

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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May 2021

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

Fall Meeting date to be determined Roslyn Center, Richmond

American Rhododendron Society	http://www.rhododendron.org/
ARS Store Order from Amazon thru this site	http://arsstore.org/
MAC Website (UPDATED REGULARLY)	http://www.macars.org/
UVA Special Collections	http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/
Old Quarterly Bulletins & JARS	http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/
Rhododendron Blog	www.rhododendron.org/blog/
MAC Zoom Meeting Videos, May 1, 2021	https://macars.org/wordpress/

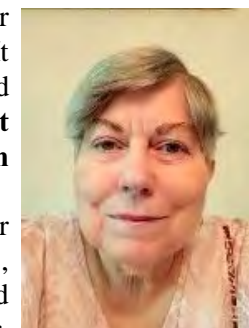
MAC SPRING MEETING MAY 1, 2021 REVIEW by Sandra McDonald

With Covid-19 pandemic restrictions still in place, MAC had a virtual meeting on Zoom instead of an in-person meeting on May 1. Attendance was about 29. The meeting was in two segments, a morning session that started at 10AM, although a warmup started at 9:30AM and an evening session. We had half an hour of informal conversations with our Rhododendron friends while we were all signing in and getting our settings for video and audio worked out for those newer to using Zoom. It was great to get to see old friends again. **See the link just above this article to watch the meeting videos.**

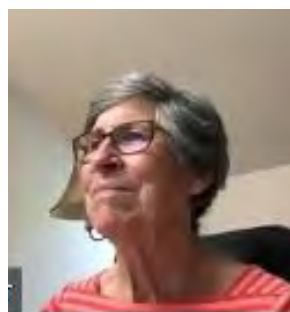
Many thanks to our President Theresa Brents, Treasurer Debby Sauer, and our Webmaster and Director, and man of technical skills David Banks for making this first MAC Zoom meeting a success.



David Banks



Theresa Brents



Debby Sauer

Nature's Rock Garden, and the proposed new species *Rhododendron smokianum*. Karel had fantastic photos that he took and some that Don Hyatt took and some by Doug Jolley. You must know that these were really good photos for the presentation considering who the photographers were.

Our morning session started with a welcome and announcements by Theresa.

Karel Bernady gave an interesting program with eclectic topics including butterflies as pollinators,



Karel Bernady



Rhododendron smokianum on a cliff. From Karel Bernady.

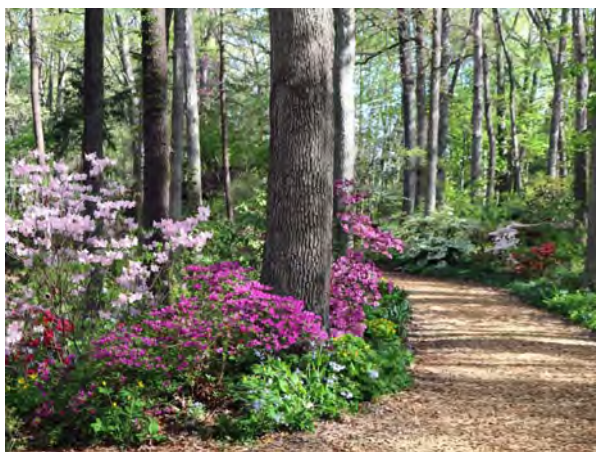


Karel's presentation had slides of butterflies with azalea pollen on their wings.

After Karel's presentation we heard reports on various MAC projects. Jan Mahon of JMU gave a short presentation about what is happening at the Edith J. Carrier Arboretum.



Jan Mahon and Edith J. Carrier Arboretum.

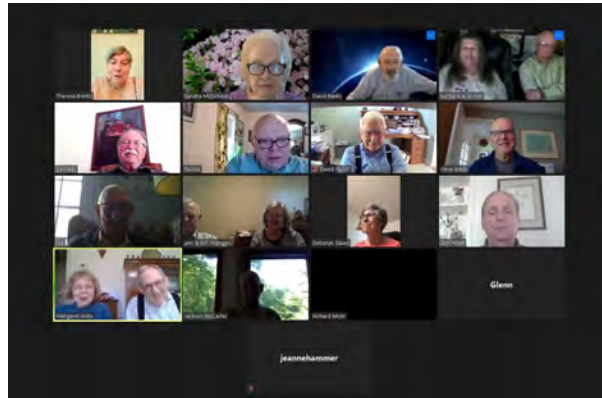


Path through azaleas at Edith Carrier Arboretum.

Jan noted that they had a abundance of Virginia Bluebells blooming and told of what was happening at the garden and that many people were visiting it.

Debby Sauer updated us on the cleanup work that she and a few other MAC members had done at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden.

Theresa read a report that Elissa Steeves had sent her about the garden at VA Tech.

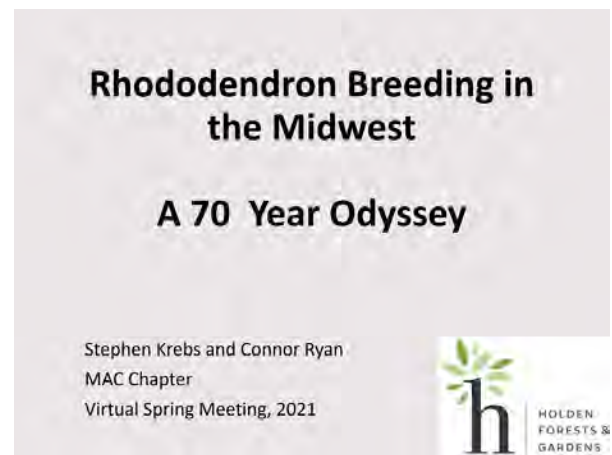


Some attendees at the morning session.

The evening session began with Steve Krebs presentation of Rhododendron Breeding in the Midwest: A Seventy Year Odyssey. Steve is the retired Director of the David G. Leach Research Station of the Holden Arboretum and Connor Ryan is Rhododendron Collections Curator at Holden Arboretum.



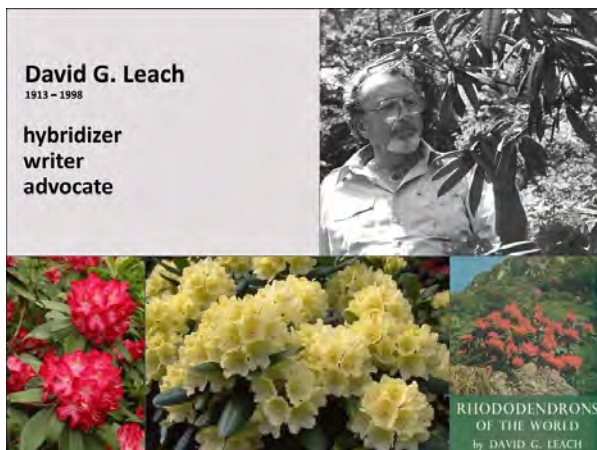
Stephen Krebs



Steve showed us photos of many of David Leach's plants and told us about the various characteristics that Leach was breeding for and evaluating in his plants. Photos from this section courtesy of Steve Krebs.



Research and garden locations.



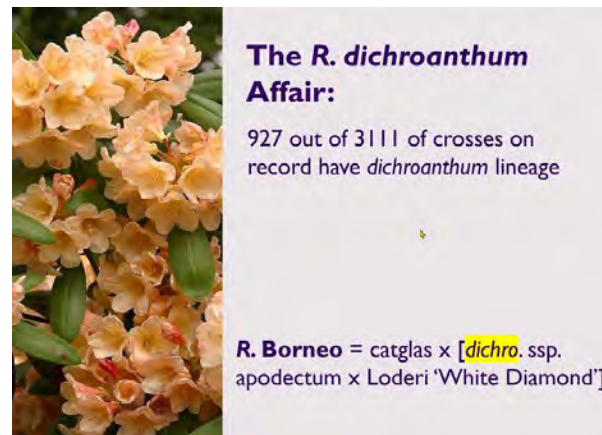
David G. Leach and his well-known book *Rhododendrons of the World*.



Cold hardy plants.

Breeding for Hardy Orange Flowers 1° Crosses by Leach (1950s)

♀	♂	Derived Cultivars
cat. var. <i>album</i>	(<i>nerii</i> . x <i>dichro.</i>) x <i>fort. discolor</i> = Edward Dunn?	Bali, Moon Mist, Blazen Sun
cat. var. <i>album</i>	<i>dichro.</i> x (<i>griff.</i> x <i>auric.</i>) = Francis Hanger	Peach Parfait, Atlantis, Duet
<i>maximum</i>	(<i>dichro.</i> x <i>griersonianum</i>) = Fabia	Vee Vee
Russ. Harmon	(<i>dichro.</i> x <i>fort. discolor</i>) = Goldsworth Orange	Hindustan, Capistrano



David Leach used *R. dichroanthum* in his crosses since he was interested in producing cold hardy yellows which were not yet available. His hybridizing goals were good form for flowers, leaves, and growth habit, fragrant flowers, extended bloom dates, tolerance of extreme temperatures, alkaline soils, disease and insect resistance.

Cultivars for Resistance Breeding



R. 'Ingrid Mehlquist'



R. 'Rocket'



R. 'Caroline'

Connor Ryan is Rhododendron Collections Curator at Holden Arboretum with interests in collections, grafting and breeding.



Connor Ryan.

Current Interests in Rhododendrons

- Collections
- Grafting
- Breeding



Breeding with Resistant Species
R. hyperythrum

Bud hardy zone 6
Heat tolerant zone 9
Dense, glossy foliage
Floriferous



Holden Rhododendron Collection

HYBRIDIZER	UNIQUE SELECTIONS
DAVID LEACH	122
TONY SHAMMARELLO	42
WESTON NURSERIES	39
PETER GIRARD SR. + JR.	30
JOSEPH GABLE	28
WATERER (KNAP HILL)	26
CHARLES DEXTER	25
LANNY PRIDE	20
PAUL BOSLEY	13



- 1870 plants
- 754 unique taxa
- 54 species

First 'Southern' Release: 2018



Splendor™ =
R. 'Hegry's Red' x
R. hyperythrum

Wild Origin Species



OH Native Azaleas –
Ashtabula County



Minniebush – *R. pilosum*
at Dolly Sods, WV

Keys to Adaptive Trait Breeding

- Source material for breeding (species or cultivars)
- Trait is highly heritable
- Large breeding populations
- Effective screening method(s)
- Multiple site evaluations
- Time (~10 years R&D)



Mechanics of grafting

IN THE CROZET GARDEN by Lloyd Willis

It is April 22, 2021, a Friday, as I sit down to write this article. While it has looked like spring for several weeks, it has not felt like spring on many mornings. Quite cool in fact. Doing yard work at 38°F in a steady breeze has had me with three layers on my head and seven layers on the chest. Recently two hours outside doing yard work seems mentally not enough and physically quite enough.



What makes the garden interesting to me today? The dogwoods in flower in our yard and in neighboring yards have been outstanding. The older daughter told us (as a treat for coming over to her house to walk the dogs) to go upstairs to their second floor bedroom and look out. We are good at following the instructions of our adult children (sometimes). This time we did as requested and were rewarded with looking out upon a sea of dogwood blossoms.

The sugar maples, red maples, and Japanese maples are mainly in full leaf. The variety in leaf color of the Japanese maples continues to bring joy in the early spring. Several change leaf color as they open which adds to the joy. We are enjoying seeing the fiddleheads unfolding on the Autumn Brilliance ferns and have plans to plant more. Several of the hostas are at the four to six inch tall stage and seem to be getting bigger each day. Grandson Silas (age 13) has been learning to spray our hostas with the smelly chemicals to protect them from the rabbits and deer.

Multiple azaleas are in full bloom. Sometime soon I want to count how many are now over ten feet tall (three at least). The 'Taurus' rhododendrons have been full of bloom this spring. Now the ground around them is littered with the fallen blossoms. However, it is still interesting to see the colorful stamens and pistils. Some of the Yaks are starting to open. Always a treat.

So where is the humor in this article? First, the background information. About two blocks north of us there is a family putting out food in twenty-six bowls for the local deer. About two blocks south of us there is a family putting out food for the local deer. When one or more deer visit us during daylight, I try to give them directions to the local free food—often using a very firm and very loud

voice. For years, we have seen where one deer has spent the night bedded down in our field. This week Mrs. Willis and I are on our morning walk. There was a heavy dew. I pointed out the one deer bed. Mrs. Willis kindly said to please look again. There were seven beds. Now I'm wondering are we a resting place for the deer between the two feeding places. Or, have the deer eaten so many of our azaleas and hostas that they need a rest before traveling to the actual feeding stations?

MAC WEBSITE HAS HAD MAJOR UPDATE

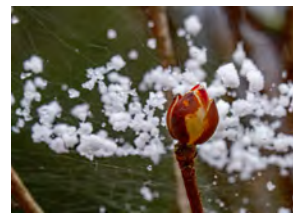
David Banks has been doing a major update on our website MACARS.ORG. If you have not visited recently you should take a look. There is a video of Gregory Bald plants that Don Hyatt had made some years ago that Dave converted from the obsolete Flash which is no longer supported by anyone. Dave converted it into an .mp4 file in several steps with added music. It can be seen on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vbOb1514Fg or you can see it on the MACARS.ORG website by clicking Native Azaleas, then Gregory Bald, the Gregory Bald_Visit Video.

Dave has added links to the recorded video of our May 1 Zoom meeting right on the Home Page: MACARS.org. If you missed the meeting this is where you can watch and listen to the talks.

There are other additions on the website, too, including more older issues of the newsletter.

WINDBEAM WAY WANDERINGS May 2021 by Doug Jolley (Photos by the author.)

April 1 certainly delivered an April's Fool surprise to our blooming garden. *Rhododendron* 'Cornell Pink', *R. dauricum*, and one precocious *R.* 'Gable's Early Bird' were treated to a coating of granular snow followed by a solid frosty



Granular snow on *R. periclymenoides*.

night. The weather for many days had been nice and warm and Davetta and I knew that unusually mild temperatures would not last. Testimony to a balmy March's sudden end was

presented by deciduous azaleas hosting spider webs suddenly transformed into decorative snowy baskets.



‘April Snow’.

The next wave of flowers included another April snow but this time the show was provided by *Rhododendron* ‘April Snow’. The highlight this April was *R.* ‘Gable’s Early Bird’ which bloomed nearly the entire month. A selection of more diminutive varieties that are early bloomers are growing in a special shade cloth covered structure of somewhat tender rhododendrons,



Gable’s Early Bird.

spring wildflowers and various species of lady slipper orchids both native and hybrids. Our yellow



R. keiskei.

R. keiskei often would succumb to early frosts but just a bit of protection is doing the trick in allowing for weeks of blooming.



R. ‘Landmark’.

A second late April frost then finished the chapter on what was in bloom and a new wave of flowers appeared within a couple days. Now in early May, elepidote rhododendrons, native azaleas, lady slipper orchids and later spring wildflowers are reigning supreme. Our chapter’s Plants for Members program has certainly provided for outstanding performers

with many now reaching mature stature. Some favorites are *R.* 'Fantastica', *R.* 'Normandy', *R.*

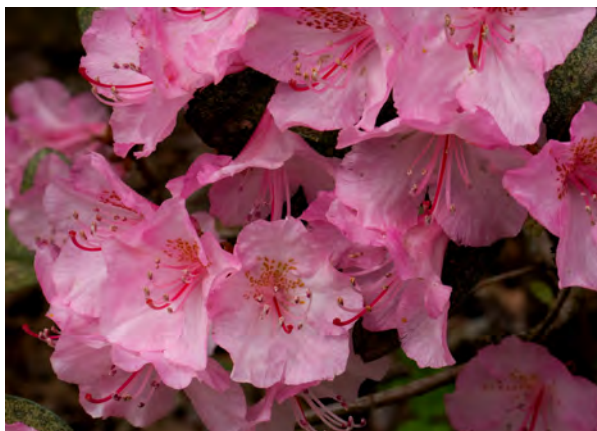


'Windbeam'.

'Bubblegum' *R.* 'Landmark' and a host of native



'Mist Maiden'



'Bubblegum'



'Fantastica'

azaleas. Some flame azaleas and flame azalea hybrids have reached heights of ten feet or more. Also grafted plant won at one of the Sandwich Club meetings years is a grafted Dexter numbered rhododendron. We call it "Sandwich Prize". In the probably 15 plus years we have had this plant, it has grown to less than 3 feet tall. Each year a flowering of nearly red flowers, each sporting a black throat, cover the plant. Following that, a flush of new leaves appears with just the smallest bit of new stem. Apparently, there is no need at this point to move it to roomier digs. There are other more outstanding Dexter's to be grown but this one is the definition of dependability. Finally, visits to populations of *Rhododendron maximum* in the wild, especially in our higher elevations, show the importance of this plant in contributing to its environs. Birds, native orchids, ferns, hemlock and beech overstory create an inviting environment. Just a few days into May I was able to visit a mountain bog surrounded by rhododendron-hemlock forest. One resident had just arrived for the summer. It was a Canada Warbler singing and posing in front of lush rhododendron leaves: Canadian fauna and flora here in West Virginia.



Remember all photos can be seen in color and ENLARGED at MACARS.ORG.



Tree peony and 'Dexter's Champagne'



"Sandwich Prize"



R. austrinum x *R. calendulaceum*.



Canada warbler



R. periclymenoides



'Caroline'



Yellow lady slipper



'Fantastica'



Yellow lady slippers

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