

# 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

May 3-5, 2002

The Mimslyn, Luray, VA , Our Fiftieth Anniversary  
Celebration

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>

### FALL MEETING 2001 by Sandra McDonald

We had a great weekend at Blacksburg with beautiful sunny warm weather. The tally of members and speakers attending was 66. Blacksburg is so far away from the areas where most members live that we usually have fewer attendees when we have a meeting there. Blacksburg is a thriving city with lots of construction probably due to the growing student body at Virginia Tech.

Bill Bedwell presented some beautiful slides from the Spring 2001 ARS Convention which few MAC members were able to attend. He also had



Bill Bedwell

slides from another trip. Bill is an excellent photographer and his slides were as beautiful as ever.

Paul James gave us a preview of the P4M plants with many slides of the plants in the sale. It was good to see what some of the unfamiliar clones looked like.



Paul James

The Seedling Sale for the benefit of the ARS Research Foundation had a good number of plants resulting in \$260 dollars for the benefit of the ARS



Dr. Erik Nilsen and David Lay

Research Foundation.

Theresa Brents brought her stock of Rhododendron books which is always fun to look over.

Saturday morning Dr. Erik Nilsen, a Virginia Tech Professor of Biology and Ecology temporarily at the National Science Foundation, gave an excellent presentation “Probing the diversity of Rhododendron for Ecologically Adaptive Traits” (leaf traits in *Rhododendron* with a focus on vireyas). This scholarly-sounding topic had many of us sitting on the edges of our seats, fascinated with the presentation. From Erik’s beginnings researching *Rhododendron maximum* and its water and temperature relationships after he began working at VPI, his research has certainly expanded in the rhododendron world. The genus *Rhododendron* is so large that it makes a very good subject for different kinds of research. New research is highlighting the diversity of the vireya distribution and its ecologically adaptive leaf traits. Knowledge may be gained from studying vireyas that could extend to other plant genera.



George McLellan. Photo by Sandra McDonald

George McLellan gave a presentation about the new azalea species *R. eastmanii*. George had taken a trip to South Carolina this spring where it found it in bloom. George had lots of slides of *R. eastmanii* and slides of some other white native azaleas in which he pointed out differences.

The team of Harry Wise and Frank Pelurie put on a demonstration of how they plant rhododendron seed. They had a hand out so that now every MAC member who wants to grow rhododendrons from seed should be able to do it.

After lunch, the comedy team of Dr. Maximum (Frank Pelurie) and Dr. Minus (Harry Wise) gave



Harry Wise aka Dr. Minus. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

a cutting propagation demonstration in costume. (I



Frank Pelurie aka Dr. Maximum. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

don’t think I would want them to cut on me.) But with the hand out anyone who wants to propagate rhododendrons from cuttings can at least get started in the right direction.

The P4M (Plants for Members) distribution took place mid-afternoon after which the room was about empty.

We had a Mediterranean Buffet for dinner; Frank had returned from a visit to Italy shortly before our

meeting. The buffet was followed by a presentation by Dr. Robert McDuffie from the Department of Horticulture and the Center for Continuing Education at Virginia Tech. He talked about European gardens and showed the landscape design plans of several Italian and French gardens and a few English and Welsh gardens.

After the dinner Frank Pelurie presented a Bronze Medal and a Certificate of Appreciation to two chapter members. Doug Jolley won the Fall Foliage Show.

Doug Jolley was auctioneer for a plant auction which raised \$547.

An optional tour of the Blacksburg area was available on Sunday morning.

**BRONZE MEDAL:**

Alton S. Hall was presented the Bronze Medal



Frank Pelurie presenting the Bronze Medal to Alton Hall. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

**Award in recognition of:**

His many years of service to the chapter as Director, Vice President and President, and also for his work on the 1988 Convention and as audio-visual operator.

He will also be remembered as our “Ace” driver during the trip to Scotland for the ARS meeting in Oban, Scotland.

Most recently he and Barbara helped arrange and host the chapter meeting in Gloucester, Virginia.

For these and his many other quiet contributions we present the chapter’s highest honor.

**CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION:**

James S. Brant was presented the Certificate of

**Appreciation in recognition of:**

His active participation in meetings and native azalea expeditions. He has really exhibited his UPS and USMC “Can do” attitude.



Frank Pelurie presenting the Certificate of Appreciation to Jim Brant. Photo by Walter Przypek.

He has helped generously with our Fall Meeting at Elkins, West Virginia in 2000 and helped in planning and arranging tours for the Spring Meeting in 2001 in Gloucester.

He seem always ready to help out at any activity at which we are present. For his ever-willingness and helpful enthusiasm we recognize him with this



Dr. Robert McDuffie.. Photo by Sandra McDonald.

**Certificate of Appreciation.**

**DR. AUGUST KEHR**

A great rhododendron friend of many of us, Dr. August Kehr passed away peacefully on September 27, 2001, at the age of 87 in Iowa. He and his wife Mary Lou had moved to Cedar Falls, Iowa, in August, 2001, to be near their daughter and her

family. "Augie", as many of us knew him, was living in North Carolina at the time of the ASA Convention in late June this year.

He earned his Ph.D. in Plant Breeding, Plant Pathology and Cytology in 1950. He then went to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he became Associate Professor. From there he went to Iowa State University at Ames, Iowa, where he was Professor of Horticulture as well as Horticulturist for the U.S.D.A. In 1958 he moved to Silver Spring, Maryland and went to work at the U.S.D.A. Research Station in Beltsville. In 1978 he retired from the U.S.D.A. and moved to North Carolina.

He was a past President of the ARS, and a recipient of both the Gold Medal and the Pioneer Achievement Awards.

He was an avid hybridizer who had several rhododendron and evergreen azalea introductions and was working towards a yellow evergreen azalea. He also hybridized magnolias. He had his garden on tour when the ARS Convention was



Auctioneer Doug Jolley with Jim Brant. Photo by Sandra McDonald

held in Asheville and many of us saw his Hendersonville garden with its many rhododendron and magnolia hybrids.

#### **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER:**

Jean Walsh, ,  
63390

#### **Changes of address:**

Sarsfield, Patrick & Betty, ,Bent  
Mountain, VA 25059  
Taylor, Dell, Staunton, VA 24401

#### **TIDBITS FROM WEEKLY NMPRO E-MAIL**

#### **November 7 and November 13 issues.**

\* Only 8 gypsy moths were trapped in Oregon this year, the lowest total since 1989. Gypsy moth populations reached all-time highs in the mid-1980s when 19,000 were trapped in 1 year in Lane County alone, reports Ore. Dept. of Ag. No gypsy moths were trapped in Ashland and Portland's Forest Park, two sites given aerial pesticide treatments this spring. Three moths were trapped in Gresham and single moths were caught in North Portland, Beaverton, Milwaukie, Baker City and Azalea. (503) 986-4662.

\* Va. Dept. of Ag. and Consumer Services collected 97,931 pounds of unwanted or outdated pesticides Sept. 20–25 through its pesticide disposal program. Chemicals were dropped off by 179 commercial growers, pesticide dealers and pest control specialists. Since the program began in 1990, VDACS has collected 916,730 pounds of pesticide. The most commonly collected chemicals are DDT, arsenic-containing pesticides, toxaphene, dieldrin, silvex, and 2,4,5-T. <http://www.vdacs.state.va.us> <<http://www.vdacs.state.va.us>>

\* Irradiation of mail by the U.S. Postal Service has many mail-order nurseries concerned. It appears the amount of radiation needed to kill anthrax spores would be sufficient to kill seeds and possibly live plants. Many companies that have relied on the U.S. mail are considering changing to an alternate carrier. "We recognize certain things will be affected by irradiation, including plants, and we're working on a process to separate mail that would be affected from other mail. We'll start installing some of the irradiation machinery this month, but this is not an immediate process," said USPS Spokesman Jerry Kreienkamp.

[Ed. Will the above process affect the ARS Seed Exchange?]

\* Oak wilt is attacking Michigan trees. The disease is caused by a fungus that can be transmitted by insects or passed through root grafting. In red oaks, leaves turn reddish to bronze at the edges and may wilt and curl. In white oaks, leaves on infected trees generally turn from green to tan, beginning at the tip. Leaves curl and remain attached to the tree, and usually only a few branches on an infected white oak will wilt. Avoid pruning oaks from April through at least the end of June and prune during the cold months



David Lay and David Sauer. Photo by Walter Przypek.

instead, said officials from Mich. St. Univ. Ext. (517) 355-2308.

**LEPIDOTES, THE LITTLE GEMS IN THE RHODODENDRON GARDEN** *Reprinted from NERC News with permission of the author Frank Arsen.*

After more years than we cared to recount, we had more or less settled on those little gems of the rhododendron world, the lepidotes. This was an about face for us, who at one time grew anything that would fill up space and was pleasing to the eye.

When we first moved to Lindenhurst in our first venture at home ownership, we had what we thought then was a huge backyard. It was a sandy wasteland, with tufts of grass here and there, shaded by three sassafras and one huge wild cherry tree. After we filled the yard with shrubs and lawn, we then discovered the Rhododendron Society.

Needless to say, all of our former shrubs, such as butterfly bush, forsythia, rose of Sharon, etc. were very quickly replaced by, you guessed it, rhododendrons and azaleas. Between the Society's plant sales, friends in the Society and nurseries in the Society, we soon ran out of the allotted space and started looking at the lawn with a jaundiced eye.

When the lawn became nothing but pathways between beds, we decided our appetites were larger than our property and had to call a screeching halt to this madness. Putting our heads together, the logical solution was simple. Let's start growing the dwarf varieties, both hybrids and

species.

The hatchet started to fall about this time on some of our larger out-of-bounds rhododendrons. For each of those we eliminated, it made room for five or six dwarf varieties. At this point in time, and with the discrimination borne of years in the brotherhood of rhododendron buffs, we now had a bare minimum of the elepidotes.

Our experience with the lepidotes started with two low growing forms of *R. keiskei* that we purchased from the Bovees in 1970. In 1980 one of these plants was one foot tall and three feet wide. Now, in 2001 it is only slightly higher and slightly wider even after taking many cuttings.

These original two plants have given us some wonderful progeny; some even more dwarf than their parents. In 1980, we wrote about some open pollinated seeds of these *R. keiskei* that resulted in four hybrids. We called them "Pink Keiskei #1,2,3, and 4," but one of them was later named 'Arsen's Pink' by Jim Cross. We believed that either *R. racemosum* or *R. glaucophyllum* was the bashful pollen parent. At any rate, they are compact tight growing plants and very floriferous, differing only in variance of pink color and size of flower.

**THE GARDEN OR HOW DRY I AM** by Sandra McDonald

The weather man drones on, 46 days with no measurable precipitation, 47 days with no rain in sight, and on and on. I do hope we get some rain and that we can go out of town for a short while. It is ridiculous to still be watering the garden in the middle of November. I haven't taken in the irrigation timers yet from my pot-watering areas because it is still too dry. I hope they don't freeze before I have to bring them inside. It seems to be this way over a good portion of the Southeast. Reports from Charlottesville, Gloucester, and Richmond all say it is very dry.

A couple of weeks ago as I left for work the weather man was saying beware of the fog in Norfolk. At that moment we didn't have fog in Hampton, but within a few minutes we did, and it had a very strange odor, sort of like something electrical burning. The odor was still strong when I arrived at the nursery. I called the police non-emergency number to investigate the cause. A lady told me it was the Great Dismal Swamp burning, so I stopped worrying that the terrorists were trying to gas the

Norfolk military bases. She had evidently had many calls about it before mine. Now I have smelled the Great Dismal Swamp burning before, but this was the worst it had ever been in my experience. The peat burns and smolders for a long time and the fog was holding the smoke to the ground. It is really dry when the swamp burns.

The garden is holding up amazingly well with just the irrigation we can give it. The leaves on the Japanese maples, the witch hazel, and *Acer* 'Cinnamon Flakes' are spectacular. The New England asters are so blue that I can't bear to give them all up. I pulled out a good bunch of them because they are so tall and take up so much room, but I have to leave a few because of the lovely color. The mums are nice, too. The *Camellia sasanqua* trees are really putting on a wonderful show this year. There are double pinks, double whites, double burgundy, and a chance seedling double white with pink tips reminiscent of double apple blossoms. I am hoping that Camellia Forest Nursery will want to distribute it, since I don't know of one like it in the trade.

The fall blooming cyclamen are at their peak now with pink and white flowers and nice mottled leaves.

This is the time of year when I make some decisions on what I really would like to be rid of. I practically sifted a good bit of soil to get out as many corms of *Crocsmia* as I could. It was becoming too invasive. I ended up with about a 5 gallon bucket of corms for the garbage man. Also, a few years ago I got rid of a coarse growing *Miscanthus* with zebra stripes perpendicular across the blades because it was seeding itself around and looked like it could really be a problem. I am still digging out little seedlings of it.

Bill Bedwell was renovating some spots in his lawn this fall and inspired me to do the same. Since we don't water the lawn much, not many of the grass seeds germinated. Gardeners are optimists so guess I will just try again next fall and hope for better rains.

This fall I was hoping to plant some things, but so far have only done a few. It is too dry to even dig holes. I have to run water where I want to put in a new plant and run water where I want

to dig up an old one to move.

The sunny days and red, yellow, orange, and pick foliage has been glorious. We should really count our blessings.

### EDITOR NEEDS MATERIAL

Your editor would like to receive original articles from MAC members. My supply is running low. Otherwise you will be seeing more filler photos and reprinted material.



Colorful foliage at the azalea table. Photo by Walter Przypek.



Doug Jolley with his prize-winning foliage awards. Photo by Sandra McDonald.



Audience at Fall Meeting talks. Photo by Sandra McDonald.



Audience at Fall Meeting talks. 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.

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