

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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Rhododendron Society

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

Apr 24–26, 2003

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

Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

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



MAC members at Sandstone Falls. Photo by W. Przypek.

Sixty-five people attended the MAC meeting in Bluefield, WV. Friday night Walter Przypek did a slide preview of plants from his garden in the P4M sale, and David Sauer did a slide presentation of New Kurumes in his garden that were in the P4M sale. Frank Pelurie had brought hundreds of these plants

for the P4M sale.

It was a scenic weekend with some fall color, and lots of beautiful mountains to see. Sandra McDonald began Saturday morning with a slide presentation about Le-Mac Nurseries: Its History and Introductions. Then most of the group car-pooled to the New River Gorge National River's Sandstone Falls. An elevated board sidewalk made seeing the falls easy. There was also a little side trail where some unusual plants were growing.

The fall foliage Best in Show award went to Bruce Feller from New York.

Elmer Lapsley was back with us at this meeting and did some of his old auctioneering for us. We had a dynamic dinner speaker in Dr. Alex Niemiera who spoke about his plant hunting expeditions to China. He didn't have many photos of rhododendrons, but the talk was very interesting because of his focus on the culture and plants of China.



Frank Pelurie, Rosa Carter, George McLellan, Norma & Ron Brown, Don Hyatt at New River Gorge's Sandstone Falls Park. Photo by W. Przypek.

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

Fall arrived with some wonderful changes, cooler temperatures and plenty of much needed rain. Although we were able to water our garden through most of the summer, September brought restrictions – no outdoor watering! Just as things started to get desperate the rains arrived, eight inches total for October, nicely spaced. I don't think the entire first nine months of the year totaled the amount we received in October. November seems to be following the same trend. Our rain gauge as of mid November totals six plus inches.

Our rhododendrons and azaleas are looking good. There are good buds on the rhododendrons even with the drought. It seems that the buds were set later than normal this year. Did anyone else notice this? Some plants didn't set buds until late August.

Our fall blooming azaleas had mixed results this season. The Linwood azalea 'Opal' is in full bloom in mid November. The Encore azaleas 'Amethyst' and 'Royalty' have had sparse bloom as has George Ring's 'August to Frost'. I think these plants need more sun than I am able to give them. The



Jane McKay

Encore azalea that has been the hit of the fall show is 'Autumn Embers', blooming for the entire month of October. The fall color here is still good. The dogwoods and Japanese maples have been magnificent. We have an over abundant crop of acorns this year. This is a mixed blessing. The deer have been so busy fattening up on acorns they have ignored our gardens for the last month or so. The reverse affect took place on the squirrel population. All summer we never saw more than two squirrels in the garden, now I think we have 200. They are all over the place. If they just ate the acorns I wouldn't be upset but why do they have to bury them in all my potted plants? Another downside is all the little oak trees we will have to pull out next spring — my back hurts thinking about it.

I really do have to stop accumulating plants! I knew before we went to the Fall meeting in Bluefield that I already had too many plants in pots to fit into my two winter holding areas. I knew the area in my basement where we have plants under lights (cuttings and seedlings) was full. I told Wally that we should not buy any plants in Bluefield due to the lack of space and the water situation. He just smiled but I insisted NO, I'm going to be firm — no more plants. So I only bought 16 new Kurumes. Well I did cut down a bit. I only did azalea and boxwood cuttings this summer. I had planned to do rhododendron and holly cuttings this fall but now there really is no room under the lights, maybe next year. I really do have to stop accumulating plants.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER

A

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Franklin & Mary Helen Pelurie, 315 Dewey Drive,
St. Albans, WV 25177

David & Virginia Banks, 215 Charter House Lane,
Williamsburg, VA 23188

Theodore G. Scott, 4248 Grattan Price Dr.,
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

William Constable, 2133 Richmond Rd., Troy, VA
22974

William Constable, Jr., 2133 Richmond Rd., Troy,
VA 22974

'TIS THE SEASON

by Bill Bedwell, Dinwiddie, Virginia

As I write this near the beginning of December, there is an ominous forecast of a "possible" ice storm beginning tomorrow afternoon. With some wind. This makes me apprehensive with memories of the garden damage from the ice storm a few years ago — maybe four or five years ago — plus the terrific ice storm damage when the rhododendron garden was young in the late 1960s. The garden survived every storm but the clean up takes so much time from other garden chores and the damage often eliminates attractive landscape features.

The approaching winter brings to an end one of the worst growing seasons in many years. The dreadful, unrelenting heat and drought seemed even worse after several years with truly nice summers. It was not a good spring either. The flowering season started too early, following an unusually mild winter; then we got several disappointing cold



Bill Bedwell

snaps. PJM's spectacular peak of bloom came to an abrupt end. Bud set on most other rhododendrons was scarce. Not a good year.

It turned out that fall was the outstanding season of 2002 when the drought ended and trees and shrubs everywhere put on a spectacular color show — even those not noted for good fall color. I saw a beautiful golden yellow coral bark Japanese maple in Jim Brant's garden in Gloucester, and George McLellan gave me the official name, *Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku.' The November-December issue of *The American Gardener* has a nice photo on page 31

of the coral red limbs in winter and George said Pamela Harper's new book recommends it. Jim has it in a location visible from the kitchen windows.

About a week ago I was walking around Bill Saunders' place looking at the hundreds of new plants he has added. It is going to be a beautiful sight. He has lots of naturally occurring "natives" on his property and they are loaded with flower buds. At the ARS/ASA convention in Atlanta last April, I heard the term "natives" at least once every 30 minutes. Sometimes in every sentence. In Bill Saunders' case, the Dinwiddie "natives" refer to the *Rhododendron, periclymenoides* that I have enjoyed while roaming those same woods since childhood. About that time Joanne Ortiz walked by on the way to grocery shopping and told me about the blisters she got while she and Bill were hiking among the "natives" on Roan Mountain last June. Sorry I missed that trip.

Back in my garden, I found I have good bud set on most rhododendrons. I think it was David Leach who once wrote in an *ARS Journal* article that he asked Tony Shammarello how he got such good bud set on his nursery plants. Tony's method was not to water in July. I think it worked for us this summer.

It is amazing that I lost so few plants when I did no watering in the old garden. The only plants to receive any supplemental water were those planted in recent years in beds nearer the house. But I did have some casualties, Golden Star being the greatest disappointment.

With extended drought followed by lots of rain this fall, I was surprised that there was so little fall blooming. PJM thought it had been through the winter dormancy and it was April in September. As usual, Wissahickon (or Cherry Red) partially opened some buds, but not as many as I expected. Ice Cube was a surprise with lots of flower buds showing color. Summer drought followed by fall rains seem to encourage this, but the off-season flowers on rhododendrons seldom are pretty. It just messes up the spring show.

Speaking of fall flowers, I planted one (Autumn Embers) of the new Encore azaleas two years ago to try them out. It had no flowers in spring nor fall last year and nothing this spring. The plant was growing poorly. In late summer I decided to throw it away and find something else for its prominent location, but then it bloomed for weeks this fall. A really nice show all through November. Once again my threats worked wonders, much like the threat of doom from

a July drought seems to encourage bud set. And the bright orange red flowers on Autumn Embers was perfect with the other fall foliage.

I like the changes that occur with each season. I especially enjoy anticipating what new wonders spring will bring. Let's hope 2003 will be a much better year for our gardens.



Dr. Alex Niemiera at the MAC Fall Meeting. Photo by S. McDonald



Frank Pelurie and Elmer Lapsley at MAC Plant Auction.

SAD NEWS

Both Dick Brooks and Betty Spady have passed away quite recently. See the *ARS Journal* for more information.

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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