bounds. Curator Norlyn Bodkin and MAC member Ron Brown have procured hundreds of rhododendrons and azaleas of which 50 are MAC plants.

I was able to observe one of the goals of these plantings last spring when a camera enthusiast was intently focused upon a yellow and orange truss of a *R. calendulaceum* x *R. austrinum* cross.

Hopefully, in their various settings these plantings will afford people the opportunity to enjoy as well as become acquainted with our native azaleas, rhododendrons in general and the American Rhododendron Society.

MEMBERS OF THE MIDDLE ATLANTIC CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY MAKE LARGE AZALEA CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY ARBORETUM IN HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA - by Dr. Norlyn Bodkin, Curator.

Sandra and Kenneth McDonald, owners of Le-Mac Nurseries, Inc. in Hampton, Virginia have donated over 250 rhododendrons and azaleas to the James Madison University Arboretum in Harrisonburg, Virginia. The 125-acre arboretum, located on the campus of James Madison University, is a show place for Virginia native species and members of the genus *Rhododendron* and some other members of the family Ericaceae. The University Arboretum was established in 1985 and is the only on-campus arboretum at a state school in Virginia. The plantings were done during the fall of 1994 and spring of 1995 and according to Dr. Norlyn Bodkin, Director of the JMU Arboretum, "We have an instant azalea garden of many different and unique varieties." Most of the plants were over five feet tall and have added a much needed color component to the Arboretum. The Azalea Garden will be named in honor of the McDonalds.

Dr. Douglas Jolley and his MAC Nursery, which consists of the West Virginia MAC members Harry and Betty Wise, Frank Pelurie, the Aitkins, Jarretts, Mike Breiding and Jim and Doris Boyer and Davita Jolley, have contributed seven different species of rhododendrons, a total of 34 plants over the past three years.

MAC member Ron Brown is a very active volunteer at the Arboretum and has done a lot of work helping to dig plants for use at the Arboretum on many of the plant "expeditions" Dr. Bodkin has made.

The JMU Arboretum is a complex of gardens including a large native wildflower species garden, a perennial garden, a bulb garden, a shale barren rock garden with endemic species, and a large natural Oak-Hickory Forest Association covering many of the gentle slopes.

Dr. Bodkin is deeply appreciative of the contributions from members of the ARS for this new Azalea Garden in furthering the development of the Arboretum.

Some of the rhododendrons in the collection include: *R. prunifolium*, *R. mucronulatum*, *R. reticulatum*, *R. alabamense*, *R. arborescens*, *R. austrinum*, *R. calendulaceum*, *R. dauricum*, *R. prinophyllum*, *R. yedoense* var. *poukhanense*, *R. kaempferi* hybrids, Balta, miscellaneous hardy evergreen azalea hybrids and some named varieties of rhododendrons.

LYME DISEASE UPDATE - *The Avant Gardener* reports that a vaccine for Lyme disease has been developed for dogs, but one for humans is not expected until at least 1997. This tick-born bacterial infection has spread throughout the Northeast, North Central and Pacific Coast regions. Early indications of infection are a rash (often in bull's eye form) and flu-like symptoms. Untreated it can cause severe headaches, arthritis, and heart and nervous system disorders months to years later. About 80% of Lyme disease cases are caused by the bite of infected nymphs (the young tick which is almost too small to see). Wooded areas, brush, and tall grass and perennials are habitats of tick host animals such as mice and deer. Mowing and reducing leaf litter can reduce the risk of contact. Wide paths also reduce the danger.

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station at New Haven reports that lawns in full sun will harbor virtually no ticks even when tick densities are high in adjacent woods. A single spraying with the insecticide carbaryl (Sevin) in late May to early June will control the nymphs for most of the summer.

The *American Nurseryman* in its April 15 issue reports that the Lyme disease organism *Borrelia burgdorferi* is a threat to those who spend a significant amount of time outdoors. Psychiatric and neurological problems associated with Lyme disease, though more common than previously thought, are often overlooked or misdiagnosed. When the disease is recognized and treated promptly, most cases clear up quickly with little difficulty for the patient. The spirochete, which causes a red circular rash with clear center shortly after infection, should be treated with antibiotics early so that it can not invade the central nervous system. If untreated it can invade the brain and spinal cord and cause meningitis, encephalitis and pain or loss of sensation. Months or years can pass before signs of neurological infection appear. Such symptoms include memory loss, moodiness, depression, hallucinations, panic attacks, paranoia, manic depression, seizures and dementia. In rare cases, the spirochete can attack the protective sheath around nerves, producing symptoms that resemble those of multiple sclerosis.

Your editor is passing along this information not to frighten, but rather that others who do not have access to this information can be watchful and get prompt medical treatment if necessary.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS -

Georgina B. Field

1330 Fernleaf Dr., Richmond, VA 22901

Timothy Sams, Virginia Gardening Guide

114 E. Main St. #301, Charlottesville, VA22902

THE GARDEN - by Sandra McDonald

Our mild winter this year caused at least in part by the *El Nino* in the Pacific Ocean, gave us a great display of rhododendron and azalea blooms this spring. In the Tidewater area the average December temperature was 6.5 degrees F. above normal and January was 6.2 degrees warmer than normal. February was only 0.8 degrees above normal. We had no snow in Tidewater.

There is a lot of deadheading to do in the garden at this point because of the heavy bloom this spring. Pruning of evergreen azaleas, if necessary, should be done now if you have not done it already. Since our garden is not very large, I have some evergreen azalea pruning to do every year so the plants do not get out of hand and too large for their allotted space. I find a light pruning also helps remove old blossoms which hang on the bushes. Azaleas are more difficult to dead head than rhododendrons so many of them just have to grow out around their old flowers. The brown blooms

are unsightly for a while, but they do not seem to inhibit bud formation for the next year like old seed heads on rhododendrons do. The kalmias put on a wonderful show this year. Some of Dick Jaynes varieties and some of my own seedlings really had a heavy display of flowers. I am sure I will have to deadhead them because I don't see how they could have the strength to bloom much next year after such a display this year.

One especially beautiful combination in the garden this year was 'Scintillation' blooming at the same time as *Chionanthus virginicus*. They have been growing side by side for several years, but this year was the first time I noticed what a wonderful combination they made. Several selections of *R. nakaharae* are blooming with several of Ben Morrison's salmon Backacres as I write this at the end of May. Only a few days ago the brilliant red rhododendron 'Ann Hardgrove' and dark red 'Moser's Maroon' were also blooming just behind the red and salmon azaleas and made a lovely picture.

New plants from the Spring Meeting P4M or other sources should be planted as early as possible or put into larger pots if you intend to carry them over for fall planting. MAC member Mike Andruczyk, Greenhouse Supervisor at the Norfolk Botanical Gardens, suggests in the May/June issue of the NBG Newsletter that plants less than three years old should be watered if there is no rain for a week. Mike says "give each plant's entire root zone 1 inch of water. Measure 1 inch on a can or jar and place within the sprinkler area. Time how long it takes to fill the can or jar to the 1 inch level. If it takes one hour, then you know you'll need to water for an hour during a rainless week. You may have to water more often, depending on the plant and weather." A few other suggestions from Mike are to "continue to remove suckers and watersprouts from trees," and to "cut and remove unwanted weed trees, shrubs and vines, large-stemmed items and poison ivy. Cut close to the ground and paint the "stump" with an herbicide like Roundup. It will give better control and mean less injury to surrounding plants. Plus, you use less chemicals."

MAC member Kunso Kim, Curator at Norfolk Botanical Gardens, suggests planning your garden for year-round interest. He suggests that you "plan your garden now so that there will always be plants that draw your attention." "Incorporate plants with fragrant flowers, fall color and interesting bark or stem features. Consider a few woody specimens to form the backbone of your garden." (Some rhododendrons and azaleas meet these requirements, such as *R. fortunei* for fragrance, and some of the deciduous azaleas and some evergreen azaleas for fall foliage color.) He suggests "Korean Stewartia with its camellia-like white flowers with prominent yellow stamens at the center. The blossoms cover the entire tree in June and July. Beautifully mottled bark is an added bonus." For fall he suggests "'Harvest Gold' crabapple if you have a large space. A small tree of about 20 feet, it will be abundantly covered with single white flowers in the spring followed by golden fruit in the fall. 'Red Jade' crabapple is a weeping variety that produces bright red fruit."

Kunso also suggests "'Winter Red' Winterberry is an excellent deciduous variety of native holly. Its bright-red berries, ripening in September, last well into February. American Holly grows into a specimen tree with lustrous green leaves and red berries. Remember that holly bears imperfect flowers, so plant both male and female plants to ensure heavy fruit production." For winter Kunso says "'Heritage' river birch has beautiful exfoliating bark which reveals a cinnamon-brown color. Planted in favorable conditions, it grows to 40-60 feet tall." Fragrant Wintersweet is another good winter shrub. "In late January and February, a 10-ft. tall Wintersweet shrub produces yellow flowers with maroon rings at the centers."

For spring Kunso suggests magnolias, especially “one or more of the Gresham Hybrids, such as ‘Heaven Scent,’ ‘Raspberry Ice,’ or ‘Sulphur Cockatoo’.” “Other varieties gaining popularity are the “Girl” magnolias.” They bloom late enough to avoid spring frost damage.

MULCH AND MORE MULCH - We all know that mulch is very important for growing good rhododendrons and azaleas to keep soil cool in summer and to conserve moisture. In nature dead leaves and plant litter fulfill the plant’s need for mulch in forest ecosystems. In prairies grass layers build up over the generations. In deserts gravel tops off the sandy soil. Nature seldom leaves her soil bare.

Mulches smother out weeds and prevents weed seeds that do blow in from germinating. Deeper mulches block more weeds. Several layers of newspaper put down before applying mulch provides an additional weed barrier. One person who uses this method successfully is George Ring of the Potomac Valley Chapter. This is a good method of recycling newspapers.

Mulches also conserve moisture in that they shade the soil from the hot sun and slow down evaporation from the soil. They improve the aeration of the soil as they decompose. Mulches help maintain a constant soil temperature or at least stabilize the fluctuations of soil temperatures in winter and help prevent heaving of plants from the ground by frequent winter freezing and thawing of the soil. Mulch is also the great coverup and improves the look of the garden by covering up plant debris, rocks, etc.

There are many different kinds of mulch. Gravel is sometimes used in rock gardens as a mulch. Shredded or finely ground hardwood bark or pinebark is frequently used for mulch for flower gardens. It is attractive and improves the soil as it decays. It may require extra nitrogen fertilizer if there is much wood in it as it will rob the soil of its nitrogen and your plants will suffer. Hay and straw are sometimes used as mulch, but not usually in flower gardens or shrub borders. Grass clippings can be used as mulch, but should be applied less than one inch deep to keep the clippings from matting and preventing the penetration of water. They can also heat up the soil and damage if too thick. Fallen leaves make a good mulch for azaleas and rhododendrons, especially if finely chopped in a shredder or by a lawnmower. Shredded leaves may mat together if applied too thickly and prevent water from getting to your plants. Compost can be used as a mulch, but does decompose rather quickly. Pine needles make a good mulch, especially needles from the finer needled species. They stay loose for easy water penetration and have an acidifying effect on the soil below.

In Tidewater Virginia we have used peanut hulls for mulch. In some areas cocoa hulls are used or even groundup corncoobs. Corncoobs usually require extra nitrogen. In the deep South sugar cane or bagasse is often used, especially by nurseries.

Most mulches should be spread to a depth of 2 or 3 inches unless there is a tendency to mat together in which case it should be applied only about 1 inch deep. Some mulches like hay, chopped leaves and compost can be applied up to 4 inches deep. Mulch should be applied out to the drip line of a shrub such as an azalea or rhododendron. Oak leaves and pine needles lower the pH of the soil and so are good for acid loving plants like azaleas and rhododendrons.

WEED CONTROL TIPS - Roundup herbicide is not often used in the winter months because people don’t think it will work. In western Oregon, Roundup works every month of the year, the

primary factor being whether the weed is green or not. Barbara Hall reports that she and Alton used Roundup on chickweed on a warm day in December and found that it worked. Chickweed is a winter weed and it makes sense that the herbicide would work on it in the winter.

Some years ago Dr. Frank Goin of University of Maryland reported that less Roundup was needed to kill some weeds as the weather got warmer. In spring a good concentration was needed to kill weeds, but as the weather progressed to hot summer and plants were photosynthesizing and sending sugars down to their roots for storage, not as much herbicide was required to kill the weeds. The weeds he was working with must have been summer weeds, the weeds that most of us usually think of when talking about weeds.

MIDDLE ATLANTIC CHAPTER OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President	Ray Doggett	804-642-9190
Vice-President	Douglas Jolley, DDS	304-765-2608(H) 304-765-5551(O)
Secretary	Ray Brush	703-948-6436
Treasurer	Rosa Carter	804-232-6214
Directors:	Robert Porter	703-948-4136
	John Buschmann	804-581-3977
	Walter Przypek	804-898-9159
	Alton Hall	804-693-4433
	Sharon Collins	703-350-2791
	William Bedwell	804-358-6362
	Ronny Brents	703-337-1389
	Caroline Watts	703-948-6479(H) 703-948-5711(O)
	Jane McKay	804-589-9630
Past President	Terry Sheuchenko	(deceased)
	George McLellan	804-693-4253
Newsletter Editor	Sandra McDonald	804-723-3313(O) 804-723-5612(H)
District 9 Director	Jean Beaudry	301-365-0130
Alternate Director	Sandra McDonald	804-723-5612
Technical Advisor	Dr. Erik Nilsen	703-231-5674(O)

Sandra McDonald, Ph.D., Editor
 Mid-Atlantic Rhododendron News and Notes
 P.O. Box 268
 Hampton VA 23669