



Potomac Valley Chapter American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Early Spring Newsletter: March 2007

Calendar

- * **March 18, 2007** - U.S. Arboretum - *Hank Schannen*
- * **April 12-15, 2007** - ARS Convention, San Francisco, CA
- * **April 27-29, 2007** - District IX Meeting, Richmond, VA
- * **May 7-8, 2007** - Field Trip - Blue Ridge Parkway
- * **May 12, 2007** - Flower Show at the National Arboretum

Chapter Officers

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Next Meeting: March 18, 2007, 1:00 – 4:00 PM Hank Schannen : “15 in 15”

Hank Schannen will be the featured speaker at our next meeting on March 18 at the National Arboretum. One of the leading rhododendron experts, Hank owns RareFind Nursery in Jackson, NJ. They sell plants on site and mail order: www.rarefindnursery.com

The title of Hank’s talk is “15 in 15” -- he will be sharing with us his expert opinion on what 15 reasonable advances we can expect to see in the genus over the next 15 years. Hank will evaluate trends, advances, and possibilities that he believes will strongly impact our rhododendron interests.

Most of his talk will be supported by superb color slides but even if Hank didn’t show us a single photo, those who have heard Hank know he is an absolutely gifted speaker and will keep everyone enthralled with his entertaining and dynamic presentation. Hank’s synthesis of coming events will be an exciting eye opener. He says that most of the things we can expect are positive although he admits there are some negative aspects, too. You won’t want to miss what the “master” has to say about the next fifteen years in the rhododendron realm. Be there!!!

Refreshment Duty: Persons whose last names begin with **R** through **Z** are asked to bring some refreshment goodies for the table.

Directions: The National Arboretum is located in northeast Washington, D.C., off of Bladensburg Road at 24th and R St. The Arboretum website provides excellent directions: www.usna.usda.gov

District 9 Meeting: Richmond, VA, April 27-29

Registration materials for the District 9 meeting in Richmond, VA, should be arriving soon. Our hosts, the Middle Atlantic Chapter ARS, have arranged an exciting program with garden tours, speakers, banquets, and a plant swap. The convention hotel is at the Holiday Inn Crossroads. Please join us.



Hank Schannen – *What will the future hold?*

Blue Ridge Field Trip: May 7–8, 2007

If you want to join us on the spring field trip down the Blue Ridge Parkway, make your reservations at the Peaks of Otter Lodge as soon as possible. At the time of this newsletter publication, the lodge had ample space for us but since it is a popular vacation spot and they do not hold blocks of rooms, slots can fill up quickly. Price per room is \$99 plus tax.

Our Chapter Field Trip will be similar to the 2006 post convention tour, but we will be traveling by car instead of bus. We are recommending that those wishing to travel more with a group should convene at the Virginia Welcome Center on I-66 West near Manassas at 8:00 AM on Monday morning. The wayside has restroom facilities available.

From there, our first stop will be the 8-acre Louer Garden in Haymarket to see their azaleas, one of the largest collections in the region. The Louers have over 8000 azaleas representing about 2000 varieties.



Gazebo at the Lower Garden

There are several possible stops before getting on the Parkway for the night's lodging at the Peaks. One recommendation is Prince Michael Vineyards in Madison, VA. While there, you may sample some of their excellent wines and perhaps pick up a bottle or two to enjoy that evening at the Peaks of Otter. Another possible stop is lunch at historic Michie Tavern in Charlottesville, or a tour of nearby Monticello, home of Thomas Jefferson.

From Charlottesville, we will head down the Blue Ridge Parkway, stopping at various overlooks to see the views and admire the native azaleas and wildflowers. They should be in peak bloom.

Save time to enjoy the quiet beauty of the Peaks of Otter at milepost 86. The rooms at the lodge do not have television or phones, but each one has a private view of the lake with the mountain scenery. The inexpensive restaurant at the Peaks has excellent food, so enjoy dinner before retiring for the evening.



Native Azaleas at the Peaks of Otter Lake

The next morning, we will have a leisurely breakfast at the Peaks Restaurant before continuing south to visit the garden of Paul James near Roanoke.

Paul's garden has 15 landscaped acres around his home, but that is just part of the 1000 acres of land

his family owns that stretches from the knoll where is home resides to the top of the mountain in the distance. Paul's garden has the largest collection of the Delp rhododendrons, as well as many Gable and Haag hybrids, plus wonderful collections of rock garden plants, conifers, wildflowers, and every other plant imaginable.



Vista from the Deck at the James Garden

We will return to Roanoke for a late lunch before heading home. There are other potential stops on the way home including an herb farm near Raphine and Andre Viette's Nursery near Fishersville, VA.

Depending upon weather and season of bloom this spring, some of us may continue south from Roanoke to Asheville for a few days to admire the *R. vaseyi* along the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina.

Should the Peaks of Otter fill up but you would still like to join us, alternate lodging is available in nearby Roanoke but it will be more difficult to stay with the group. Please contact Don Hyatt for some motel suggestions and additional trip details.

Peaks of Otter Reservation Information:

If you want to participate in the field trip, make your reservations at the Peaks of Otter for Monday night, May 7, 2007, right away. Price per room is \$99, plus applicable taxes.

Peaks of Otter Lodge, Bedford, VA

1-800-542-5927

1-540-586-1081

www.peaksofotterlodge.com

Annual Flower Show: National Arboretum

May 12, 2007 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Our annual Flower Show will be held at the U.S. National Arboretum on May 12 this year. Those of us who decide to see the *vaseyi* near Asheville will be certain to return home in time to help. The flower show is one of major contacts with the public. Please volunteer to help, too, and bring flowers!

Chapter Photography Contest Results

By Bob McWhorter

As previously announced the chapter conducted its first annual photography contest during the January 14th regular meeting. A total of 38 photographs were entered. Chapter members were asked to judge the photographs and cast their ballots for first and second place photographs in each of three categories and for the best overall photograph.

The judging took place following Jane Goodrich's presentation. Chapter members were quiet as church mice and they walked, considered, reconsidered and then cast their ballots; each hoping they had chosen the winning photographs. Barry Sperling took on the job of scoring the ballots. After waiting for the suspense to build, Barry announced the following winners:

Category I – Flowers

- 1st Place – “Janet’s Fantasy” – Don Hyatt
2nd Place - "Pam Corckran x Lovelace" – Jon Wallenmeyer

Category II – Scenery

- 1st Place - “Roan Highlands 2006” – Don Hyatt
2nd Place - “Azalea Trail” – Bob McWhorter

Category III – Other

- 1st Place - “Autumn Heath Swarm – Don Hyatt
2nd Place – “Choptank Sunrise Over Janet Blair” – Gray Carter

Potomac Valley Chapter - Photograph of the Year Award – 2007

“Choptank Sunrise Over Janet Blair” – Gray Carter

The names of chapter members who attended the meeting were ‘drawn from a hat’ and given the opportunity to choose from a number of door prizes, which included 2 copies of Sonja Nelson's book about landscaping with rhododendrons, 5 copies of Ed Reiley's Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas, 1st edition and about 40 copies the Bulletin of the American Rhododendron Society, from the Spring of 1999, which contained an article by Clarence Towe and George McLellan about the *R. prunifolium* in Providence Canyon. Jim Hayes brought rooted cuttings, which were also distributed to chapter members as door prizes.

Chapter president Jon Wallenmeyer presented the contest prizes, which included for first place a fifty dollar check, a camera monopod for second place and a handsome picture frame complete with matting and brass tag denoting “ARS – PVC Photograph of the Year – 2007”. Jon pronounced the contest a huge success, thanked everyone who entered pictures and encouraged all members to participate next year.

Jon Wallenmeyer also extended the chapter's thanks and appreciation to Barry Sperling and Bob McWhorter for coordinating the contest. He also recognized Norman and Jean Beaudry, Carol Segree and Don Hyatt for many helpful suggestions when planning the contest.

Note: As promised, this issue carries a color page of the winning photographs in our 2006 contest. Your newsletter editor apologizes for so many first place awards, but we need more people to enter next time. Take plenty of pictures on our Chapter Field Trip. You could have next year's winner!

Chapter Library: Jean Beaudry

Our Chapter Librarian, Jean Beaudry, has the following books available for members to check out. Rather than trying to haul such an extensive library to each meeting, she has asked that people review the list below and request books from her at least one week prior to a chapter meeting. She will bring the book to you at the meeting, and we will expect you to return that book at the following meeting. Please contact Jean by phone or email to request books and check availability:

Email: beaujean@verizon.net
Phone: 301-365-0130

Library Book Listing:

- A01** - A Brocade Pillow, by Ito Ihei (Introduction by John Creech)
A02 - A Comparison of the Three Editions of the RHS Colour Chart, by Don Voss & Hale (eight copies)
A03 - A Contribution toward Standardization of Color Names in Horticulture, by ARS, edited by Don Voss
A04 - American Azaleas, by L. Clarence Towe
A05 - American Horticulturist, Rhododendrons, by American Horticultural Society
A06 - American Horticulturist, Escape to Whidbey Island, by American Horticultural Society (two copies)
A07 - American Rhododendron Hybrids, by Kraxberger (2 copies)
A08 - Azaleas, by Christopher Fairweather
A09 - Azaleas, by the New York Chapter
A10 - Azaleas and Camellias, by H. Harold Hume
A11 - Azaleas of China (in Chinese but good photos)
D01 - Dwarf Rhododendrons, by Peter A. Cox
G01 - Getting Started with Rhododendrons and Azaleas, by J. Harold Clarke
G02 - Great American Azaleas, by Jim Darden
G03 - Greer's Guidebook to Available Rhododendrons, 1982 Edition, by Harold Greer (two copies)
G04 - Growing Azaleas, by Allan Evans
G05 - Guidebook for Flower Shows and Judging, by the ARS (three copies)
H01 - Hardy Rhododendrons, 1954, by Frederick Street
H02 - How to Control Garden Pests, by Olkowski

H03 - [How to Identify Rhododendron and Azalea Problems](#), by Washington State University
H04 - [How to Prune and Trim](#), Snap-Cut
H05 - [Hybrids and Hybridizers](#), by Livingston and West
N01 - [Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh](#), Vol 39, #2, by the RHS
Q01 - [Quarterly Reprints, 1947, 1948, 1949](#), by ARS
Q02 - [Quarterly Reprints, 1950](#), by ARS (2 copies)
R01 - [Rhododendron and Azalea Culture](#), by William Watson
R02 - [Rhododendron Information](#), by the ARS
R03 - [Rhododendrons](#), 1965, by Frederick Street
R04 - [Rhododendrons and Azaleas](#), 2001, by Geoff Bryant
R05 - [Rhododendrons and Azaleas](#), First Edition by Sunset
R06 - [Rhododendrons and Azaleas for the Northeast](#), by New York Chapter
R07 - [Rhododendrons for Every Garden](#), by Wakefield
R08 - [Rhododendrons in America](#), by Ted Van Veen
R09 - [Rhododendrons in the Landscape](#), by Sonja Nelson
R10 - [Rhododendrons of China](#), by the ARS and the Rhododendron Species Foundation
R11 - [Rhododendrons of the World](#), by David Leach
R12 - [Rhododendrons, A Care Manual](#), by Kenneth Cox
R13 - [Rhododendrons, Propagating and Hybridizing](#), by the New York Chapter
R14 - [Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart](#), by the Royal Horticultural Society
S01 - [Shrubs and Vines for American Gardens](#), by Donald Wyman
S02 - [Sichuan Rhododendrons of China](#), edited by Fang Wempei
S03 - [Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas, First Edition](#), by H. Edward Reiley
S04 - [The American Camellia Society Yearbook, 1982](#), by the American Camellia Society
T01 - [The American Horticultural Magazine Handbook of Hollies](#), by the American Horticultural Society
T02 - [The Cattleyas and Their Relatives](#), by Carl Withner
T03 - [The Culture of Rhododendron](#), by the New York Chapter
T04 - [The Fundamentals of Rhododendron and Azalea Culture](#), by the ARS
T05 - [The Gardener's Index](#), by Clewis
T06 - [The Glenn Dale Azaleas](#), by B.Y. Morrison
T07 - [The National Arboretum Book of Outstanding Garden Plants](#), by Cathy, Heriteau
T08 - [The Pacific Coast Rhododendron Story](#), by the Portland Chapter, ARS
T09 - [The Rhododendron and Camellia Yearbook, 1970](#), by the RHS
T11 - [The Rhododendron Species, Volume One, Lepidotes](#), by H.H. Davidian (two copies)
T12 - [The Rhododendron Species, Volume Three, Elepidotes N-T](#), by H.H. Davidian
T13 - [The Rhododendron Yearbook, 1946](#), by the ARS
T14 - [The Rhododendron Yearbook, 1947](#), by the ARS
T15 - [The Rhododendron Yearbook, 1948](#), by the ARS
T16 - [The Rhododendron Yearbook, 1949](#), by the ARS
T17 - [The Rhododendron Yearbook, 1969](#), by the ARS
T18 - [The Rhododendron Yearbook, Part One, Species, 1956](#), by the RHS

T19 - [The Rhododendron Yearbook, Part Two, Hybrids, 1956](#), by the RHS
T20 - [The Species of Rhododendrons, Volume 1-16](#), by the Pacific Rhododendron Society
T21 - [Trees for American Gardens](#), by Donald Wyman
B01 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Flowering Shrubs](#)
B02 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Broadleaf Evergreens](#)
B03 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Breeding Plants for Home and Garden](#)
B04 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Orchids](#)
B05 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Flowering Trees](#)
B06 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Japanese Herbs and Their Uses](#)
B07 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Weed Control](#)
B08 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Tree and Shrub Forms, Their Landscape Use](#)
B09 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Fruit Trees and Shrubs](#)
B10 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Ferns](#)
B11 - [Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Handbook: Home Lawn](#)

Videos:

V01 - Video: [Gardening from the Ground Up](#)
V02 - Video: [The Great Plant Collections](#)

ARS Journals:

In addition, we have copies of many past ARS Journals including the following issues from the years listed below. There are four issues each year: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. We represent those with the numbers 1 through 4 respectively.

Available Years and Issues:

1960: 1	1974: 1, 2, 3, 4
1961: 1, 2	1975: 1, 4
1962: 1, 2, 3, 4	1976: 1, 2, 3, 4
1963: 1, 2, 3, 4	1977: 1, 2, 3, 4
1964: 2, 3, 4	1978: 1, 2, 3, 4
1965: 1, 2, 3, 4	1979: 1, 2, 3, 4
1966: 1, 2, 3, 4	1980: 1, 2, 4
1967: 1, 2, 3, 4	1981: 1, 2, 3, 4
1968: 1, 2, 3, 4	1982: 1
1969: 1, 2, 3, 4	1983: 2
1970: 1, 2, 3, 4	1984: 2
1971: 1, 2, 3, 4	1985: 1, 2, 3, 4
1972: 1, 2, 3, 4	1986: 1, 2, 3, 4
1973: 1, 2, 3, 4	1987: 1, 3, 4

Note: This list and any future updates will be posted on our chapter website:

www.arspvc.org

There should be a link off the **Home** page, but also links under **Activities** and **Newsletters**, once your editor gets the current issue online.

2007 PVC Photography Contest Winners

Category I: Close Up



1st - Janet's Fantasy by Don Hyatt



2nd - Pam Corckran x Lovelace by Jon Wallenmeyer

Category II: Scenery



1st - Roan Highlands 2006 by Don Hyatt

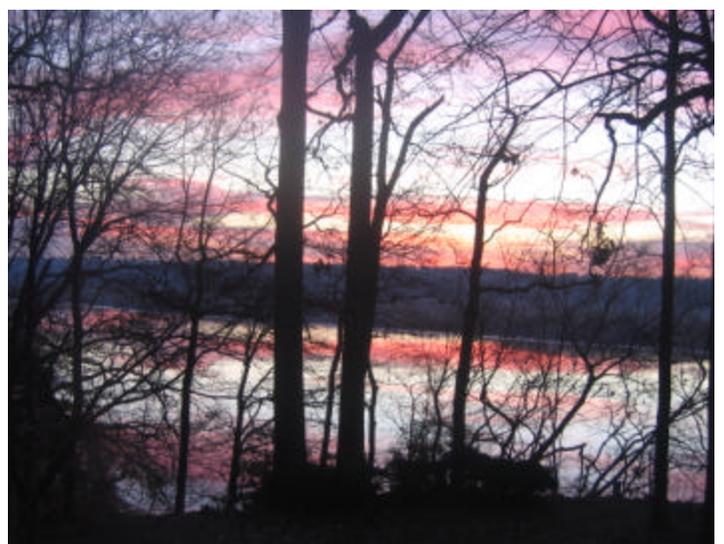


2nd - Azalea Trail by Bob McWhorter

Category III: Other



1st - Autumn Heath Swarm by Don Hyatt



2nd & Best in Show: Choptank Sunrise by Gray Carter

Winter Woes: Will Plants Bloom this Spring?

This winter started out extremely mild. Except for one cold snap in early December, the rest of the month and into mid January was balmy. However, the rest of January and all of February were way below normal. In my McLean garden, many nights had temperatures as low as 6 to 10 degrees with strong winds. Some of that was with snow cover and most was not. That is rare for my garden.

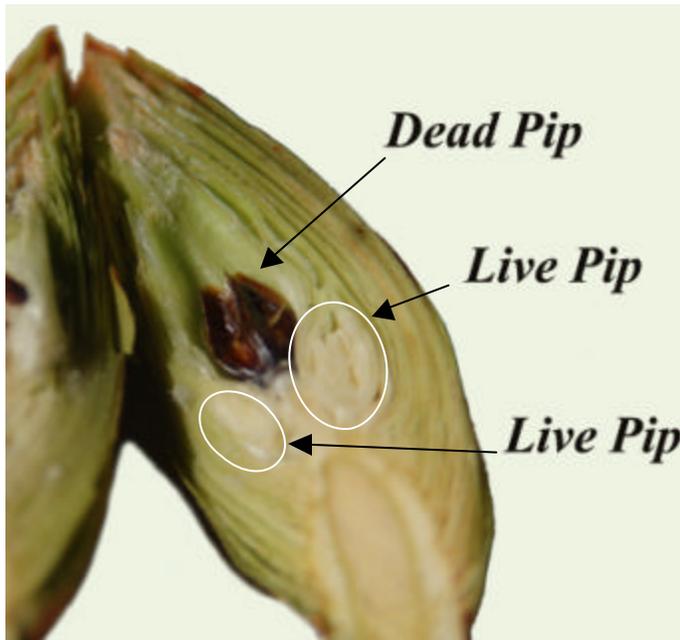
Many early blooming plants had already started into growth during the mild weather, but they were hit especially hard when the Arctic cold wave arrived. Around my neighborhood, the flowering quince was blooming but it is over for this year.

The hellebores I can see above the snow are in bad shape. The new shoots, buds, and leaves are obviously damaged and they probably won't bloom this year. Some of my daffodils are brown and withered, too. The buds on my tree peonies are dry and crispy so they certainly won't flower this season.

Naturally, I've been concerned as what to expect with my rhododendrons and azaleas. Were they badly damaged by the cold? I decided to check flower buds on various plants in the garden to assess the damage. I must admit it is not easy to pick off a flower bud and cut it open to see if it would have bloomed. However, at least I'll know what to expect from the rest of the buds on that plant and others in the garden.

Inside a normal rhododendron bud are "pips", the immature blossoms and their very prominent anthers. Those pips will expand to become flowers when the truss opens. If pips are still white or pale green, the buds are healthy and probably would have bloomed if I hadn't removed the bud. If the pips are brown or black, though, the flowers are dead and will not open.

Rhododendron Bud - Cross Section



Happily, most of the buds I have tested so far still look fine on both large leaf rhododendrons and evergreen azaleas. There are occasional dead pips in trusses of less hardy varieties but most should bloom normally. Deciduous azaleas are tough so I expected them to take the cold, but I was pleased to see that the very early, small leaf lepidote rhododendrons like *R. keiskei* and *R. mucronulatum* seem unharmed. I guess they had not broken dormancy during those warm days in December. A few rhodos like 'Anna Rose Whitney' have foliage burn but most are fine. Some magnolias were hurt but my camellias are OK.

It has been a strange year, but if the weather just cooperates from now on, I am expecting normal bloom in my garden. I hope yours will be the same.

Loss of a Mentor: Harry L. Wise

It is with great sadness that we must report the death of Harry L. Wise, former District 9 Director and Associate Member of our chapter. Harry passed away on January 18, 2007, following a fall at his home in West Virginia. He had been recuperating at home following surgery last fall due to lung cancer.

Harry's kindness, generosity, and wonderful sense of humor will be greatly missed by all who knew him. At the 2003 District meeting in Bowie, MD, attendees will never forget the humorous presentation that Harry and fellow West Virginian, Frank Pelurie, gave as the "Plant Doctors" that opening night. Dressed in hospital garb, the two cleverly applied medical terms to parallel all manner of things related to rhododendron culture, explaining how to propagate by seed or cuttings, how to transplant pot bound plants, how to prune, control diseases, and more. The crowd just roared in laughter as they taught us so many important details about rhododendron culture. If only we had a tape of that presentation! Harry received the ARS Silver Medal in 2004.

Sandwich Club: Cape Cod, June 2

The Sandwich Club meets each year on Cape Cod at the Heritage Plantation to admire the many acres of Dexter rhododendrons in full bloom. Cuttings of rare forms rooted the previous year are auctioned off that Saturday morning, with proceeds going to help support the garden. The rest of the time we just have fun. We usually stay at the Shady Nook Motel in Sandwich. For details, contact Norman Beaudry:

beaunorm@verizon.net

June Trip to Roan and Gregory Bald

Plans are still sketchy for Don's annual excursion to Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald. This year the trip will be an extension of the Magnolia Society Convention in Raleigh, NC, from June 13 to 17, so we should be hiking the ridges around June 18 to 21.

Rooting Dormant Cuttings by Don Hyatt

After a winter like this one, I guess an article about rooting dormant cuttings is appropriate. The heavy snow and ice this February may have broken some branches on your plants, but please don't let that cutting material go to waste. Cuttings taken in the dormant state often root quite easily. Even a branch that is severely desiccated can be revived and rooted as well. For those, I just make a fresh cut at the base of the stem, stick the branch in warm water, and cover the foliage with a plastic bag to keep humidity levels high. If it plumps up, I try to root it.

For containers, I use plastic pots or cut-off gallon milk jugs with slits in the bottom for eventual drainage. The key is to find a pot size that will fit easily inside a clear plastic bag. I fill the containers with my standard mix: 1/2 Peat, 1/4 Sand, 1/4 Perlite. Some types of sand may be limestone based which can cause problems, so when in doubt use peat and perlite in a 50/50 ratio. The potting medium should be damp but not wet since excess moisture is often the reason cuttings fail because they rot.

Since rhododendrons and azaleas are shallow rooted, I make short cuttings about 2 inches long. I also remove any flower buds since attempting to bloom uses up energy that should be used for rooting.

To discourage fungus and insect pests, I often "sterilize" the cuttings by soaking them for 5 minutes in a solution made of 1 part Clorox and 10 parts water. Afterwards, I rinse the cuttings well to remove the Clorox water and allow them to dry in the air for a few minutes or pat them dry with paper towels.

Next, I dip the end of each cutting in a rooting hormone such as Dip 'N Grow, and insert the bottom inch into the potting medium. The ratio for the hormone I use varies depending upon how difficult the cutting is to root. Evergreen azaleas can be rooted at the more dilute 10 to 1 ratio of water and hormone, but hard to root cuttings may do better at 5 to 1.

When the container is filled with cuttings, I enclose the pot in a plastic bag to make a mini-greenhouse and place the pots of cuttings under fluorescent lights with 16 to 24 hours of light each day. Pots can be placed on a north window sill with good light, but avoid bright sun as bags can overheat.

Cuttings usually break dormancy in 4 to 8 weeks and at that time they are often starting to form new roots. I watch the bags carefully so I can remove any cuttings that die or pull out any leaves that turn brown. That keeps potential fungus diseases from spreading to other cuttings in the container. There should be no need to water the pots during that time

since the condensation on the bag falls back into the potting medium keeping it damp.

I keep containers under lights during the rest of the winter and early spring. Eventually, after the cuttings have formed an ample root system, I start opening the bags slowly over a period of several days so the cuttings can get accustomed to lower humidity levels. Then I transplant to individual pots.

I give the cuttings some weak fertilizer after they are actively growing but be careful of too much fertilizer since it can kill young plants. By mid summer, I stop fertilizing since I want the plants to go dormant again in the fall. Young plants are very susceptible to early freezes, especially if they are actively growing. Cold frame protection is helpful, but cuttings taken in March are often large enough by fall to survive that first winter on their own.

Mike Creel of Lexington, South Carolina, has done some interesting experiments with dormant cuttings, especially using deciduous azaleas. He doesn't bother with rooting hormones but has success anyway. He roots his cuttings outside using "dome pots" which he constructs by taking a container such as a large pot with good drainage, filling it with a very porous potting medium, and covering the top with a clear plastic dome made from the top of a 2-liter Coke or Pepsi bottle. The dome should have a smaller diameter than the pot so there is a place where to add water to keep the medium moist.



The Creel Way "Dome Pot"



Deciduous Azalea Cuttings

For deciduous azaleas, he selects short stems that have a Y-crotch or other branching structure since these tend to root better. He inserts the base of the cuttings in the medium and covers the tops with the plastic dome. Pots are kept in bright light but out of strong sun. Since the cuttings have already gone through their normal cold period, they break dormancy easily in the spring, avoiding one of the major problems with summer cuttings. Try a few!

Donald W. Hyatt, Newsletter Editor
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