

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

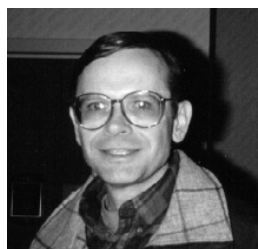
Vol. XXIII No. 4

December 1997

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

May 15-17, 1998	Four Points Hotel (Sheraton), Harrisonburg, VA
Nov 20-22, 1998	Chamberlain Hotel, Hampton, VA
Spring 1999	Roanoke, VA
November 5,6&7, 1999	Williamsburg, VA
(Eastern Regional Meeting -host MAC)	

THE "HARDY DEXTERS!?" by Doug Jolley



Doug Jolley

For anyone attending the fall meeting in Fredericksburg in October, vintage copies of the *ARS Journal* were available at the book sale. I enjoy perusing these earlier editions to read articles about or articles authored by some of the icons of the rhododendron world. In putting these quarterlies away I noticed an *ARS Journal* with a black spine and "page 206" noted on the cover. That issue was Vol. 43, No. 4, Fall 1989 and the title was "Hardy Dexter Rhododendrons" by Jon M. Valigorsky, M.D. My garden is located just a chip shot away from the geographic center of West Virginia and 1997 was a terrific year for elepidotes, so after looking at the list of Dexters which were deemed hardy, I wondered how mine did — not only this spring following a mild winter, but overall.

Because of their beauty and history, most Dexters have received prime locations in the garden. Hardiness is a key selection factor here because many winters will produce temperatures 10 to 15 degrees below zero accompanied by little or no snow cover. The aforementioned article has influenced my choices as to which Dexters I have tried.

Twelve cultivars have been tried over a period of nine years. My first and favorite is 'Scintillation'. It came through a mild winter in which temperatures never dipped below zero in fine fashion. 'Scintillation' is now two and one half feet tall by four feet wide and it in full bloom with a carpet of foam flower beneath was a sight to behold (and photograph).

'Gigi' in full truss and backlit by early morning

sunlight is my favorite photographic subject. 'Gigi' suffered winter damage the prior winter, but this year bloomed nicely. Some young plants which benefited from the mild temperatures and bloomed for the first time this spring include 'Gloxineum', 'Glenda Farrell', 'Wyandanch Pink' and 'Mrs. W.R. Coe'.

'Parker's Pink' has been dependable for three or four years now. 'Ben Moseley', only two years old, is healthy, but has yet to set flower buds.

A few years ago 'Great Eastern' came into anthesis and then promptly died. 'Powder Puff' and 'Brown Eyes' also failed.

'Accomplishment' has exhibited the most determination of all. Five winters have passed and each year 'Accomplishment' is nearly defoliated by rabbits. Each spring new growth sprouts on what is now a stick with a few leaves randomly scattered. That this plant is still alive is an accomplishment!

While I do not keep weather records, 'Scintillation' and 'Parker's Pink' have performed best for me. However, many varieties listed have just now reached five and six years old and this mild winter (without deer) undoubtedly allowed many to flower for the first time. I hope they, too, will truly be "Hardy Dexters" for me.

SPRING MEETING 1998 by Doug Jolley

Our Spring Meeting will be held in Harrisonburg, Virginia on May 15-17, 1998. Glenn Kauffman and Ron Brown have been busy organizing what should be an excellent weekend. Saturday's tours include the James Madison University Arboretum with a dedication of the Middle Atlantic Chapter Native Azalea Garden and a tour of Ron and Norma Brown's Garden.

FALL MEETING 1997 by Alice Doggett

Our Fall Meeting held in Fredericksburg was most enjoyable. For those of you unable to attend, you missed a great meeting.

The Friday evening slide presentation by Don Hyatt on Landscaping was very informative as well as entertaining. Don talked about leaving open spaces with rhododendrons and azaleas planted around the open spaces. Most of us put our plants too close together and create tunnels when the plants are mature. Are you growing tunnels?

On Saturday morning Doug Jolley introduced us to beautiful native azaleas growing in West Virginia with slides of lovely plants and locations including Dolly Sods. He showed us some plants that seemed to be natural hybrids between species.

Saturday afternoon we were treated to the wonders of raising fruit while enjoying our plant hobby. Bill Harwood and Jane Warner, owners of Virginia Blueberry Farm, covered the many varieties of blueberries, as well as the familiar bushes. The birds love the green berries on the ground cover blueberry bushes.

Saturday evening speaker Bryce Lane, Acting Director of the J. C. Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina, was a very interesting speaker. He took us all over the United States, visiting arboreta, to the mountains with great vistas, and to his own back yard which showed the effects of a hurricane.

The Jolley-Wise workshop on cultivation and propagation gave us all new ideas and information on these subjects. Have you visited dumpsters searching for containers in which to plant seeds and cuttings? Harry has!

And last, but not least, on Sunday morning George McLellan gave a beautiful slide program from the study group on native azaleas and their locations in the North Carolina and Tennessee mountains. Most of us became interested in the study group until we heard about the rattlesnake. That did it! We do look forward to seeing more slides from these brave souls.

As usual there was the book and glove sale, auction, seedling sale, and Plants for Members (P4M) sale.

Our Spring 1998 Meeting in Harrisonburg will, no doubt be more great fun since that is when our plants show off their beauty in flower. See you there.

ARS RESEARCH AND ENDOWMENT FUNDS

At the Fall Meeting, the seedling sale raised \$157 for the Research Foundation and the donation of a large plant in honor of Austin Kennell by Jean and Norman Beaudry raised \$55 for the Endowment Fund.

MAC HAS A NEW SECRETARY

The Chapter would like to welcome JoAnne Ortiz as the new Secretary. At the same time we wish to thank Sybil Przypek for serving as Secretary for the past two years.



JoAnne Ortiz

DEATHS

Colonel Ray Goodrich of the Potomac Valley and Middle Atlantic Chapters passed away November 19, after being in the hospital with pneumonia for two weeks. MAC members extend deepest sympathy to his wife Jane.

MAC extends its sympathy to Bill Bedwell whose mother passed away on November 24.

NEWS OF MAC MEMBERS

This past May 14, *The Roanoke Times* published what amounted to a full page article with some photographs of our modest MAC member **Paul James** and we are just finding out about it. The article said, "His garden has a natural feel to it. Grassy paths weave between the beds, avenues for humans to travel from rock garden to rhododendron groves to hosta plantings. Cows grazed on these hills, determining the natural footfalls." Paul said, "The garden was designed by Holstein."

MAC member **Don Hyatt** just returned from a computer competition with his students. The students did very well, earning over \$150,000 in scholarships and prize money for the schools. Don was given a special "Coach of the Year" award.

REPORT OF DISTRICT NINE DIRECTOR

by Sandra McDonald, October 24, 1997

I attended the ARS Board of Directors meeting in Allentown, Pennsylvania. "Bud" Gehrlich, the new president, conducted the meeting and it moved along quite well. Dee Daneri, the new Executive Director, was there performing her duties, and Jean Beaudry, who now has taken over the separate new office and duties of Secretary, was there, also.

A name change for the Society did not pass at the meeting because of the strong feelings against it. However, this will probably be on the agenda again in the future, possibly even next spring. There may be articles or letters about the reasons for proposing a name change appearing in the *Journal*.

Old excess *Journals* in storage are being distributed to chapters who want them for the cost of shipping. The *Journals* Barbara Hall had have been disbursed, but

there are others being stored at the printer's warehouse that also are going to be distributed.

A membership roster is going to be printed and should be available for purchase from the Executive Director in 1998. New members will no longer be given one.

The former ARS Research Foundation Treasurer Tom Barker died. A new treasurer, Werner Brack of the New York Chapter, has been appointed to replace him. ARS Research Foundation donations should be sent to Werner Brack, RFD 2, 202 Steep Bank Rd., St. James, NY 11780.

ARS Treasurer Gerald Nutter is resigning. The ARS Executive Committee will appoint an acting treasurer until next May.

The Board approved raising advertising rates to keep up with costs for the *Journal*. The *Journal* will also begin including metric measurements in its articles to assist our overseas members.

Dues have increased from \$25 to \$28.

Anyone needing to contact the Executive Director may contact her at:

- Dee Daneri, Executive Director, 11 Pinecrest Drive, Fortuna, CA 95540.
- Telephone 707-725-3043. When calling there is a message giving an opportunity to ask for ARS or Rhododendron information in Mailbox #1. Mailbox #2 lets you leave a message or request information. Mailbox #3 will be answered by Dee. Her office hours are Mon-Fri 8-5 California time.
- FAX 707-725-1217
- Email: DeeDaneri@aol.com. She encourages this means of communication.

ARS has a web site and some money has been allotted for development and maintenance.

Massachusetts Chapter member Joe Parks wants to put together an anthology of articles from back issues of the *Journal*. Any profits will go to support the *Journal*. ARS will purchase 250 copies, as will the Massachusetts Chapter. Timber Press will print the anthology and also sell it.

A new committee has been formed to correlate work with University of Virginia Library. I have been appointed chairman.

Anyone who needs to contact me about ARS business may do so at:

- Sandra McDonald, District Nine Director, 4302 Chesapeake Ave., Hampton, VA 23669
- Telephone 757-723-5612 (most afternoons or evenings before 8 p.m.) Weekday mornings from 7:45 to 9:30 a.m. at 757-723-3313.
- Email: sfmcd@exis.net

JMU ARBORETUM AND ALDERMAN LIBRARY RECEIVE GIFTS

Gladys Wheeldon (Mrs. Thomas F. Wheeldon), widow of one of the founders of the Middle Atlantic Chapter made a generous gift to the Sandra and Kenneth McDonald Azalea and Rhododendron Garden at the James Madison University Arboretum in September of this year. Mrs. Wheeldon also made a generous gift to the Rhododendron Book Fund at the University of Virginia Library during the summer.

Mrs. Wheeldon is a charter member of the Middle Atlantic Chapter and has been active since its beginning back in 1952 when she attended a meeting of the prospective members of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society on March 23 - 25, honoring Mr. Peter N. Barber of Exbury Estate in Southampton, England. Peter Barber gave a talk on the Exbury hybrids, illustrating his subject with color slides. On Sunday, March 23rd, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Wheeldon held an open house at their "Gladsgay Gardens." On Monday morning the group visited Williamsburg, Virginia and on Tuesday after informal discussion a great many of the group proceeded to Washington to attend the evening meeting of the Azalea Symposium. The By-laws were adopted on March 24, 1952 at the meeting.

Mrs. Wheeldon has been very supportive of MAC through the years, acting as hostess for the many garden visits by MAC. She has been a regular attendee of MAC meetings up until recent years. However, she is still a member and maintains an interest in the Chapter activities through the newsletter. Her generous donation to the rhododendron book fund at the University of Virginia a number of years ago made it possible for the University to purchase many rhododendron books for the collection. Her recent generous donation continues this work.

Her support of the new Sandra and Kenneth McDonald Azalea and Rhododendron Garden at the James Madison University Arboretum will make possible the addition of companion plants and help fulfill other needs in developing the garden.

MAC is most appreciative of Gladys Wheeldon's enthusiastic support over the years and her continuing interest in our favorite plants.

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

After the drought this summer and early fall, the garden is welcoming the rains of the past few weeks. The fall color was surprisingly good here and on the Skyline Drive. The only plant in full bloom now (mid November) is *Chrysanthemum pacificum*. I think we

will add more of this to the garden next year.

We attended the ARS Northeast Regional Conference in Allentown, Pennsylvania, in late October and would like to tell you a bit about it. We find these conferences, along with our MAC meetings wonderful mini-vacations.



Jane McKay

Dr. Clarence Towe opened the meeting on Friday evening with beautiful slides of native azaleas. To all those hybridizers out there he suggested we breed for foliage first as good flowers are easier to come by.

Dr. Gary Moorman in pictures and in words described rhododendron diseases — the symptoms and the management of each disease. He stressed the cleaning of pruning tools with 10% Chlorox or 70% alcohol — which is the concentration of rubbing alcohol. (Using a stronger or weaker concentration of alcohol does not kill the fungus.) When discussing leaf and flower gall he suggested the best way to control this is to remove and destroy the galls. This disease is hard to control with fungicides. The removal should be done before the galls turn white.

A panel discussion, “Growing Species Plants in the East,” with Dick Brooks (North); Hank Shannen (Central); and George Ring (South) was held. The heat tolerant rhododendrons mentioned were *R. fortunei*, *R. hyperythrum*, *R. maximum* and *R. minus*. *R. kiusianum* was highly thought of by all, but they felt it is susceptible to heat. My plants of *R. kiusianum* seem to be doing well. Does anyone in MAC care to share their experience?

Ed Reiley spoke on “Rhododendron Culture,” and some of the points I thought especially interesting are: Planting — Fall is best for establishing good root growth. Spring planting should be done as early as possible as plants do not send out roots at the same time as flowers or new growth. They also will not send out roots in heat of summer. Optimum root growth is when soil temperatures are between 45 and 65°F.

If pH is above 6, sulfur will not be available to lower the pH. You need to use iron sulfate or ferrous sulfate to lower it to 6. (Now if I only knew where I could buy iron or ferrous sulfate.)

A plant low in magnesium is hard to root.

We also had interesting talks on evergreen azaleas, conifers, native companion plants, kalmias, new and hardy rhododendrons and the “Gardens of Exbury.

More than 200 people attended. We greeted old friends, made the acquaintance of a few new

enthusiasts and after 30 plus years of rhododendron growing, learned more about our favorite plants.

GREGORY BALD AGAIN by Frank Pelurie

Well, George and I did it again, climbed to Gregory Bald Friday, October 31. Needless to say I took me almost half an hour longer to get to the bald. When I got to the top of the ridge I found George resting against a log while a doe and fawn grazed at his feet. Then on the way down the doe and two fawns were at the same location. They certainly were not afraid of hikers.

In general it took a little over 3 hours to get to the bald and a little less than 3 hours to get back down to the vehicle. We spent 4 hours on the bald. It was a great day, no rattlesnakes. For the number of azaleas growing on Gregory Bald and the amount of flowering, the quality of seed set was rather poor, possibly due to environmental factors, poor pollination, sterile plants, or other factors. The general health of the plants could be better. Many appear to be infected with the fungus gall. I hope more of the hardwoods surrounding the bald will be removed to enhance airflow through the azaleas.

Saturday morning we visited Roan for a few hours. George led me to the Engine Gap area.

A bit earlier in the season Harry Wise and I went to Audra State Park and collected seed from the general area where Doug Jolley took the slides of the hybrid azaleas that were shown at the Fall 1997 MAC meeting. Since Harry and I were not there when the plants were blooming, we used Doug's rough mapping of the plants and took a few seed pods from every plant that had seed in the mapped areas. From the plant mapping, Doug's slides and our inspection of the plants there appears to be *Rhododendron periclymenoides*, *R. arborescens*, and reportedly *R. calendulaceum* in the immediate area. (We did not go deep enough into the area to find the *R. calendulaceum*.) The seed pods collected look more like those of *R. periclymenoides* with some resembling *R. arborescens*. The seed however, while never reaching the size of *R. calendulaceum*, ranged from larger than average *R. periclymenoides* to extremely thin with a few approaching the appearance of *R. arborescens*, with a great diversity of size, shape and color.

Anyone wishing seed of these from Audra State Park area, mixed Gregory Bald area, or Roan area *R. calendulaceum* or *R. catawbiense*, write me at 250 Dutch Ridge Road, Clendenin, WV 25045 or call 304-968-3793. If you reach the answering machine, leave your name, address and telephone number with the type seed you want.

COMMENTS ON A PROMISING NEW RHODODENDRON NAMED 'JOHN C. WHITE'
by William Bedwell

My plant of the new variety from Northern Virginia, 'John C. White', has new growth almost a foot long this year. But this plant has been amazing me for close to ten years and is fast becoming a favorite! Read on.

The exceptional growth means it really appreciated the fertilizer that I finally gave it in May of 1996, and it was magnificent during the mid-April tour of my garden in Dinwiddie — huge pyramidal trusses of light pink that becomes darker to rose on the ruffled edges of flower lobes. Flowers are similar to 'Wheatley' but more richly colored and a larger truss. Unlike 'Wheatley', the leaves are dark green and the plant is very vigorous. 'Wheatley' is still the most beautiful plant in my garden when in bloom, but 'John C. White' usually opens its spectacular trusses up to a week earlier than 'Wheatley' but later than the early Shammarellos, such as 'Cheer'. Flowering time averages the third week in April for me. Also, it seems to handle hot summers and lots of sun with no trouble. I think one of its parents is 'Nova Zembla' but, for me, it has none of the guaranteed-to-die-after-five-years problem that 'Nova Zembla' has. (That is why the nursery people like 'Nova Zembla' — it always survives their guarantee period!)

I donated a large number of cuttings to MAC's Plants for Members (P4M) program a few years ago, and they produced very vigorous plants that many MAC people took home. David Lay reported that it rooted unusually well, in spite of the fact that I broke all the rules for taking cuttings. I removed every cutting from a 3-foot, multi-branched section of the plant that I was forced to prune off on a hot August or September day when I discovered a borer had tunneled several feet down the main section of the plant. What's even more amazing is the cut branch lay in the mid-day sun and wilted for nearly an hour before I thought to salvage the cuttings. I revived the wilted cuttings by plunging them into hot water—the same way we revive wilted flower show entries. Then I stored them in a jar of water in the refrigerator for two days before cutting back half the length of the leaves and putting them in plastic bags without water to package and mail to David Lay.

Yes, they went by good old U.S. Mail to Kilmarnock! All this abuse and the cuttings produced some of the most vigorous plants I have ever seen in the MAC P4M sales.

Now that a few years have passed since that P4M distribution, I have been wondering how

Rhododendron, 'John C. White' is doing for other MAC people who got it in. Don Hyatt gave the plant to me after he rooted it from the first cuttings distributed at a meeting of the Potomac Valley Chapter. Ray and Jane Goodrich had previously exhibited it in a Potomac Valley flower show where it won a major award. As I understand it, the Goodriches grew the original plant from a seedling given to them by George Ring who made the cross. The Goodriches named it for Margaret White's husband who had admired it in the flower show not long before he died. Margaret White attended our MAC meeting where the plant was distributed and was very pleased. She told me that she has made sure her family members have plants but she did not know if many other people have it. This is truly an ARS District 9 communal rhododendron and it may prove to be one of our best doers. If you have a plant, write to me and tell me how it is doing: Bill Bedwell, 1618 Monument Ave., Apt. 7, Richmond, VA 23220.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

William H.D. Leaning,
VA 22936-0695
Brian F. Katen, Blacksburg,
VA 24060
Dave & Virginia Banks, Vienna,
VA 22182 (Assoc. members)
L. Malcolm Clark, Chandler Gardens,
St., Southern Pines, NC 28387 (Full Member)
Jerry Hill, Hill's Nursery,
Arlington VA 22207-2099 (Reinstated)

IPM PROGRESS

Soon predator insects such as lacewings and lady beetles could be produced so efficiently that even nursery growers would be able to afford the large numbers of them needed to control pests in their fields. USDA-ARS is patenting an artificial food 100 times less expensive than insect eggs normally used to rear insects. The cost of feeding the predators is easily the most significant cost of raising them. (Information from NMPRO)

THE GARDEN by Sandra McDonald

The rains came at last! After a summer when our rainfall was more than 12 inches below normal for the year, we finally started getting rain in mid-October. Since the dogwoods turned red and dropped their leaves early and some silver maples had their leaves just turn crisp-dry green, we thought we were in for a poor fall display of foliage color. We were pleasantly surprised when we did get some quite good color in mid to late November. The moisture has gone down

several inches with rain almost every weekend since it finally started, though it is still dry down deep. At least we can do a little planting now. It was too dry to attempt it in early fall.

Evergreen azalea 'Dorset' has been blooming its nice coral red for quite a while and did not seem to be harmed when a few of the tender plants such as impatiens in the more open parts of the garden were lightly frosted earlier this week. The protection provided by a big oak tree probably prevented the frost from reaching it. The several plants of *Camellia sasanqua* have been putting on a beautiful display. The drought does not seem to have harmed them.

The New England and Russian asters have been nice. I especially like blue flowers, and their lovely blue flowers in the late autumn after the early chrysanthemums have finished is really appreciated. They are hard to place though because they grow so tall and should be at the back of the border, but do

want lots of sun. (It is a shame we can't seem to grow any of the really blue flowered rhododendrons here in our heat.) The various maples have put on a long display of color this fall. The coral-bark maple *Acer palmatum* 'Sango kaku' puts on an early display of very yellow foliage which contrast brightly with its orange bark. Then some of the other varieties of *A. palmatum* with cut-leaf foliage turning bright to deep red on some varieties and yellow on others put on their show. Close on their heels is the Fullmoon Maple *A. japonicum* which turns a lovely yellow. And finally in our garden the rare 'Cinnamon Flake' maple which is a hybrid between *A. griseum* and *A. nikoense* puts on a wonderful show with its trifoliate yellow and pink leaves and of course its wonderful cinnamon colored bark. It is going to be a large tree. One of its parents, *A. griseum*, is having its own little show nearby with trifoliate leaves in shades of red and great peeling bark.

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 Ray Brush, Treasurer, PO Box 266, Madison VA 22727.

Annual membership dues are \$28 per year.

Miscellaneous inquiries may be sent to the editor (address below) for forwarding to proper individual.

If your address label is highlighted, your dues are past due.

Sandra McDonald, Ph.D., Editor
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