

# 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

Nov 10-12, 1995	Ramada Inn, Newport News, VA
May 7-12, 1996	National Convention, Oban, Scotland
June 6-8, 1996	Brier Inn, Lewisburg, WV
Fall, 1996	To be determined
Spring 1997	Harrisonburg, VA

**FALL MEETING PLANS UNDERWAY** - Sybil Przystek and Ray Doggett have been working on the Fall Meeting. The program will include Richard Mahone former grounds superintendent of Colonial Williamsburg speaking on Friday evening; a panel discussion for "good doers" for our area is being proposed for later Friday evening; a slide show about the azaleas on Gregory Bald early on Saturday morning; a Rhododendron and Azalea Foliage Show; bus trip to Norfolk Botanical Gardens and Smithfield Gardens later in the morning and afternoon; social hour, plant auction, book sale; buffet dinner with featured speaker Clarence Towe, an expert on native azaleas; and Plants for Members. On Sunday morning there will be a class/panel discussion on propagation. This should be a very interesting and enjoyable meeting. Hope to see you all there.

### **FOR ALL YOU FOLIAGE FREAKS** - by George K. McLellan.

I must confess, I frequently plant a member of our beloved genus solely for its foliage, and even when acquiring one for its flowers, its foliage will play an important part in its choice. In the garden, especially a fall-winter garden, the rhododendron and azalea foliage can be an important design element. Their foliage can provide one of the most important elements of a good garden - TEXTURE. The shape, pattern, color and light reflection provide an extra dimension to your garden. Flowers come and go, but a plant's foliage will be in the garden long before and long after the flowers have passed. Concentration on flowers and the neglect of consideration of a plant's foliage can lead to a poor overall appearance of the garden.

This Fall's MAC Meeting will give us all a chance to study, enjoy and share our favorite genus' beautiful foliage. **MAC IS GOING TO HOLD ITS FIRST ANNUAL JUDGED FALL FOLIAGE SHOW** with a cup for the winner of the Best in Show entry. So everyone should go out in their garden and begin choosing entries for our fall show. We will have full entry information in the Fall Meeting Notice. Bring your entries and maybe your name will be the first on the cup.

### **DRAWING TO TAKE PLACE AT FALL MEETING, OR SCOTLAND ANYONE?** - by David Lay

At Fall meetings over the last few years David Lay has donated auction plants from his nursery and the money generated has been earmarked for a drawing to take place at dinner on November 11, 1995 at our meeting in Newport News. The nearly \$500 so far accumulated is to be used by the lucky winner to offset a portion of the considerable expense of attending the National Convention at the American Rhododendron

Society meeting in Oban, Scotland next May 7 to 12. Second, third and fourth place names will be drawn to fill in for the first place winner if illness or some unforeseen circumstance makes the trip impossible.

On your registration form for our Fall meeting this November, all members and associate members will be asked to indicate if they wish to participate in the drawing. In other words, are you already planning to go to Scotland or would you definitely consider going if you were fortunate enough to receive a windfall of \$500.

The Scottish registrar says that space is extremely limited and the convention is already fully booked with a waiting list. Fortunately, one registration is being held in the name of the Middle Atlantic Chapter, so even if you had not planned to go to Oban, you can still go if you win the drawing and can pay the rest of the necessary expenses! (Should our winner already have registered for the convention the special MAC registration will be offered to the second, third and fourth place draws. If none of them can use the MAC registration, it will be returned to the registrar in Scotland for someone on the waiting list.)

**POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER MEETING** - from Don Hyatt, PVC President.

PVC is having a joint dinner meeting with the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA at the Far East Restaurant off Rockville Pike behind White Flint Mall at 5055 Nicholson Lane in Rockville, Maryland on Saturday, October 28, 1995 with Registration Check-in from 5:30 - 6:45. The theme is "The Asian Influence" and the featured speaker will be our own Bill Bedwell. There will be a plant auction, cash bar, educational materials, and young seedlings of Asian rhododendron species and hybrids, as well as rooted cuttings of interesting azalea clones, will be provided as dinner favors. Cost is \$22.00 per person including meal, tip, appetizers, tax and gratuity. MAC members have been issued a special invitation through our president, Ray Doggett. MAC should receive registration materials by early September, which should be available from Ray Doggett at 8106 Terrapin Cove Rd, Gloucester Point, VA 23062. The **Registrar is Mr. Bruno Kaelin, 5432 Summit St., Centreville, VA 22020. Phone (703) 830-2656. Bruno must have checks for all attending by October 14, 1995.** You can probably get in touch with Bruno directly by phone or letter if you want to attend the meeting.

**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:**

Jeffrey & Sonya Fisher                      4633 Massena Dr., Williamsburg, VA 23188-1261  
Dr. William Stepka                              715 Glendale Dr., Richmond, VA 23229  
(Bill, a former MAC president, is rejoining after a number of years absence due to his wife's illness.)

**DECEASED MEMBER** - MAC member Effie Kempf passed away the week of May 22, 1995 after a brief illness. Her husband Mr. Luitpold "Fritz" Kempf moved to Oregon to live with his son for a while. The temporary address for Fritz is Mr. Luitpold "Fritz" Kempf, c/o Mr. Robert Kempf, 19397 Southwest 35th Court, Lake Oswego, OR 97034. The Kempfs were regulars at our MAC meetings. We will miss them.

**TERRY SHEUCHENKO MEMORIAL** - MAC is planning a memorial for deceased President Terry Sheuchenko. Toby Zakin is chairman of the committee. If you have suggestions for a memorial, contact Toby at 3605 Raleigh Mtn. Trail, Charlottesville, VA 22903 (Ph.804-293-2369) or contact Sybil Przypek or Sandra or Ken McDonald. The committee is considering several ideas, but is still willing to listen to new ideas. Contributions can still be made to the fund by sending them to MAC Treasurer Rosa Carter, 1033 Newkirk Dr., Richmond, VA 23224 and mark your donation for the Terry Sheuchenko Memorial.

**JOIN A COMMITTEE, HAVE MORE FUN** - President Ray Doggett would like to get more people active on committees. The more you participate, the more you learn and the more enjoyable the MAC experience will be. Following is a list of MAC committees:

Alderman Library Liaison  
Budget  
Equipment  
Finance  
Flower Show  
Ginter Botanical Garden  
Honors  
Long Range Planning  
Membership

New Member Welcoming  
Newsletter  
Nominations  
P4M  
Publications/Extension  
Publicity  
Ratings  
Research  
Video Library

Workers are especially needed for the Flower Show, Membership and Publicity Committees. Please contact President Ray Doggett if you would be willing to serve on a committee. Ray Doggett, 8106 Terrapin Cove Road, Gloucester Point, VA 23062. Phone 804-642-9190.

**MAGIC ON THE MOUNTAIN - AN AZALEA HEAVEN** - by George K. McLellan.

*A dozen members of the MAC Species Study Group made a trip to western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee during the third week of June to study native plants, especially those of the genus Rhododendron. The principle stops were Highlands, NC, Wayah Bald, Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest, Gregory Bald, sections of the Blue Ridge Parkway and Roan Mountain. Most would agree that the highlight of the trip was Gregory Bald.*

Something magical is happening on a mountain top on the North Carolina-Tennessee border. Nature is creating an azalea heaven on Gregory Bald, and you need go no farther than the Great Smoky National Park and climb 4949 feet to view one of the greatest assemblies of deciduous azaleas in the world. The bald is a Mecca to anyone interested in our native azaleas with its famous hybrid azalea swarm. When in full bloom the sight is almost indescribable. The range and combination of flower colors, shapes in bewildering arrays, the different fragrances that waft tantalizingly among the plants give one a truly unforgettable experience.

Gregory Bald is best reached from the Cades Cove section of the Park, by taking Forge Creek Road to the parking lot at the base of Gregory Ridge Trail and hiking about 5 1/4 miles to the top. The first 1 1/2 miles of the trail go through a beautiful mature forest of hemlock and tulip trees, understoried with *Rhododendron maximum* and follow scenic Forge Creek as it tumbles down to lower elevations. After crossing the creek for the last time the trail begins a steeper ascent to the top of Gregory Ridge where the woods becomes more open and underbrush less thick, and a few native azaleas appear. They were in bloom beginning at about 3,500 feet at the time we were there. Most are *R. calendulaceum*, but a few appear to be *R. cumberlandense* (formerly *R. bakeri*). At the 4.6 mile point from the parking lot, Gregory Ridge Trail connects with Gregory Bald Trail at about 4,600 feet. It is only 7/10 mile to the bald.

If one is in good condition and pushes, the hike up to the top can be made in 2 1/2 to 3 hours, but it would be better to go slower and enjoy the scenery, so figure about 4 or more hours to the top. Some books list the hike as moderate, others as strenuous because of the elevation change of over 3,000 feet. For persons accustomed to breathing at sea level, the slower pace makes breathing easier.

As we hiked the last steep 7/10 mile to the bald we began to hear thunder and the sky darkened. At this point one may doubt his sanity - hike all this distance to be on top of a mountain in a thunder storm! But you can glimpse the light at the end of the trail, catch a flash of brightly colored flowers and suddenly burst into the open of a grassy bald covered with hundreds upon hundreds of brightly colored azaleas in full bloom.

All the while your sense of smell is overwhelmed by a wonderful fragrance. All your fatigue, tired muscles, aching joints, sore feet disappear. You are on a natural high from the sheer beauty of the place.

Gregory Bald is an oblong shaped, gently convex summit of about a dozen acres dominated by grasses, azaleas, blueberries (*Vaccinium* sp.) and service berry (*Amelanchier* sp.) bushes. The summit is

4949 feet above sea level and the bald extends downward to about the 4800 foot contour line, where it is fringed by scrub trees that have been impinging on the bald from the surrounding deciduous forest. The azaleas are scattered over the bald, some as single plants, others in thickets of azaleas and are especially thick at the edges where grass and forest meet on the south, east and west margins. Azaleas may also be seen in the scrub forest where they may not bloom as profusely now that they have been overgrown by the trees.

When in full bloom, it is the azaleas that command attention. Each plant seems to have its own combination of flower color, blotches, size, shape and flower presentation, blended to its foliage and plant habit. The combinations are endless.

The flowers range from pure white with yellow to gold blotches, pale yellow to golden yellow, different hues of salmon to peach pink, some with deeper blotches, a full range of hues and tones of orange with striking gold blotches, light to deep reds, strong vivid purplish reds, pale fuchsia with gold blotches, deep pinks, medium pinks, pale pinks with and without blotches. Their shapes run from flowers with long tubes and narrow pointed petals producing a star-like effect, to more flat faced flowers with rounded petals, some of them slightly recurved.

The presentation of the plant also varies enormously. Some carry the flowers in ball trusses, some in smaller flower clusters scattered uniformly over the plant, others have their flowers in sheets of blooms that almost hide the foliage. Foliage varies from glossy bright green to a very intense deep green. There are leaves that have an almost rugulose appearance from the impressed leaf veins. Pubescence also varies from plant to plant. Plant habit differs with a few plants that are low and stoloniferous, others of medium height and very compact, and some are tall and have a more open habit.

This wonderful but sometimes bewildering display is a result of natural hybridization that probably began about 70 years ago when the park service ended grazing on the bald. Before that the inhabitants of Cades Cove used to summer herds of sheep and cattle on the bald before the area became park land.

It is interesting to speculate on the species that produced this hybrid swarm and see the different manifestations they have produced in the individual hybrids. Near where the trail enters the eastern end of the bald is a group of white azaleas with glossy leaves, star shaped flowers with prominent reddish style and stamens, glabrous shoots and a strong heliotrope fragrance, all of which key to *R. arborescens*. On the



Pink and white azalea in Gregory Bald Swarm.



David Sauer and Sandra McDonald on top of Gregory Bald.

northeast end of the bald you can find a low stoloniferous azalea with small long thin tubes, yellow blotched white flowers that show the influence of *R. viscosum*. Fred Galle has found *R. viscosum* var. *montanum* on Parson's Bald which is less than one mile south. *R. cumberlandense* can be found on Gregory Bald, especially on the southern side and the west end. *R. calendulaceum* plants are seen on the approach to the bald and in the fringe woods.

Our group arrived at the bald on June 21st when it was in peak bloom, but most of the yellow shades of azaleas were past their peak bloom and all we saw were scattered trusses with lots of faded flowers. The yellow shades must be influenced by *R. calendulaceum* as were the white azaleas with yellow blotch and rounded flower forms. The very deep reds, some with fuchsia undertones were just beginning to bloom and some were still in bud and not fully open, but showing color. They may be complex *R. cumberlandense-arborescens-viscosum* hybrids perhaps with some *R. calendulaceum* in them. The salmons, peaches, flesh pinks and buff pinks are perhaps the result of *R. arborescens* and *R. cumberlandense*, since most have pointed petals.

The striking fuchsia pinks, from pale to deep shades, many with yellow or gold blotches and star-shaped flowers could be complex hybrids between *R. arborescens*, *viscosum* and *cumberlandense*, as are the glowing cherry reds. Whatever the parentage, this hybrid swarm has produced an area of unbelievable beauty that should not be missed.



Don Hyatt, Ken and Sandra McDonald, George McLellan, Bill Bedwell and Debbie and David Sauer at trail's end.

If you want to plan a trip to Gregory to see the azaleas in bloom be sure to contact the park officials to see if the bloom is on its normal schedule of June 15th to June 25 peak bloom. I have known people who were there on the last day of June and the azaleas were still in tight bud. Also check to see which days the Cades Cove Road is closed to all but bike traffic in the morning, so you will not be delayed on the start of your climb. Good Luck!

**PLUMLEAF AZALEA WINS GCA MEDAL** - The American Horticultural Society announced in its September 1995 issue of American Horticulturist that *Rhododendron prunifolium* is the winner of the first Montine McDaniel Freeman Horticulture Medal from the Garden Club of America. The medal recognizes an under used North American native plant or its cultivar.

**THE GARDEN** - by Sandra McDonald

This summer has been a trial. Some members in central Virginia were deluged with rain in early June, but overall most of our region is in a pretty bad drought situation. In the Tidewater area we had 0.02 inch of rainfall from June 14 to June 30; 1.74 inches of rainfall for the month of July; and 1.35 inches of rainfall for the month of August. August is normally our wettest month. There were 26 consecutive days when the temperature went above 90 degrees F. in July and early August. We are about 9 inches below normal rainfall for the year. The National Weather Service is predicting near normal rainfall and normal temperatures for the months of September, October, November for our area and most of the eastern part of the U.S. I certainly hope we get at least normal rainfall.

A few small plants passed away when we went on a one week trip in late July. I felt rather badly about that until I happened on the article "Learning the Limits" by Carol Kuehn in the Fall 1995 issue of Pacific Horticulture which was in an approximately 18 inch high pile of mail on our return. She wrote about summer heat making irrigating and mulching the main seasonal chores and said she always had some losses of new plants. But by keeping extras waiting in the wings the spots can be refilled. The failures result from a lack of water at a critical time. Usually there are one or two of many identical plants in the same area. Late summer and early fall can also be dry and require extra watering or it will be lethal to small plants. Spending a couple of days away at these critical times of the year results in some dead plants. Trips at these times require elaborate arrangements for watering, plus the worrying that accompanies it while away. Many gardeners prefer to travel in winter and usually refuse to budge in summer because of this. It is frustrating to nurture plants for months and then lose them while you are away on a trip for a few days.

This summer I have come to the conclusion that I need more plants that bloom in August because the garden looks so yellow-green and bedraggled then. *R. prunifolium* put on its usual lovely red display and *R. serrulatum* was fragrant, but not make nearly as impressive a picture as its red relative. The crape myrtles were lovely, especially the lavenders and the soft pinks. They are so common here as to be disdained by some gardeners, but if you look at them from a fresh point of view, they really are impressive plants with good colors, a long blooming season and beautiful bark all winter. Verbenas, cardinal flower and gaillardia tried hard, but that was just not enough put on a good show in the garden. A few late blooming deciduous azalea hybrids put on a small display, but the plants are not large enough for real impact yet. Improving the appearance of the August garden should be my next project.

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AN OUNCE OF IMAGE IS WORTH A POUND OF PERFORMANCE

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**DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S REPORT** - by Jean Beaudry.

The Board of Directors meeting of the ARS filled up the complete day prior to the beginning of the 50th Gala Anniversary meeting of the ARS. Following are some of the items covered which I think are of the most interest to our Chapters. I have provided the Presidents of the Chapters with a complete set of Agenda, Minutes, and Policies of the Board for your review at your next meetings.

The next annual meeting will be held in Oban, Scotland in May of 1995. All 700 spaces have been filled but there is a waiting list in the case of cancellations. The Convention Manager, John Hammond is looking into a process which will allow plants to be purchased, properly packed (bare root), inspected and sent back to the US for convention attendees. Harold Greer is part of the committee and we should hear more about this in the fall. There will be a new publication at the Scotland meeting from the RHS, their Jubilee

Yearbook. It will also be available directly from the RHS for 12.95 pounds plus shipping and handling.

I was sorry to have to announce to the Board that the Potomac Valley Chapter would not be able to host the annual meeting in the year 2000 as planned. After the District meeting was held in early May (which was a great success due entirely to a small dedicated group of members from Potomac Valley with help from both the Mason Dixon and Middle Atlantic) it was regrettably decided that the lack of support for that project by Potomac Valley members made the responsibility of an annual meeting impossible. There have been many phone calls to other Directors and chapter Presidents in the Eastern Region since the announcement and the new hosts for the 2000 convention will be the Massachusetts Chapter.

There was discussion about contact about a merger made to Malcolm Clark, the President of the Azalea Society, by Dick Brooks. There appear to be many Azalea Society members who are unwilling to consider a possible merger. It was decided that the ASA President should be invited to the ARS Board of Directors meeting in Princeton in November and that local chapters should consider trying to foster more cooperation in the form of joint meetings.

Sonja Nelson, Journal editor told us the cost of paper is rising. To offset this she is looking into raising the cost of advertising and changing to a lesser weight paper.

There were several changes in By-Laws including a change in the makeup of the Honors committee to a chairman and 5 members who are geographically representative of the ARS membership. Another change was the requirement that recipients of both Gold and Silver medals be members of the ARS.

The report from the survey that was in the Fall issue of the Journal was very disappointing. Only 547 members filled out the survey. In an effort to get a better representation, Hank Shannon has mailed out 1000 surveys directly to a random group.

Dick Brooks introduced the Chairperson for the Public Relations and Membership committee. She is Rev. Carolyn Dana Lewis from Ann Arbor, Michigan. Carolyn will be locating to Arlington, Virginia in July for two years, so we should all get to know her. Hopefully her ideas will help us all.

Ted Stecki gave a report for the committee he headed which had looked into changing the dues to anniversary collection by the National Secretary. He said of the chapters polled that 60% wanted no change in the current process and 29% wanted a change. After a great deal of discussion the Board voted to continue with the present collection process.

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held on Friday November 10, 1995 at the Eastern Regional meeting in Princeton, NJ. Any member of the ARS may attend and the meetings are very informative. If you have any issues or ideas which you would like presented at that time, please contact me. Jean Beaudry. (Report of District Nine Director for ARS Board Meeting, May 9, 1995)

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EVERY SOLUTION BREEDS NEW PROBLEMS

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**RHODOS ON THE INTERNET** - adapted from the June 1995 Newsletter of Nanaimo Rhododendron Society.

The World Wide Web or WWW, a rapidly growing part of the internet can be used with browsers like "Mosaic" to go from highlighted words or pictures in a document to other documents on the same host computer or other computers around the world. You click on a topic of your choice and the program connects you with the computer where the document is located. This is done using Universal Resource Locators (URLs) which give the internet address where the information is stored.

To get to the British Columbia World Wide Web Servers Home Pages you enter the following URL into your browser program:

<http://www.freenet.victoria.bc.ca:80/bcw3list.html>

The URL for the Pukeiti rhododendron garden in New Zealand is:

<http://pluto.taranaki.ac.nz/pukeiti/welcome.html>

This hypertext document has information about the history of the garden, its climate and a list of photographs of the plants (which can be downloaded).



## MIDDLE ATLANTIC CHAPTER OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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