

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

Vol. XXIV No.4

December, 1998

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

May 14-16, 1999 Tanglewood Holiday Inn, Roanoke, VA
November 5,6&7, 1999 Fort Magruder Inn, Williamsburg, VA
(Eastern Regional Meeting: host MAC)

Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

R & A News <http://members.aol.com/randanews/news.html>

American Rhododendron Society <http://www.rhodie.org/>

U VA Science & Engineering Libraries <http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm>

FROM THE PRESIDENT by Doug Jolley

Among the writings of Gertrude Jekyll is the mention of manuring rhododendron beds as a winter chore. With a ready source now available "on site" the rhodos and azaleas have responded well to this treatment. Not only do the rhodies thrive, the incidences of visitors to the garden crawling about in search of labels for this plant or that plant has all but ceased.

As 1998 nears an end, it is not too early to mark next year's calendar for what should be two stellar meetings. On May 14, 15, and 16 we will meet in Roanoke, Virginia. Frank Pelurie and Paul James are planning a weekend of activities which include visits to area gardens and a luncheon at Greenbriar Nursery's new Roanoke location.

Paul's garden will be on the list to visit and as described in the *ARS Journal* it is home to a near complete collection of Delp hybrid rhododendrons.

On November 5,6, and 7, our chapter is hosting the ARS Eastern Regional Meeting in Williamsburg,

Virginia. In addition to a full slate of tours, sales, and presentations, Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery in Raleigh, North Carolina, will be our featured speaker. More details will follow. If any year is going to offer exciting rhododendron destinations, 1999 will certainly fill the bill!

FALL MEET-ING 1998. by Doug Jolley

The Fall Meeting of MAC-ARS was held at the historic Chamberlin Hotel in Hampton, Virginia. Friday evening, some members of the Species Study Group presented to Harry Wise an impromptu award of a cap from "Catfish Heaven" in Harry's hometown of Dothan, Alabama. It seems that C.H. was a memorable culinary stop during a seed



Austin and Betty Kennell at the MAC Fall Meeting in Hampton.

collecting trip earlier this fall.

Bill Bedwell recounted his and David Lay's trip to the ARS Convention in Niagara Falls, Ontario. As



MAC members touring McDonald's garden.



Ted Scott and Ray and Betty Brush touring the garden.

usual, Bill's photography and narrative made us wish that we all could have been along. Bill also showed the David Leach Research Station visited during the ARS convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Bill attributed his early involvement in the ARS to reading Dr. Leach's *Rhododendrons of the World*.

Our group was joined by members from the Hampton Roads Horticultural Society and local Master Gardeners on Friday night. Attendance for the weekend activities exceeded 100.

On Saturday morning we were treated to the story of three very different gardens. George McLellan began with his restoration of a 19th century farm house and his subsequent gardening efforts. George's garden lies along the Wye River in Gloucester County, Virginia, and is a warm Zone 7. Interesting were several of his gardens shown at different times

of the year., Norm Beaudry then took us to Bethesda, Maryland, and his and Jean's garden. The Beaudrys have a suburban garden and have emphasized rhododendrons, conifers, and a myriad of companion plantings. Unfortunately, deer are the scourge of the neighborhood and Norm described the trials and tribulations of dealing with these four legged locusts. Finally, Paul James showed us how his garden near Roanoke, Virginia, has undergone various changes both physically and philosophically. In summation, his hillside has been transformed into a wonderland of rhododendrons, azaleas, rock gardens, and horticultural wonder in general. Our upcoming Spring Meeting will visit Paul's garden in mid May.

The McDonalds and the Przypeks graciously opened their gardens for the afternoon tours. Amazingly to the cold climate members, several plants of all sorts were still blooming. With a myriad of rhodos and azaleas at each location one could only imagine how these gardens would appear in their full springtime regalia.

Once again Sharon Collins chaired the foliage show. Bill Bedwell won Best in Show with the evergreen azalea 'Palestrina'. The seedling sale, book sale, and a stellar auction completed the afternoon.

The banquet room was situated on the eighth and top floor of the hotel. Twilight view was grand as the sun set over Hampton Roads. Congratulations to Ray Doggett for winning the Chapter's Bronze Medal. Get well cards were signed for Dorothy Robinson and General Robert Porter. Both are convalescing from recent maladies.

Dick Murcott from Long Island, New York, inspired and entertained us for the remainder of the evening. A terrific program can be given without "benefit" of slides or a microphone as Dick covered past and recent trends in hybridizing and reflected on involvement in the ARS in general. Halfway through his presentation we were all graciously allowed to watch a spectacular fire works display which suddenly erupted next to and over us.

The evening concluded with Plants for Members and with many retiring to the hospitality room. Sunday morning George McLellan and Parker Little showed slides of various native azaleas to the Species Study Group. Many thanks are in order to coordinators: David Lay, the McDonalds, and the

Przypeks. Also, those who furnished plants, seedlings, seed and gave helping hands make these meetings a success.

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC - by Jane McKay

Cool, sometimes cold nights and warm days have been the story this fall in central Virginia. Unfortunately still no rain, so we are watering. We



Jane McKay

hate to see the garden go into winter so dry. The fall color this year has been spectacular we didn't really expect it because of the drought. Now at the end of November the leaves are down (yet to be picked up and composted) and the main show is the deciduous hollies. *Ilex verticillata* 'Winter Red' and 'Winter Gold' are loaded with berries as is *I. serrata* × *verticillata* 'Sparkleberry'.

We see deer almost every day on the back hill, but they have left the garden alone this fall, possibly due to the heavy acorn crop. We do spray our plants outside the fence with 'Deer Away' early each December and so far they have left the rhododendrons alone. Most of our azaleas are inside the fence and the few outside we cover with nets.

We are rethinking our method of fertilizing. On Long Island we always fertilized in the winter after the ground froze. We continued that practice here, but now feel with the warm winter days and late spring freezes having the fertilizer available so early may add to the chance of bark split. This year we will fertilize in late March or early April. We will also try a higher concentration of phosphorus and lower concentration of nitrogen as we are not getting good bud set.

Who said you cannot teach an old dog new tricks.

BRONZE MEDAL PRESENTED TO C. RAY DOGGETT for his active participation and service to the Chapter over many years. Ray served as chapter president after taking over suddenly on the death of Terry Sheuchenko. Ray had previously been president of the Richmond Chapter of the Azalea Society of America and has helped arrange several joint meetings of our groups. Ray and Alice have hosted many board meetings at their retirement home at Gloucester Point.

Thanks for all that you have done and we hope that there will be much more participation and sharing in the future. November 21, 1998, Hampton, Virginia.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE



Doug Jolley presenting Bronze Medal Citation to Ray Doggett. Photo by Walter Przypek.

Welcome to new members:

William Constable, Jr., Troy, VA
22974

William T. Lloyd, , Portsmouth,
VA

William & Ann Mangels, ,
Baltimore, MD 21204

Robert & Jay Murray, , Colts Neck,
NJ 07722-1021

James S. Replogle, ,
Bridgewater, VA 22812-1434

Change of address:

David and Virginia Banks,
APO AE 09715

Sharon R. Collins, , Mt. Solon,
VA 22843

Don & Carolyn Dana Lewis, Ann
Arbor, MI 48104

M/M John C. Withers, ,
McGaheysville, VA 22840

DEATHS

Evelyn Kaelin died on Sunday, November 22, 1998. She had been been ill for many years, though few people realized it since she had such a friendly and sunny disposition. Our deepest sympathy is extended to Bruno and his family on their loss.

Dorothy Robinson's brother passed away in October. Paul James' mother died on December 4. Our deepest sympathy is extended to them both.

ILLNESSES

Several MAC members have been ill this fall. Dorothy Robinson had surgery and is recovering well. General Porter was unable to attend our fall meeting, but is also doing well now. John Buschmann was

confined to bed for 4 weeks with bursitis and sciatica. Maggie Aitken is still in recovery from the accident in which she was struck by a car.

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

Kendon Stubbs received the prestigious Jefferson Award, the University of Virginia's highest award. His innovation was in making the University Library's vast resources more accessible to the University community, and to scholars worldwide, via the Internet. While other librarians were concentrating on the electronic delivery of the bibliographic record, Kendon understood that users really wanted content (text, images, data, sound), etc. Today the E-Text Center at the University has spun off five additional digital centers and is recognized as a model for other research libraries. His contributions were instrumental in the University's having received a \$450,000 Mellon grant to digitize rare books in the Clifton Waller Barrett Library in American Literature, which in turn led to a partnership with a British publisher to market digital versions and provide revenue to reinvest in future digital projects. Because of his work, the University is also a key player in IBM's Digital Library initiative, for which it recently received \$1 million in digitizing services. See web site <http://viva.lib.virginia.edu/puboff/press/stubbs2.html> for full article.

The September 6, 1998, Sunday Gazette-Mail in Charleston, WV had a feature article on **Harry and Betty Wise**. The article was headlined "Not quitting, Man with mission, woman with paint brushes, fill their retirement years." Harry retired 11 years ago and since he has limited garden space at home, started on his famous Coonskin Park project. The park has 800 acres. Harry moved many of his plants when he had to give up a lot across the street he was using. He and some helpers moved them to Coonskin and he has continued to add plants to the park. Now Harry has plenty of land, but not enough time, energy, or help.

Betty says that each of us has something we like to do. She paints, mostly watercolors, her work ranging from plants and flowers and landscapes to some very colorful abstractions.

Don Hyatt's students took the top award at the ThinkQuest contest. Don, who teaches computer science at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Fairfax County, took his students to California for the awards. Two of his students (David Green and Alex Kuleska, juniors at the school) worked by e-mail with a third student (Granite Christopher from Kenai, Alaska) to win the grand prize for their web site "Soundry". The grand prize was \$25,000 per student plus a Java Award for a total of \$27,500 each. His other three teams did well too: first in Arts/Literature (\$15,000 each), third

in Sports/Health plus a special Java Award (\$11,000) and fifth in Math/Science (\$3,000). The total winnings for his students alone was somewhere over \$100,000 this time. If team partners who worked remotely on the Internet are counted, the "take" was over \$200,000. The awards are primarily scholarship money.

AZALEAS ON COPPER BALD by Kathy Kron

I was pleased to be invited to join a group of azalea enthusiasts on a field trip to Copper Bald. Ed Collins was the organizer and on the morning of June 24, 1998, we were joined by Rob Eisenberg, Dick Kehn, Charlie Larus, Ellen Riley, Bob Stelloh, and my student, Ann Powell. The weather was warm, well, hot actually, but otherwise we had clear skies and sunshine.

Copper Bald is just north of Wayah Bald along the Appalachian Trail. The elevation of both balds is approximately the same. However, Copper Bald is not really bald—the summit is tree covered. A relatively short hike (with a nice lunch stop at the "Mossy Log Café") took us up through slopes covered with deciduous azaleas. Although at lower elevations most of these individuals were past flowering, as we ascended the trail, more and more flowering plants were evident. Soon there were azaleas flowering in every direction.

Identifying azaleas can be tricky, especially when there is hybridization occurring within a population as was apparent at Copper Bald. However, with a good hand lens (10× works well) and a little practice, some of the more obscure characteristics of these lovely plants can be seen. Bob Stelloh asked me to prioritize the characteristics I use to identify the native azaleas. I use flower color first and divide the color into two broad categories: orange-red and white to pink. I then look at the upper lobe of the flower to see if there is a yellow-reddish orange blotch. Once I have noted these characteristics, I then look to see if the leaves are still in bud or just unfolding vs. whether the leaves are fully opened. This helps to narrow down the possibilities—for example, on Copper Bald, the white-flowered individuals had their leaves fully open—narrowing down the possible species to *Rhododendron arborescens* or *R. viscosum*. The orange-red flowered azaleas also had their leaves open. This indicated that these were most likely *R. cumberlandense*, or possibly late-flowering *R. calendulaceum*.

In order to distinguish between *R. arborescens* and *R. viscosum*, I need a hand lens and my nose. One of the characteristics I use are the edges (margins) of the flower bud scales (hand lens needed here). These are often a chestnut brown color and are found at the base of the truss. *Rhododendron arborescens* has multicellular hairs that form a fringe along the edges

of the bud scales. The outer (abaxial) surface of the bud scale is smooth in *R. arborescens*. In addition, *R. arborescens* has very few, if any, hairs on the leaves and the new twigs and shoots are smooth and hairless. Often the young stems are yellow brown, although this varies quite a bit. *Rhododendron viscosum* is much hairier on the twigs, young stems, and leaves. Bud scale characteristics are quite variable in *R. viscosum*. Another characteristic that is quite consistently different between *R. arborescens* and *R. viscosum* is the fragrance (nose needed here). The fragrance of *Rhododendron arborescens* is sweet with cinnamon overtones. By contrast, *R. viscosum* has a heavy, sweet fragrance that is quite musky. (*R. cumberlandense* and *R. calendulaceum* are not fragrant.)

The most common white-flowered azalea that I saw on Copper Bald was *Rhododendron arborescens*. However, there were very few individuals that appeared to be "pure" *R. arborescens*. I say this because *R. arborescens* is a species that has no blotch on the upper corolla lobe. But many of the white-flowered individuals I saw on Copper Bald had a very small to medium-sized yellow spot on the upper corolla lobe. This brings us to the other common species on Copper Bald, *Rhododendron cumberlandense*.

How does one tell *R. cumberlandense* from *R. calendulaceum*? In addition to whether or not the leaves are fully expanded, the best characteristics to use are elevation (*R. cumberlandense* is generally found above 3500 feet) and the presence or absence of glandular hairs on the flower stalk (pedicel) and edges of the sepals — need that hand tens again! Both *R. cumberlandense* and *R. calendulaceum* have glands along the edges of the bud scales. Most of the time these glands are a dark reddish brown and look like little rounded teeth on the lower half of the bud scale. The differences between the two species can be seen on the flower stalk and edges of the sepals. *Rhododendron cumberlandense* has multicellular hairs without glands on these structures while *R. calendulaceum* has multicellular hairs with little round glands on the flower stalk and sepal edges. To see these tiny characteristics you need to aim you hand lens at the base of the flower and pull away the bud scales to see the stalk of the flower. The sepals are usually tiny things, often no bigger than a millimeter in length, so you have to look closely.

Of course, one of the most interesting things about the azaleas on Copper Bald is that so many of them don't fit the description of *R. arborescens* or *R. cumberlandense* very well. Some individuals are white with a yellow blotch and have virtually no fragrance, some are salmon or pink with an orange blotch and a sweet fragrance! Just about any

combination of characters you can think of occur on Copper Bald. Indeed, I would say that the azaleas on Copper Bald are a good example of a hybrid swarm—that is, a local population of individuals that includes species, first generation hybrids, and several subsequent generations of backcrossed individuals. This same pattern can be seen between two different species on Stone Mountain in Georgia. At Stone Mountain, *Rhododendron flammeeum* (Oconee azalea) and *R. canescens* can be found along the same hillside. In this population one can also find flowers with all possible combinations of characters from the two parent species.

Copper Bald is also interesting because it has a good-sized population of *R. cumberlandense*. This species is most common on the Cumberland Plateau, west of the Tennessee border. About fifteen years ago, I spent some time collecting azaleas on Wayah Bald (but never made the short trip to Copper Bald!). On Wayah Bald the orange azaleas are *R. calendulaceum*—although later flowering than the "typical" flame azalea. These plants are coarser, with more hairs on the stems and leaves than usually found in *R. cumberlandense*. In addition, the hairs on the pedicels and sepal margins are glandular. I find it very interesting that *R. calendulaceum* is on Wayah Bald, but *R. cumberlandense* is the common orange azalea on nearby Copper Bald.

After a few hours of exploring the hillsides for different color combinations of azaleas, we headed out. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing another population of hybridizing azaleas. My student and I took some samples for future DNA work. I hope to return to Copper Bald next year.

(Reprinted from *Southeastern Chapter ARS Newsletter* with permission of the author.)

Kathy Kron, Department of Biology, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem NC 27109-7325

REPORT OF DISTRICT NINE DIRECTOR, ARS Board Meeting of October 2, 1998

by Sandra McDonald

I attended the ARS Board of Directors meeting in Florence, Oregon on October 2, 1998. There were several items of interest to the membership.

Some chapters are in need of more money and want to be able to collect more than the amount allocated from regular dues. Mike Stewart said the Portland Chapter had done an analysis for how much it costs the chapter to maintain a member and found out it is in the range of \$25 per year. The issue was referred to the Policies and By Laws Committee for recommendations at the Spring Board meeting April 1999.

On the issue of using credit cards with ARS, forty-two members renewed that way this year which

was not too expensive for the Society or cumbersome for the Executive Director.

The ARS membership roster is now on the web, but only their own chapters are accessible by password for the chapter presidents and the district directors. I have checked these rosters out and they are helpful. Dee Daneri wants direction from the board and thoughts from the chapters about having the complete ARS roster on the web (available only by password) with only one person in each chapter having the password. This would be to replace the Membership Roster that has been available to members for \$2.00. The roster is expensive to print and not very many copies are needed, but it is needed very much by active members. A roster print-out from the web would be about 90 pages, while the current "book" form is about 50 pages. There is also a possibility of having the roster on disk. The roster will be printed and distributed as usual after January 1, 1999.

All chapter presidents will be getting a letter about flower show dates and the issue of copyright from Journal Editor Sonja Nelson, since there has been some abuse of the copyright issue.

The number of new memberships resulting from Campaign 1000 was 872, but the bad news is that 800 members were lost. Now there is a new Campaign 2000. **For our District Nine, the challenge is for Mason-Dixon to gain 35 members; Middle Atlantic to gain 47 members; and Potomac Valley to gain 37 members.**

The R&A News:

<<http://members.aol.com/randanews/news.html>> our electronic newsletter edited by Betty Spady, is quite successful. The older issues are now archived at the rhododendron web site at UVA library <<http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm>> and can be viewed on-line. The official ARS web site is found at <<http://www.rhododendron.org/>>. This site has new material on it. I recommend that all three sites be bookmarked on your computers. The Electronic Newsletter Committee, the Archives Committee and the Electronic Media Committee have been working together on different aspects of these projects.

There was not enough interest in the calendar project to go forward with producing ARS calendars.

The issue of liability insurance for ARS chapters was bought up because Dee gets some calls from chapters about insurance, since chapters must have insurance to hold meetings in many public places. There is a possibility that she can get the standard \$1,000,000 coverage for about \$50 per chapter per year if all the chapters sign up. The board thought this matter should be pursued since the chapters usually pay much more for this coverage.

The next board meeting was planned to be held in conjunction with the next Annual Meeting and it will be on Tuesday April 26, 1999, starting at 1:00 p.m.

Our Registrar, Jay Murray, is working to try to register the names of commercially available rhododendrons that are not registered. She is seeking help from the membership to do this. A list is available from me for those who want to help out.

Dee Daneri would like to include as many e-mail addresses in her membership list as possible. If she does not have yours you can send it to her at DeeDaneri@aol. If you don't wish your e-mail address in the roster, please indicate that it is confidential. Betty Spady, editor of R&A News is also collecting e-mail addresses of ARS members. You can contact her at Bettyspady@aol.com.

DID YOU DONATE PLANTS TO GINTER? by Ray Doggett.

In early August I received a brochure from Ginter telling about the various gardens called "Self Guided Walking Tour" In the "Rhododendron Collection" section, it states "a gift of the Virginia Rhododendron Association." When I could not reach Teresa Lester by phone, I wrote her, explaining that their rhodos were given by MAC -ARS members. I wrote on August 12, 1998. Ken McDonald called when he saw something similar in early November. I then called and got Ms Lester. She said she had received my letter, and that she would be working on a revision of this folder in early January. She expressed a desire to get as much history on rhodos at Ginter as possible. So, if you donated plants you can contribute to this history. Please contact me by letter, phone or fax. Ray Doggett 8106 Terrapin Cove Rd., Gloucester Point, VA 23062. Phone toll free 1-877-642-9190. Fax to the same number. Thanks for your help.

THE GARDEN by Sandra McDonald

As I sit finishing up the newsletter on December 6, the asters are in beautiful, blue, full bloom in the yard. I had been hoping they would be blooming for the MAC visit to our garden, but that was a little early. Now, the asters normally bloom late, well into November, but this is ridiculous. One of the pink roses has four open blooms on it, too. The *Camellia sasanqua* are still putting on a good show, but they probably peaked about the time of the tour. My *Prunus mume* with single pale pink blossoms has

many flowers open and looks like a little light pink snowstorm. The oriental plum tree still has green leaves. *Acer* 'Cinnamon Flakes' foliage turned yellow, pink, and light orange shortly after the tour. *Osmanthus* is perfuming the air with its sweet fragrance. Can this be December? I am afraid so, and do hope that when the cold weather finally hits it will come gradually. We have not even had a frost yet at home, although the gardeners at the nursery had their tomatoes zapped by a frost earlier in the season.

I'm sure most of you have heard that every month this year has set new records for heat up through October. The drought here is said to be the area's second-worst in the century. After a very wet winter and early spring the rains just stopped. The ground is like concrete where we have not been watering. In fact, we are still watering plants in the ground in December. I can't ever remember doing that before.

It is about time to cut some decorations for Christmas. I'll give the holly a try, but I could include asters and roses! Gardener friends at Colonial Williamsburg told me that they usually have trouble keeping the fresh fruit on their famous wreaths in good condition because of cold weather. This year they are having trouble with the greens drying out too much because of the hot, dry weather. This 70 to 80 degree weather should be coming to an end soon.



Elmer Lapsley, Mike Andruczyk, Dave Lay and George Brubaker at MAC Fall Meeting.

NOTES FROM WEEKLY NMPRO E-MAIL

* North Carolina entomologists have identified a species of longhorned beetle on coniferous evergreens in the Tar Heel state. The Asian-native insects, *Callidiellum rufipenne*, were collected from stands of eastern red cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*, near Manteo, N.C. Entomologists said that because the beetles were found in trees growing several miles from any major port city, they may be established in the U.S. Though they generally breed in recently dead trees, the beetles attack living stressed trees in Japan.

* Gypsy moth populations continue to climb in Illinois, especially in the N.E., according to the Ill. Dept. of Ag. In 1998, 52,000 gypsy moths were trapped in the state compared to 35,000 in 1997 and 3,000 in 1996. The IDA attributes the dramatic increases to insects moving in from Wisconsin and Indiana and unusually mild winters. (217) 785-9272.

* Scientists at the State Univ. of New York are hoping that American chestnut seedlings infused with frog genes will develop into blight-resistant trees. Since April, SUNY researchers have successfully transferred synthetic African clawed frog genes into cells that produce chestnut tree shoots. They hope to plant small trees from these shoots by late 1999. Identified in 1904, the blight has decimated native chestnut populations in American forests. SUNY scientists believe the African frog has inherent resistance to the fungal organism that causes the blight.



Margeret White and Jane Goodrich on the garden tour.

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.

Sandra McDonald, Ph.D., Editor
Mid-Atlantic Rhododendron News and Notes
P.O. Box 268
Hampton, VA 23669