

# MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

PVC-MAC Zoom talk by Ralf Bauer January 29, 2023 at 2PM EST  
Joint ARS/ASA Conference April 19-23, 2023 Atlanta, GA  
MAC-PVC Joint Meeting May 19-21, 2023 Shrine Mont Retreat, Orkney Springs, VA

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## EASTERN REGIONAL MEETING RECAP

Several MAC members attended the Eastern Regional Meeting in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, September 27-29, 2022. Our Chapter did not have a separate fall meeting this year. This mid-week meeting worked out very well.

The activities and programs were excellent. After arriving at the hotel, we went to the Gettysburg Gardens open house and met up with some of the local members and some Potomac Valley Chapter members and looked at some of the unusual plants the nursery was growing. Tuesday evening after dinner Don Hyatt gave one of his very comprehensive talks with many beautiful plant photos of new plants being developed in the Eastern U.S.



Don Hyatt setting up for his talk about new plants in the Eastern U.S. Photo by S. McDonald.



George McLellan at Gettysburg Gardens.

Wednesday was tour day with a visit to Hershey Park to see the Rose Garden and Japanese Garden, and the impressive butterfly house where we went into the enclosed house very carefully and walked around among the butterflies.



Dave Banks with Barbara Bullock at Gettysburg Gardens.



ARS Registrar Michael Martin Mills at Gettysburg Gardens.



Hershey Park bonsai house.



Rosa and Bob McWhorter at Hershey Park.



Group at Hershey Park. Back row: Dave Banks, Karel Bernady and Michael Martin Mills.

We then got back onto the buses for the trip to the Gettysburg Battlefield. We had a very impressive tour guide on our bus who gave us an extensive history of the battlefield as we drove around and made several stops.

MAC members who remember the going down Monument Avenue in Richmond will remember the statue of Robert E. Lee on his horse. The Historic Gettysburg Battlefield has a statue which we saw as we toured the Gettysburg Battlefield.



Virginia State Monument of Robert E. Lee and his horse at Historic Gettysburg National Military Park.



Some of our group from the bus listening to our tour guide give us a history lesson about the Gettysburg Battlefield..

Wayne Mezitt accepting the Pioneer Achievement Award for Edmund Mezitt, Wayne's deceased father.



Wayne Mezitt

Wednesday evening Wayne Mezitt gave a program about Weston Nurseries in Hopkinton, Massachusetts and the Mezitt family. Grandfather Peter J. Mezitt, (1885-1967) started the nursery in 1923 and it was carried on by son Edmund (1915-1986), then by sons Wayne (1942) and Roger (1944-2017), and now Peter (1967), four generations of Mezitts. They now have nurseries in Hopkinton, Chelmsford, and Hingham, Massachusetts.



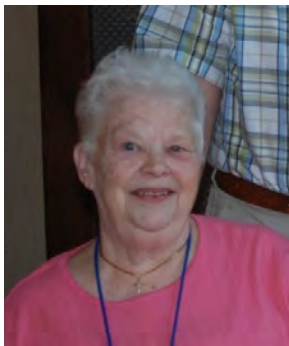
Lloyd and Margaret Willis ready to listen to the talk by Wayne Mezitt.

There was a plant sale with very nice plants that was open at various times.

Several of us headed back home on Thursday morning hoping to make it back home before Hurricane Ian would make driving hazardous.

## DEATHS

MAC member **Mary Barb**, 80, of Basye, Virginia, passed away on October 13, 2022. She owned and operated Barb Day Care until 2015. She loved children and their activities and was involved in many children's organizations. Mary is survived by her



Mary Barb

husband Hubert, and three children Kevin Barb, James Barb (Julie), and Rebecca Jenkins, five grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

MAC members will remember Mary's smiling face when she and Hubert came to our meetings.

## ZOOM PRESENTATION BY RALF BAUER

Ralf Bauer in Offenburg, Germany, will be giving a Zoom presentation to PVC and MAC members on Saturday, January 29, 2023 at 2:00 PM. He will be talking about his study of the *R. minus* complex. *Rhododendron minus* now includes what were *R. carolinianum*, and *R. chapmanii*. *Rhododendron smokianum* is now considered a new species. He has made many trips to the Eastern U.S. studying the native azaleas and rhododendrons and hybrids and has become a real expert on them. Ralf did give a previous Zoom talk about native azaleas and hybrids on January 30, 2021, that some of you may have seen.

Dave Banks will be handling the technical work for us. He will be sending out the link to members again.

Topic: Ralf Bauer talk on *R. minus*

Time: Jan 29, 2023 02:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5673619168?pwd=TzlJYkw0ZjFCdHU2UXZsV1MvNlBqZz09>

## MAC SPRING MEETING by Theresa Brents

The joint MAC/PVC meeting is May 19 - May 21, 2023 at the Shrine Mont Retreat and Resort in historic Orkney Springs, VA. Shrine Mont is located on 1200 acres at the foot of Great North Mountain in the Shenandoah Valley and at the edge of the George Washington National Forest. Lodging and all meals will be included in the room rates. Rooms are basic and food is simple, but ample and delicious. Saturday's garden tours will feature MAC member Hubert and his late wife Mary Barb's garden. Hubert's garden has over 400 rhododendrons and azaleas and many other unique

trees and plants. We will also visit another small rhododendron garden and a wonderful wildflower garden.

Look forward to a weekend with old and new friends, speakers John and Sally Perkins and Doug Jolley, and a plant auction providing you with the opportunity to acquire some fantastic new plants for your garden.

### **IN THE CROZET GARDEN** by Lloyd Willis

It is November 4, 2022 as I sit down to write this article. Yesterday when the wind was blowing, I could see what looked like giant yellow raindrops. On closer inspection, it was hundreds of small Chinese elm leaves. We have sugar maples visible looking in all four directions from our house. The largest and favorite is the one east of the house. It usually gives us 2 to 3 weeks of a beautiful golden fall color. This fall most of the leaves gave us 2 to 3 days of color before dropping off. Another group of sugar maples north of the house also lost their colorful fall leaves faster than usual.



Lloyd Willis

The company who does our tree work was here yesterday and are here again today. Their goal is the removal of two ash trees which are beside a garage. Each tree is over 70 feet tall and could easily crush the two story garage if it fell. The company went to another job so we currently have a truck and crane sitting by the garage next to the two-story high ash tree totem poles which will hopefully be removed soon. There are two possible positives out of this tree work. One is of course saving the garage and the other is that our two sons-in-law could have a tremendous amount of free firewood.

One of the joys of the garden in fall is the color. The sugar maples, the red maples and the Japanese maples continue to provide so many enjoyable shades of yellow, orange, red, and purple. The contrast of the colorful maples with the green of the azaleas and rhododendrons continues to be a visual treat.

Another joy of the garden in the fall is adding new plant beds. The newest bed was added this week. Five weeping Japanese maples were put in a circle eight feet across centered around another Japanese maple. Then 24 hostas were added to the bed as was 3 to 4 inches of pine bark mulch. All the plants were purchased at fall sale prices and my Monday-yard-work-college-age helper dug all the hosta holes.

So where is the humor in this article? About two weeks ago, Mrs. Willis (Margaret) and I were close to finishing a late breakfast. I said to Margaret that one of the things I missed most about the pandemic was that our face time with the children and grandchildren was clearly less than what we had had before the pandemic. Within ten seconds of that statement, the phone rang. The older daughter asked if we would like to ride with her the twenty minutes or so it takes to get out to Sugar Hollow where she left her jacket on her morning run. I asked her how far in she left the jacket and was told about a mile. To myself I thought that I haven't even finished breakfast and need to ride out to Sugar Hollow and then hike a mile in and a mile out with a full stomach. Not my idea of good face time. We said give us fifteen minutes to finish breakfast and we will be ready to go. We went—beautiful drive, good conversation, good face time. The jacket was still there and while the jacket was one mile in, it was next to the road—four feet away from the road. The daughter was happy to get her jacket and have company on her approximately hour drive. I was even happier not to have the mile hike in and mile hike out to get the jacket. Then she asked what our plans were for the rest of the day. I told her that on our way back from the rhodo meeting in Gettysburg I had spotted two large Japanese maples at a garden center in Verona which is about half an hour from our house. She said fine, I'll drive my husband's double cab pickup and we'll go get them. I did purchase one 30-gallon and three 15-gallon Japanese maples. It was a wonderful and unexpectedly expensive trip.

And it should be noted that while my helper and I spent twelve hours planting the four large Japanese maples, I have not forgotten the twenty-five rhodos in one-gallon pots that are still to be planted this fall. Happiness is . . . .

## LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden announced that it is planning to purchase 6.2 acres of land from Lakeside Baptist Church for \$1.9 million. Henrico County will support the plans with contributions, but the garden will still need to raise \$1.15 million through donors to cover the cost. Ownership is supposed to transfer in July 2025. <https://www.nbc12.com/2022/09/29/lewis-ginter-botanical-garden-plans-land-purchase-lakeside-baptist-church-expansion/>

## TO THE MOUNTAINS

by George McLellan

Once again a party from our ARS group has taken its annual June trip to the Southern Appalachians to view native Rhododendrons in all their glory in full bloom. Since 1990 I have been doing this trek and it has never been uneventful, but this year it seemed very routine until the last day when we had a REVELATION that will bring us back next summer with new enthusiasm. But, I get ahead of myself, so I will give you a brief chronicle of that trip first.

As usual the first stop was to Mount Rogers National Recreation Area and Grayson Highlands State Park. We were a little late to see the of *R. calendulaceum* at the camp grounds where there are some excellent yellows behind the store. But the *Kalmia* at Massie Gap was breath taking and the *R. catawbiense* in its many forms was still in good bloom.

The next days were spent around mountains in Tennessee and the Blue Ridge Parkway. A visit to Jay and Lindy Jackson reminded me that I will not miss the notable hike to Gregory Bald anymore. Their garden of native azaleas has all the colors and forms you will see on the Bald plus other species *R. viscosum* and *R. prunifolium* which were beginning to bloom while having wine and beer to sip. The next day was devoted to the Highlands of Roan which is always a special site to see. It was gratifying to see some seedlings of the Gray's Lily coming back and blooming.



Then we went onward south down the Blue Ridge Parkway towards Franklin, N.C. for three nights. On this trip with us were Steve Wright (Director of Jenkins Arboretum who had permission to take cuttings) and his intern Tara Spears from the University of Pennsylvania. Tara is doing research on *Rhododendron smokianum*, a newly identified species found on Mount LeConte and nearby areas in the Great Smoky Mountain Park. Therefore, a day was spent around Newfound Gap where Tara was able to see her first glimpse of *R. smokianum* in the wild. The next two days were spent exploring Wayah Bald and Hooper before a visit to Vivian Abney and her East Fork Nursery.

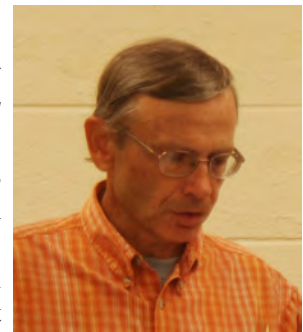
Now to speak of the revelation. While hiking on Roan at Engine Gap with Sally and John Perkins. Sally, while looking at the display of *R. calendulaceum*, remarked that it was just like the Appalachian Train on White Top Mountain in Virginia. I had been to White Top, the second highest mountain in Virginia, and not seen anything at the top but a grassy bald with cell phone towers, and had not stopped at the Appalachian Trail.

So on the trip home, I took a side trip up the forest road to the top of White Top and stopped at the parking lot for the Appalachian Trail and headed south on the Appalachian Trail. It was an eye opener, although it was late in the bloom season and only 10 to 15% of the azaleas were still in bloom. I saw magnificent azaleas still in colorful bloom along the trail that seemed to follow the 5000' contour line. There seemed to be as many or even more azaleas than was on Roan, plus it was on a much easier trail. After I was there Karel Bernady also checked out White Top and said it is a must see to be explored for a day or 2 days. So next bloom season. . . . .

## WINDBEAM WAY WANDERINGS DECEMBER 2022

by Doug Jolley (All photos by Doug Jolley.)

The garden season is pretty much over here in central West Virginia. The native witch-hazel plants were bright



yellow in both fall foliage and flowers. Speaking of bright yellow, multiple news outlets reported in October that the state was experiencing its most colorful autumn in years. Our garden can attest to that headline.



*R. periclymenoides*

We experienced frosty nights in early October and later in the month as well. Deciduous trees, shrubs and our larch were beautiful. On the azalea aspect,



*R. arborescens*

many native azaleas were very nice. Red was the main hue and we had beautiful *Rhododendron periclymenoides*, *arborescens*, *alabemense* and *prinophyllum*. Other native species and deciduous hybrids sported shades of yellow, orange and rust.

Among the outstanding trees, *Cornus kousa* and *Acer rubrum* 'October Glory' were standouts.



*R. 'Landmark'*



*Cornus kousa*



*Kalmia* 'Ostbo Red' and Praying Mantis egg mass.



Screech owl in new box.

Davetta and I hopefully have a new avian resident/predator. For a few years I have contemplated placing a Eastern Screech Owl box somewhere in the garden. This November I purchased a box and placed it fourteen feet off the ground attached to a stately Dawn Redwood tree. Upon completing the transaction, the bird store clerk wished me luck and noted that the box might be



Praying Mantis in September.

occupied in a few to several months. The site selected matched most of the placement directions researched. Three days after placement I was taking photographs of our new occupant! Hopefully a pair will stay and raise a brood of owlets next spring. Another welcome predator which is common here is the Praying Mantis. This fall we have noticed several egg masses scattered throughout the garden.

In finishing, I travel through the New River National Park each week and cross the well-known New River Bridge on U.S.



*R. arborescens* at New River Gorge.

Route 19. One of those times I took

the road which leads past the Visitor Center, down into the gorge, across the river and back up into Fayetteville. The foliage in the gorge was very nice. With a bit of shoreline searching I managed to photograph *R. arborescens* and accompanying trees with the bridge crossing high above. These azaleas are reliable bloomers each mid-June. Additionally, the flowers are highly fragrant. I wonder how many whitewater rafters realize and appreciate the beautiful plants by which they zoom?



*R. maximum* and *R. arborescens* at New River National Park.



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

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

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**Memberships and renewals should be sent to our Membership Chairman Jeanne Hammer at 231 N Robinson Dr, Macon, NC 27551.**

Annual membership dues are \$40 per year.

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

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