

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Oct 11–13, 2002

Holiday Inn, Bluefield, WV

Apr 24–26, 2003

District Meeting, Washington, D.C. area
Meeting opens Thursday evening

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>

FALL MEETING 2002 IN BLUEFIELD, WV

by Frank Pelurie

Mark your calendars NOW! The Fall 2002 Middle Atlantic Chapter meeting is set for October 11 – 13, 2002, at the Holiday Inn On the Hill in Bluefield, West Virginia. This weekend should be the prime time for fall foliage so bring your cameras, binoculars and walking shoes. There are so many places that we could visit on Saturday that I honestly can't make up my mind which to choose. Within an hour's drive there is Burke's Garden, a high mountain valley that is scenic and that has on the eastern rim of its valley many native azaleas worth exploring. Then there is Brush Creek Falls, one of The Nature Conservancy preserves that has been set aside for its plants such as native yew, Canby's mountain lover and a few others. A little further away is another area acquired by the Nature Conservancy and now owned by the National Park Service, the New River Gorge National River's Sandstone Falls, again a very scenic area with some uncommon plants. While in this area it may even be possible to visit again the garden of David and Barbara Parmer. Harry Wise and I stopped in at their place for a visit early this past July and were surprised with all the changes to their garden. Another possibility about an hour and a half away from Bluefield is a place that I have not visited



yet, but have been wanting to for many years now. It's Breaks Interstate Park. I understand that it is very scenic and I suspect that there should be some *R. cumberlandense* growing in the area. I almost forgot this one, Bramwell, West Virginia. Bramwell was settled by wealthy coal mine owners at the end of the nineteenth century. It was once considered the richest small town in America. As many as nineteen millionaires and their families made their home here. The Victorian charm of Bramwell continues to enchant visitors who wish to explore it even to this day. Obviously we can not visit all the places I have mentioned in the one day available. At this time I am leaning towards developing three or four tours and then polling the group Friday evening at the meeting.

Our banquet speaker this year is Dr. Alex Niemiera, a Horticulture Professor at Virginia Tech who has been recommended to me by MAC members many times. I

have asked him to speak about his plant hunting expeditions in China. Also, sometime during the weekend Dr. Sandra McDonald will repeat the talk she presented on "Le-Mac: a Brief History and Its Introductions" at the ARS National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, this past Spring.

And, on Friday evening we are going to have two programs, one by Walter Przypek and the other by David Sauer on the P4M plants that will be available at the meeting.



As for the P4M plants, save plenty of space in your cars to take plants home. There are over 700 rooted cuttings in 6 inch azalea pots. You will be able to select from the entire group of New Kurume azaleas and a few others cut from the Sauer's garden, and a selection of cuttings taken from the Przypek's garden which will include a few of Walter's unnamed hybrids. I have been watching these plants flower since early this past winter and I can tell you, there are some very beautiful flowering plants in the P4M distribution this year. The plants are about the same size as those distributed last fall and each plant will be priced at only \$1 each. Why so cheap? Well the P4M program's purpose is to make available to chapter members outstanding, unusual and hard to come by plants, not make money for the chapter. So the plants are only priced to cover expenses. I hope you enjoy them as much as I have enjoyed rooting and watching them grow this past year.

The hotel facilities and their location are very nice; it's easy to find; and best of all the price is right.

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

Did I mention something in the last *News and Notes* about the drought being over? Was I ever wrong! Adding insult to injury was the heat. We had 27 days in July and 20 days in August over 90 degrees F. Most of those days were in the high 90s and at least ten days reached 100 degrees F. Add to that mixture under two inches total rain for July and two tenths of an inch up to August 28 when we were blessed with three inches of rain. We were fortunate that we were able to water up to August 30 without restrictions.



All in all we have fared fairly well. We have had quite a bit of dieback in many of our rhododendrons, more so on the ones in the sunniest locations where some of them also have sunburn. The evergreen azaleas are not showing any effects, but the deciduous azaleas have suffered. The leaves on the deciduous azaleas are almost completely burned, more so on the species than the hybrids. What has surprised me the most is that *R. periclyminoides (nudiflorum)*, which is native in our area, has suffered as much as the rest. I think they will all recover as the buds all look fine, and

the leaves on the tips of the branches are still green. Some of our young trees have dropped their leaves early. Our dwarf conifers are a mess, and I won't even mention what we used to call a lawn. I have to say we've been luckier than most. Our very, very expensive watering has paid off.

DUES INFORMATION by Jane McKay

During September you will receive your dues notice unless you are a life member or are paid through 2003. We ask that you send your dues in promptly. Despite the fact that it makes it easier for all involved in the dues process, it saves the chapter money if a second and third notice does not have to be sent.

Let me explain the dues procedure. When I receive your payment I deposit your check in the Chapter account. (I usually do this once a week.) I then fill out a transmittal form and send that along with the deposit slip to our treasurer, Debby Sauer. Debby sends the transmittal along to Dee Daneri, the Executive Director of the ARS with your dues minus the Chapter portion. Dee records your payment and notifies the *Journal* editor, Sonja Nelson, before December 1st or you do not receive your January *Journal*. As you can see this all takes time. Delays can happen in the procedure due to illness, vacations, holidays, etc. So PLEASE send in your dues promptly.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER

Marcus Simpson,

COPING WITH DROUGHT by David Lay

This is the worst summer I can remember since we moved to the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay 25 years ago. We have had 30 consecutive days over 90 degrees F and less than a quarter of an inch of rain in late July and August. Coming on top of an usually dry fall and winter, everything is suffering, even mature oaks.

We have lost small azaleas, perennials and Asiatic magnolias. Dogwoods, hostas, and ferns have been particularly hard hit, and one of our water-sensitive, weeping katsuras has bitten the dust. There is already extensive dieback on mature rhododendron and azaleas, and likely to be a good deal more over the next few months as the long term effects of severe stress become more apparent.

We have been doing several things to alleviate the problem in our drought-stricken five-acre garden.

Besides dragging hoses, we have been pruning extensively, removing dieback and shaping old gnarled azaleas that have been neglected and allowed to sprawl. We figure that with evergreens, cutting down transpiration through leaf surface reduction isn't a bad idea.

Drought has also forced us into some horticultural triage. Which plants are the rarest, which are unique mature specimens that could never be replaced in our lifetime? Are there plants we never particularly liked anyway, or are so marginal in our climate that they are hardly worth the extra care year after year?



Many deciduous plants cope with drought by premature leaf drop. We have hand-watered large and valuable Japanese maples but have left most deciduous azaleas, especially the natives, to fend for themselves. There are a few sentimental exceptions among the species that I cannot bear to see shrivel up. I have been hand-watering, the white-flowered or album forms of *R. weyrichii* and *R. kaempferi*, the rare *R. sanctum*, and a nine-foot dark red *R. prunifolium* Sandra McDonald gave us years ago. I have also assiduously watered two big yellow variegated dogwood and redbud 'Silver Cloud' with superb stippled white foliage.

Once we decide to water something we water deeply and continue to water regularly. Watering activates small feeder roots near the surface so we try to wet the soil at least 6 inches down. Occasional superficial watering undoubtedly does more harm than good. We have discovered the most dramatic downside to even deep watering is that it attracts voles. When soil is like concrete these critters seek out wet, soft earth with tender roots.

What next? Perhaps a “good” hurricane.

LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE by Sandra McDonald

Your editor recently discovered an article about the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting several cases of Legionnaires' disease (*Legionella longbeachae*) on the West Coast a

couple of years ago. A report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* said these would be the first recorded transmissions of Legionnaires' disease from potting soil in the U.S. Several cases were previously reported in Australia and Japan in recent years.

Legionnaire's disease is an acute, respiratory infection that causes flulike symptoms including fever, headache, fatigue and body aches that develop into pneumonia. Legionnaires' Disease (LD) was first reported in 1976. Outbreaks have been associated with airborne transmission of *Legionella* bacteria through cooling towers, showers, and other aerosolizing devices. However, most Legionnaires' Disease cases are sporadic, and the source and mode of infection in many cases are unknown.

Australia had issued a health warning to all gardeners to take precautions when using potting mix.

Persons using potting soil and who wish to take precautions that may reduce the very small potential risk of illness even further may consider the following recommendations:

- open potting mix bags with care to avoid inhaling airborne potting mix
- moisten the contents of the bag on opening by making a small opening and inserting a garden hose to dampen the potting mix
- wear gloves to avoid transferring potting mix from hand to mouth
- always wash hands after handling potting mix, even if gloves have been worn
- and take the same precautions when handling soil, peat, mulch and garden composts.

More information about Legionnaires' Disease is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/>.

TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS, AND FILMING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF NORTH CAROLINA AND TENNESSEE by Sandra McDonald

The Species Study Group's annual trek to the mountains was quite eventful this year. Ken and I left Hampton for Franklin, North Carolina, on Sunday, June 16, 2002, to meet up with other Species Study Group members. The logistics for this trip were the most complicated of any trips we have done

so far since George McLellan had planned to meet a number of people at different points on the tour.

I had been corresponding by e-mail with Dr. Hartwig Schepker, a horticultural consultant, in Hannover, Germany, who was working with a documentary film crew from the company fact + film in Bremen, Germany, to produce a movie for a famous rhododendron park in Bremen. I had not met Hartwig, but was helping him with some contacts in the Southeast U.S. and trying to get a few things together he would need when he got here and also arrange for him to meet with our group for hiking Gregory Bald. Hartwig had been to Borneo and then to China already in the spring, filming rhododendrons with two of the film crew. They flew directly back from China, made a quick stop in Germany, and came on to Knoxville, Tennessee.

Ken and I met George McLellan and Jim Brant at the Microtel in Franklin, North Carolina. They had already been to Georgia to see native azaleas in a couple of places and had transported Bill Saunders and JoAnne Ortiz to the Appalachian Trail because Bill and Joanne wanted to do some hiking and had to leave their car where they would end their hike.

On Monday, June 17, Anita and Doug Burke



George McLellan, Doug & Anita Burke, Ken McDonald & Jim Brant on Mt. LeConte.

joined us in North Carolina where we visited Wayah Bald with *R. arborescens* practically at its peak bloom. We saw some interesting flower forms this year, including many with yellow blotches which they are not supposed to have according to some definitions of the species. We hiked a 4.8 mile section of the Appalachian Trail ending at Burningtown Gap. We did see a few likely hybrids of *R. cumberlandense* and *R. arborescens*, around Copper Ridge Bald. We had approached Copper from the opposite direction than we normally did in hopes of seeing different plants, but we only saw a

few unusual ones. We got in late Monday night to Maggie Valley where we planned to stay for two nights.

Tuesday morning we got up with the chickens and headed for Mt. LeConte, a place we hadn't visited before. The trail was lovely, dark, and woodsy, but there were few blooms of any kind. We crossed several one-log bridges. We went as far as the stone arch and turned back because of insufficient time to do the whole trail and see the *R. minus* at the top. We went on to Clingman's Dome and hiked out to Andrews Bald. It was a rocky trail, not much fun, and a disappointment for us this year. We saw some *R. catawbiense* and *R. calendulaceum*, but not rare forms. We drove on to Balsam Gap which was quite pretty and took some photos.

During the night Ken became ill and had to go to the emergency room at the Haywood County Regional Medical Center in Clyde, North Carolina, in the wee hours of the morning. He recovered enough to go on a light liquid diet for Wednesday and the two of us drove on at a very leisurely pace to Townsend, Tennessee, where Ken rested some more. The rest of the group with some new additions went on touring with George and Jim to other areas and met up with us in Townsend, Tennessee, on



At the trail head in the dark: George McLellan, Jim Brant, Ken McDonald, Paul James, Frank Pelurie, Hartwig Schepker, and Enno Born. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

Wednesday evening where we had dinner at Timbers. I had a very good trout. Ken wasn't allowed to eat much, but did manage French onion soup and a baked potato.

Around 9 p.m. Christine Glenewinkel, the attractive, young, red-headed director of the filming crew, came around to meet us. She had not been on the trip to China and was not quite as tired as the rest of the crew. The camera man, Jens Enno Born, and sound man, Andreas Bäurle, as well as Dr. Hartwig Schepker, were exhausted since they had recently

come from China, so we did not get to meet them until the next morning.

We got up before 4 a.m. on Thursday morning so we could drive out to Cades Cove and meet the ranger whom Jim Brant had found to let us get in the gate at 5 a.m. before the normal opening time of 6 a.m. Our little caravan drove through Cades Cove in the dark and then on out Parsons Branch Road to the trail head. It was too dark to see any of the wildlife.



Andreas Bäurle and Christine Glenewinkel. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

We actually started our hike up Gregory at 6:10 a.m.

It was a busy day on Gregory. The azaleas were a little past peak since we had such a warm spring that threw the timing off. There were more hikers there than I

had ever seen before. Don Hyatt had brought a group from Potomac Valley Chapter which included Norman and Jean Beaudry and Gray Carter. This was a first and perhaps a last for some of them. Paul James and Frank Pelurie joined us. The Burkes were still with us, and one of George's friends from Gloucester was there as well as a friend of hers from Richmond. There were many people we didn't know who were not in our groups. We ran into Buddy Lee from Louisiana, hybridizer of the Encore azaleas, on Gregory.

The film crew had hired two young men to be bearers to carry some of the filming equipment. The crew spent the day busily filming many of the azalea hybrids, as well

as doing short interviews with some of our group. We had a very long day and long drive back to Townsend. Again we had dinner at Timbers, this time with our group and Christine Glenewinkel and Dr. Hartwig Schepker.



Christine Glenewinkel, Enno Born, & Andreas Bäurle. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

Friday morning we met up with the film crew again and drove to Roan Mountain. We had no bearers this time, so the camera crew had to carry their own equipment. They were pretty tired. Even Christine had to help carry some of the lighter things. We added some more people to the group on the hike. Dr. Martha Derthick met us at Roan and made the hike. Paul James, Frank Pelurie and the Burkes



Clockwise from front: Paul James, Don Hyatt, Frank Pelurie, Jean and Norman Beaudry and another member of PVC group. Photo by Sandra McDonald.



Paul James on Gregory Bald. Photo by Ken McDonald.



Andreas Bäurle getting the sound right on Roan. Photo by S. McDonald.

were still with us. We had another great sunny day for filming. On the way up the camera man and the sound man nearly got lost because they had stayed

to Grassy Ridge. We tried to call Jim on the little FRS two-radio communicator, but he didn't have his on or not with him. Luckily, Ken and I were pretty



Dr. Hartwig Schepker & George McLellan. Photo by Ken McDonald.



Paul James, George McLellan and Ken McDonald going to Grassy Ridge. Photo by S. McDonald.

behind for some filming. George, Jim, Hartwig, Christine, and the others had gone on ahead. The

sure which way we had to go and went on up the trail with the camera crew.



Heading to Grassy Ridge: Jim Brant, Christine Glenewinkel, Hartwig Schepker, George McLellan, Paul James, and Martha Derthick. Photo by S. McDonald.



Above: Enno Born, Christine Glenewinkel, and Hartwig Schepker. Below: Paul James & Sandra McDonald. Photo by Ken McDonald.

trail forked and the crew nearly took the wrong fork, going on down the Appalachian Trail instead of out

We had a lovely day of filming on Roan at Grassy Ridge. *Rhododendron catawbiense* was a little past



Sandra McDonald, Dr. Hartwig Schepker, Enno Born, Christine Glenewinkel, and Andreas Bäurle after a day on Roan.
Photo by Ken McDonald.



Sandra McDonald & Hartwig Schepker, Andreas Bäurle, Christine Glenewinkel, & Enno Born. Photo by Ken McDonald.

peak, but the crew still got some good material. The views were as spectacular as ever.

We got back to the car at Carver's Gap where we waited for the film crew. George and the others had already headed for home. We said our good-byes to our new filming friends and to Hartwig and wished them good luck on their continuing trip. They were going down the Blue Ridge Parkway and to Providence Canyon in Georgia.

After we got home we eventually heard from Hartwig

who told us about a major airline foul up in which they had to purchase new tickets to go home (later reimbursed) and then the temporary loss of a couple of pieces of their expensive camera equipment. They will not soon forget the trip, nor will we.

Shortly after Ken and I got home, Ken ended up in the emergency room again and had a 3 day stay in the hospital. Then a little over a month later after undergoing many tests, he had surgery. Ken is doing well now.

Christine sent us and George CDs of some of the plants they saw as well as some views of Providence Canyon, which were spectacular. Christine sent Ken a black baseball hat with the famous Bremen Town Musicians logo on the front. The Town Musicians are from a famous German children's story. Ken had given Christine a baseball cap with a Great Smokey Mountain National Park logo on the front. She also sent CDs about German Immigration from Bremen to America. Hartwig had given us Bremen mugs with chocolate and some literature about plans for further development of the rhododendron park that he is working on with the city. Ken and I certainly hope we will be able to visit Bremen and see the progress at the park as well as the many rhododendrons they have in the not too distant future.

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

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