

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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Rhododendron Society

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Sept 29 – Oct 1, 2000

Elkins, WV

April 20–22, 2001

Comfort Inn, Gloucester, VA

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>

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

The garden is lush this summer thanks to ample rain in April, May, and June. At the end of July it started up again after a short dry spell.

If you remember, in the past issues of *News and Notes* I complained about lack of buds on our rhododendrons. This year we had abundant flowers thanks to heavy doses of phosphate. Unfortunately, I had forgotten about one of the garden chores I dislike, deadheading. Actually it comes right behind spraying and weeding on the list. Usually it's extremely hot as it was this year when deadheading season arrived. In addition ticks were extremely plentiful this spring. I don't mind faded trusses that snap off easily, but most of them don't, not to mention the sticky mess all over your hands (rubbing alcohol on dry hands helps remove the mess). Enough of my complaints. Next I'll probably be upset because I will have to start pruning some of that lush growth.



Jane McKay

The garden is very green at this time of year (late July). A few bright spots are two plants of *R. prunifolium*, one pale orange, the other deep orange-red. Also in bloom is a plant labeled 'Late Yellow arborescens C12 Kehr', which is lovely and fragrant. The top petal is yellow and the rest of the flower is pale yellow-pink. Daylilies are just finishing and were exceptional this year. Caladiums, coleus, and impatiens, along with

whatever hosta the voles left alone will provide the main color for the rest of the summer.

A GARDENER'S DILEMMA by Bill Bedwell

Years ago I thought 'George Tabor' was the most beautiful azalea I ever saw. Some of my original plants turned out to be 'Formosa' but I liked that too. They were planted in one of my original beds which was an ideal location for growing. Also in the area is the Glenn Dale, 'Echo', and 'Mucronatum' often called 'Ledfolia Alba', 'Indica Alba', but I think a more appropriate synonym would be "White Fly Bait."

Anyway, now the area is such a jungle I can't get into it. No amount of pruning seems to solve the problem for more than a couple of years before I am again faced with massive pruning. I can't even see the beautiful rhododendrons that were supposed to be the background. They are taller than the azaleas, but the azaleas are taller than I am. These are definitely plants for a big park or big estate with lots of space to use up.



Bill Bedwell

The other white azalea giving relief to this group is 'Rose Greeley', but its growth habit is less gross so it has been overcome by the rankly growing 'Formosa' and 'Mucronatum'. Other than the rank growth problem, only momentarily subdued by pruning, the beautiful 'Formosa' and 'George Tabor' tend to shed old flowers instead of

continuing to display their ugly, faded glory. I suppose it is a case of the good, the bad, and the ugly, to borrow a book title from the 50s.

I just have not had the time to grub everything up. It will be a chore. If I take the time to do planting, maintenance falls behind. I guess I have gotten over my limit...or age has caught up with me. I still have the trunk of a dead pine tree in that area and it is covered thickly with ivy that came from a sprig that Rosalie Nachman gave me on my first visit to her garden. The ivy has pretty foliage that resembles maple leaf, and I think the ivy is holding up the dead tree. About ten feet of the top fell off over winter, but it went into a white Glenn Dale azalea, 'Shelia', instead of 'Formosa'. There was no significant damage, but I have not had time to remove the carcass so that is another impediment to getting into the jungle.

I have another jungle in the middle of the garden that is all Kurume azaleas and not as bad, but I must decide if I really want to get rid of 'Pink Pearl' that is beautiful when it flowers but an ugly mass of dead flowers in the center of everything when the rhododendrons start up. My original plan was to keep the center of the garden with something in bloom from early to late, but dead flowers detract from all later stuff. I think it would have been better to have separate sections with each bed in bloom all at once. My later blooming plants do tend to be in the back part of the garden.

I am now repeating that scheme (or mistake???) of having something in flower all through the season up near the house in the side yard. My very earliest blooming varieties tend to be there, with one or two things in flower through the main season then several for late season, then summer blooming plants and fall blooming plants, with a few fall camellias continuing into winter, weather permitting. So far the only things that hold ugly flowers are the kalmia and rhododendrons when they get petal blight. Without any spray that is now a problem. With spray, most of the varieties in this bed drop their old flowers nicely.

It is amazing how we come to hate the plants that grow really well, but they are so beautiful when in bloom it is hard to get rid of them. I have a friend in Richmond who planted a 'Constance Fry' rose by the front entrance to his house and it has formed a jungle that is spectacular the one time of the year when it blooms, but an impediment to getting in and out all year, especially when

weighted down with flowers and leaves. It threatens to cover the house. Working on it is horrible and prone to cause injury from thorns or worse. That's another gardener's dilemma, and he has not yet come to terms with it!

REPORT OF DISTRICT NINE DIRECTOR

for ARS Board Meeting of 24 May 2000 by Sandra McDonald

I attended the ARS Board of Directors meeting in Burlington, Massachusetts, on 24 May 2000. The following points were highlights of the meeting:

- ARS now has a new Chapter, the Swedish Chapter, with 36 members.
- Mike Stewart, Western Vice President and Membership chair told us that membership is down 10.8%. He suggested that one way to keep the membership we have would be to work on chapter projects where all members have a common interest along with follow-up on those who do not renew.
- *Journal* Editor Sonja Nelson is looking into publishing a new 10-year index for the *Journal*.
- Herb Spady has been working on converting old *ARS Bulletins* and *Journals* into electronic media. He hopes to eventually put them into a CD ROM format.
- The ARS Seed List will be placed on-line as well as advertisement for Research project proposals.
- Nominations for officers will be made in the fall. The membership can nominate someone by submitting a petition with 25 member signatures.
- Jerry Reynolds is the new chairperson for Publicity and Public Relations. He will be following up with all chapters to try and put together press packages.
- Ted Stecki, chairperson for Budget and Finance Committee presented the proposed budget. He said there would be a deficit of between \$5,000 and \$10,000, depending on the number of members we have. He encouraged the District Directors to follow up with non-renewed memberships. Donations from chapters were up this year.
- The make-up of the Executive Committee was discussed. Those on the committee consist of President, Eastern and Western Vice

Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, three Directors nominated by the president and approved by the Board, and the immediate Past President.

- The decline in the number of members attending annual meetings was discussed. Some factors that may influence attendance are frequency of meetings, costs, and length of meetings. President Lynn Watts referred this problem to committee.
- The issue of whether individuals and companies can use the ARS logo on personal Web sites came up. Our logo is copyrighted and cannot be used.
- The next Board of Directors meeting will be held in conjunction with the Western Regional meeting in mid September on Vancouver Island, B.C.

From Officers and Committee Reports:

OARS (Office of the ARS) would like to offer U.S. chapters the option of handling renewals at the chapter level or having the office renew at \$2.50 per member.

The new OARS Web site has greatly improved correspondence between the Executive Director and the Chapters. ARS has a Spider Web with 20 charter spiders now on the web to give members and the public better access to information about the genus *Rhododendron*. When calls come in or e-mails come in, they are referred to spiders selected by zip code.

The restricted grants received were used to print colorful new educational brochures and hang tags for plants. ARS also published a new colorful membership brochure.

A written report from Jay Murray, Registrar of Plant Names, reported she had received 136 applications in 1999. She asks that previously unregistered names in the trade be registered. She asks the District Directors to remind their chapter members of the need for the Society to add to and maintain a stable nomenclature system for the genus *Rhododendron*. The application form and instructions are available by e-mail, and the Royal Horticultural Society is still providing certificates of registration without charge.

Betty Spady is receiving positive feedback for the electronic "R&A NEWS". Visit the site at <http://members.aol.com/randanews/news.html> and read what is new in ARS. There were 5800 hits in

three months. Old issues are archived at the UVA Alderman Library Web site:

<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm>.

Thanks for the opportunity I have had to serve as your District Nine Director. My term ended at the close of the May 24 meeting and Bill Mangels is your new District Director. Donald Voss is the new Alternate District Director. I still have my two committees: the Archives Committee and the Editorial Committee, and I remain a member of the Research Committee. If I can be of any help to you in these areas, please contact me. I am always seeking letters and manuscripts about Rhododendrons to add to the Rhododendron manuscripts collection at the University of Virginia Library.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

The Rhododendron Fund at the Alderman Library received a contribution in memory of Gen. Robert Porter from Harry Wise.

Austin Kennell donated his collection of *ARS Journals* to the MAC to use as they wished. The Board decided that the Virginia Tech Library would be a good place to put them since the UVA library already has a set. VT Librarian Margaret Merrill picked them up from Austin in August and is very pleased that VT now has the collection of Journals.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

Maude Henne, ., Charlottesville,
VA 22947

Carolyn Segree, , Gambrills,
MD 21054-1835

William Sneed, , Earlysville, VA 22936

DECEASED MEMBERS

William Person of Charlottesville died July 10, 2000.

ARBORETUM MUSTILA IN FINLAND by Sandra McDonald

During August, Ken and I made a trip to Scandinavia to visit our son and his wife and do some sight seeing. One of our stops was at



Ken McDonald and Dr. Irma Tigerstedt. Photo by Sandra McDonald.



Rhododendron and other plants at Mustila. Photo by Sandra McDonald.



Sandra McDonald and head gardener at Mustila. Photo by Ken McDonald

Arboretum Mustila at Elimäki, Finland, which is roughly halfway between Helsinki and Lappeenranta, the town where our son lives. I had contacted ARS member Dr. Peter Tigerstedt earlier by e-mail hoping that we would be able to meet up with him at some point. Ken and I had met Peter and Irma Tigerstedt at the ARS meeting in Niagara Falls in 1998. However, it did not work out as I had hoped because during the two days we were in Helsinki we did not have a car at our disposal, and he and his wife were away at the Arboretum, and on the Saturday we finally did get to visit the Arboretum, he was away in Stockholm. However, we did get to visit with his wife Irma, a medical doctor, who was busy picking black

currents when we arrived.

I was pleasantly surprised with Arboretum Mustila. It was founded in 1902 by the councillor Axel Fredrick Tigerstedt, Peter Tigerstedt's grandfather, as a test site for exotic conifer species. About 70 conifer species, more than 160 deciduous tree species and 700 to 800 species of shrubs, vines, bulbs and perennial plants have been planted in the Arboretum's 120 hectares. Axel Tigerstedt died in 1926 and was succeeded by his son Carl Gustaf, who started introductions of woody ornamentals and perennials. He also planted the first rhododendrons for which Mustila has become famous. Carl Gustaf Tigerstedt became a well-known dendrologist. He died in 1957, and his work was continued by his two sons, Axel and Peter Tigerstedt, who in 1981 made



Sign showing the way to the rhododendrons. Photo by Sandra McDonald.



Ken McDonald and *Rhododendron brachycarpum* ssp. *tigerstedtii* at Mustila Arboretum. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

the Arboretum a national conservation area and in 1982, established the Arboretum Mustila Foundation. Until recently the Arboretum was open only to scientists and keen horticulturists, but today it is open to all interested in its unique beauty.



Brian McDonald in arboretum forest. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

Many of the trees are planted in large stands or

groves, resembling forests. Seed from trees from such places as the European eastern Alps, the region between the White Sea and the Ural Mountains, Hokkaido, Japan, and the Kurile Islands, and central British Columbia, Canada, have been prime areas from which to import seed.

The Arboretum is especially famous for its rhododendrons, which make up a colorful display in June in the Rhododendron Valley when hundreds of the plants of more than 50 species from around the world are blooming. Our visit was not timed to see this beautiful sight, but we still enjoyed the peace and beauty of the Arboretum.

The well-known *Rhododendron brachycarpum* ssp. *Tigerstedtii*, largely used as a parent when breeding hardy cultivars, originates from the Korean Diamond Mountains.

Thousands of tourists come to see the Rhododendron Valley in mid-June. There are about 40 species and many cultivars growing, a total of about 8,000 plants. The older plants were planted in the 1930s and the most recent in 1998. The

rhododendrons are sheltered by *Pinus sylvestris*.

In 1990 the Azalea Slope was renovated and 4000 azaleas were planted in the first five years. The plant material was raised at Helsinki



Hydrangea paniculata 'Mustila'. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

University where there is a large azalea breeding program. Parents of many of the hybrids are *R. luteum*, *R. canadense*, and *R. japonicum*.

Other interesting areas of the Arboretum include the Terrace, which was built by Russian prisoners of war during the 1940s. *Microbiota decussata*, *Thuja koraiensis*, *Tsuga diversifolia*, *Acer sieboldianum*, *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Mustila' and many other plants grow here. Stands of Serbian spruce and Japanese larch grow south of the Terrace.

The Oak Forest was planted in the 1920s. It is one of the best seed sources for extremely hardy oaks. The Hazelnut Grove contains over 100 hazelnut bushes planted between 1930 and 1940. Other hardwoods can be found in this area. The

Southern Slope is a warm fertile area where *Tsuga diversifolia* thrives in the shade of the almost 120 foot tall Douglas firs. Walnuts, oaks, ash, and hornbeam are also found here. The Scots pines shelter *Maackia amurensis*, *Ilex rugosa*, *Pterocarya rhoifolia*, *Phellodendron amurense*, *Cladrastis kentukea*, *Aralia elata*, *Fagus grandifolia*, *Acer triflorum*, *Hamamelis virginiana*, *Actinidia kolomikta*, *Magnolia sieboldii*, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* and many others. The north slope is the area where the first trials with conifer species were conducted at the start of the 1900s. The first stands of *Pinus contorta* and *Pseudotsuga menziesii* were established in 1910. Stands of *Larix sibirica* date to 1928, and *Abies sibirica* and *Picea engelmannii* to 1921, and *Picea glauca*, *Pinus peuce*, and *Larix*



Brian and Ken McDonald at Mustila Arboretum. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

decidua to 1911.

If we have another opportunity to visit Finland, I hope we can go in mid-June and see the rhododendrons blooming in this peaceful and

beautiful arboretum.

CONFESSIONS OF A PLANT ADDICT

This article by Amanda Offers is reprinted with permission from the Alpine Garden Club of B.C. Vol. 43, No. 4 Bulletin, September 2000.

It has been many years now since I fell victim to this particular addiction and I feel that it is time that I share some of my coping mechanisms with others of like bent. I do not intend to encourage people to fight this particular addiction merely to provide some of my best strategies for avoiding conflict with family and friends who feel that it should be curbed or – *shudder* – cured.

In my younger years I dated a lawyer for a while who taught me that deniability is what it's all about, i.e. if you must speak at all, deny everything. Using this principle, I recommend the following:

1. Do not under any circumstances leave receipts for plants where they can be found. If you do not have access to a paper shredder, the preferred method for dealing with plant receipts is to bury them in the compost pile. They will biodegrade and help you to fertilize your garden in future. This has the obvious benefit of avoiding questions like, "What did you buy at (insert the nursery of your choice?)" No proof, no case. We work under the British system of jurisprudence where the suspect is innocent until proven guilty; the burden of proof lying with the prosecution.
2. Do not under any circumstances use a charge card! You can destroy the charge slip, and even the credit card statement, but the trail remains within the charge company's computer and, as a computer professional, I can assure you these systems are not as secure as they would like you to think!
3. Cheques are dicey. Avoid them when at all possible. See #2.
4. Always keep a somewhat untidy collection of plants in nursery pots sitting around and immediately hide new acquisitions among them. By using this procedure when a loved one at some later date says, "I don't remember that plant", you can say with a perfectly straight face, "Oh, that's been there for ages, I just haven't figured out where I want to plant it yet."

Terms like "ages" or "for a while" are suitably vague and can be interpreted by you as meaning "anything more than an hour" and by the loved one in the usual manner.

5. If you've actually purchased plants that you already know the destination for, plant these immediately! Have a good look at the condition of the soil or top dressing of neighboring plants and be sure to disguise your fresh planting appropriately. I keep a good selection of top dressings, old leaves, etc. around for these purposes. It is also important to have the proper tools for cosmetic work, tweezers, brushes, etc. In this manner, by the time anyone spots the plant, the slugs, etc. will have had a chance to make it looked settled in and you can reply to enquiries as above.
6. It is advisable to keep stacks of various sized nursery pots around as well so that emptied pots can be hidden amongst these. Try to avoid leaving fresh dirt on pots you are hiding.
7. I suppose one of the more obvious things to do is to try and bring your treasures home when there is no one around. This avoids a lot of unnecessary questions and furtive sneaking around and embarrassingly poor ad-lib comments like, "Plants, what plants? I was looking for the cat."

When all else fails, and it comes to direct confrontation, it is well to be prepared with a reasoned argument. Reckon up what your would-be interrogator has been spending a year on beer/cigarettes/shoes/fabric/ etc. and present him/her with these figures. . . Then point out that nowhere near that amount had been spent on your most recent purchase of plants (be careful on this one). As the *coup de grace* I pointed out that my habit improves the environment whereas his/hers does not. . . Silence should ensue.

So good luck and go forth and beautify our environment!

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.

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