



Potomac Valley Chapter American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Early Spring Newsletter: March 2008

Calendar

- * **March 16, 2008** - Regular Meeting at the Arboretum
- * **April 16-19, 2008** - ARS Convention, Tulsa, OK
- * **April 26, 2008** - Flower Show Workshop, McWhorter Home
- * **May 1-4, 2008** - ASA Convention, Asheville, NC
- * **May 7-11, 2008** - International Rhodo Conference, Scotland
- * **May 10, 2008** - Flower Show at the National Arboretum
- * **May 31, 2008** - Sandwich Club, Cape Cod, MA
- * **June 6-8, 2008** - Middle Atlantic Chapter, Canaan Valley, WV
- * **June 15-20, 2008** - Chapter Field Trip, Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald

Chapter Officers

President: Jon Wallenmeyer
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Next Meeting: "Gardens and Friends"

By Karel Bernady

March 16, 2008, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Our next meeting will be held at the National Arboretum on Sunday, March 16th, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. We will convene in the downstairs classroom rather than the main auditorium since the African Violet Society is having their flower show upstairs that day. Take a peek at their show, too!

Our speaker is Mr. Karel Bernady, a retired chemist from Chester Springs, PA. Karel is the past president of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter and is the ARS District 8 Director. He often joins us on the mountain treks and other ARS activities. Pictured to the right, Karel is trying to make room in the Beaudry's car when they were given a 6 foot tall "rooted cutting" of 'White Dimples' by friends in the Sandwich Club.

In his presentation, "Gardens and Friends", Karel will talk about some friendships he has made through the American Rhododendron Society. He will show slides of these people and their lovely gardens while discussing some of their horticulture legacies.

Approximately one third of the gardens will be from greats on the West Coast including Frank Fujioka and the late Warren Berg. The balance will be gardens and people from the East including Paul James, Joe Minahan, Bill Rhein, Bill Zurich, Heritage Plantation, Bob Furman, and the Pilkingtons. Join us for an exciting afternoon of flowers and friendship.

Refreshment Duty: Persons whose last names begin with **Q** 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



Karel Bernady: Taking a Back Seat to the Plants

Chapter Photography Contest Results

Vice-President Bob McWhorter reports that seven chapter members entered a total of 38 pictures in our January photography contest. The pictures were beautiful and we hope more people enter next year.

As prizes for this year's contest winners, we purchased flowering plants and useful gardening items like trowels and rain gauges. The winners were determined by a popularity vote from those who attended. We asked that people who won multiple ribbons select only one of those prizes so we could provide awards for others who may not have grabbed the top three positions. This year, everyone who entered the contest went home with a prize. The color page shows the prize winners as listed below:

Category 1 - Flower/ Spray

- 1st Pl. - Don Hyatt - Hachmann's Charmant
- 2nd Pl. - Jon Wallenmeyer - Great Balls of Fire
- 3rd Pl. - Bob McWhorter - Pepper Spray

Category 2 - Scenery

- 1st Pl. - Bob McWhorter - Oh! My
2nd Pl. - Don Hyatt - National Arboretum
3rd Pl. - Bob McWhorter - Spring for Joy

Category 3 - Other

- 1st Pl. - Dan Neckel - Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
2nd Pl. - Don Hyatt - District 9 Tour, Junco Garden
3rd Pl. - Don Hyatt - Gray Carter - Sunny Side Up

Best in Show:

Dan Neckel - Eastern Tiger Swallowtail



Photo Contest Winners – Left to Right

Don Hyatt, Dan Neckel, Bob McWhorter, Jon Wallenmeyer

Thanks are extended to Barry Sperling for his assistance in conducting the photo contest. Coordinating the judging and tabulating the results is difficult and Barry did an excellent job, even down to the 5th and 6th place! Also, thanks to Rosa McWhorter for selecting the prizes.

Flower Show: National Arboretum

Saturday, May 10, 2007 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

The annual flower show will be held at the National Arboretum Administration Building on Saturday, May 10. We really need many people who have never volunteered before to help out this year since a number of our regulars will be out of town. We ask everyone to bring some flowers!

We will set up and accept entries on Saturday morning from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM. After the trusses and sprays are properly arranged, the judges will then determine the prize winners. All day long we will need people to greet the public and at 4:00 PM we need to take down and clean up. The Arboretum has expressed interest in our having some educational presentations, too, so if you could talk on one or more aspects of rhododendron culture or propagation, we could use help there as well.

Please let Jon Wallenmeyer or Bob McWhorter know if we can count on you to help out this year.

Sandwich Club Field Trip: May 31, 2008

Join us this year for the 20th anniversary of the Sandwich Club, which may also be its final meeting. Since 1988, his ARS committee has been studying the Dexter rhododendrons at Heritage Plantation on Cape Cod. The committee propagates rare clones and distributes plants via an auction for evaluation.



Admiring Rhododendrons in the Woods at Heritage

This year's auction will be held in the Shaker Barn at Heritage on Saturday, May 31st from 9:30 AM to 12:00 noon with all proceeds going to fund a summer intern. Many of us spend Friday at Heritage so we have more time to see the rhododendrons. It is peak bloom season! Several outstanding gardens are scheduled to be open by appointment on Friday, Saturday or Sunday so try to come a day early or stay an extra day to see those. We also spend Saturday afternoon in the woods at Heritage, evaluating plants that should be propagated for the next year.

This year's auction has 65 outstanding Dexter, Cowles, Consolini, and Pilkington hybrids. Norman Beaudry is posting images of auction varieties at:

www.picasaweb.google.com/beaunorm

Most of the "out of town" types stay at the Shady Nook Inn, 14 RT. 6A Old Kings Highway, Sandwich, MA (508) 888-0409 since it is very close to Heritage. Contact Norman Beaudry for additional information:

[\(beaunorm@verizon.net\)](mailto:beaunorm@verizon.net)

Sandwich Club Excursion – Side Trips

Since it is a fairly long drive to the Cape, some of us add an extra day to see nurseries or visit other attractions along the way. Below are some places we have been that you might want to see, too.

Rarefind Nursery (www.rarefindnursery.com) is located very close to the New Jersey Turnpike at Exit 7A. Hank Schannen's display garden usually has many plants still in bloom. You can also stroll through his hoop houses filled with choice rhododendrons, azaleas, trees, and companion plants, some of which are not even listed in his catalog.

2008 Photography Contest Winners

Category I: Flower / Spray



1st - 'Hachman's Charmant' Don Hyatt



2nd - 'Great Balls of Fire'
Jon Wallenmeyer



3rd - 'Pepper Spray' Bob McWhorter

Category II: Scenery



1st - "Oh! My" Bob McWhorter



2nd - National Arboretum Don Hyatt

These are color images of the top PVC photo contest winners for 2008.

Be sure to take some great photos this spring to enter next year!

Potomac Valley Chapter ARS

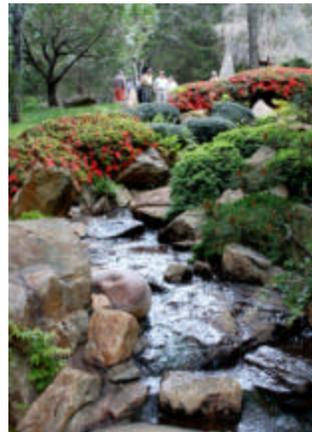


3rd - "Spring for Joy" Bob McWhorter

Category III: Other



1st and Best in Show "Eastern Tiger Swallowtail" Dan Neckel



2nd - District 9 Tour,
Junco Garden Don Hyatt



3rd - Gray Carter with
Sunny Side Up Don Hyatt

The Garden in the Woods, the display garden of the New England Wildflower Society, is another excellent side trip. (www.newfs.org) Located in Framingham which is southwest of Boston, the garden has many wonderful trails winding through a 50-acre landscape of wildflowers and native plants in a lovely natural setting. Tickets are \$8 for adults (\$5 for seniors). They also have a great plant sale.



Lake Reflections at the Garden in the Woods

You may want to drive to the end of Cape Cod at Provincetown photographing scenic vistas and light houses along the way. You can also take the ferry over to Martha's Vineyard (www.mvy.com) to see that quaint town as well as the famed Polly Hill Arboretum (www.pollyhillarboretum.org). The ferry leaves from Woods Hole several times a day but it is wise to make reservations in advance.

Another fun side trip is to Newport, Rhode Island, to see the famous mansions and century old trees in this historic city. (www.newportmansions.com) The most famous mansion is the Breakers, the opulent estate of the Vanderbilts, but there are many others including the Elms, Marble House, Rosecliff and more. Stop by the Visitor's Center in Newport to get more information, tickets, and advice where to park.



Entrance to the Breakers, Newport, RI

For \$31 you can buy a book of tickets to tour 5 mansions including the Breakers, an ample task for a

single day. However, you do not have to buy tickets to stroll along the Cliff Walk that meanders in front of the grand estates with vistas of the ocean. You can still peer into the gardens of most homes, but the mansion tour is certainly worth the cost to see how the wealthy lived at the turn of the century, trying to outdo one another with over-the-top extravagance.

There are many things to do on your way to and from the Cape so consider joining us this year at the Sandwich Club. It is more fun than a convention and such a pleasure to see rhododendrons in bloom again.

Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald Trip: June 15-20, 2008

If you haven't seen the native rhododendrons and azaleas in bloom in the wild, consider joining us this year on the hikes to Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald. Seeing masses of rhododendrons and native azaleas in full bloom against those scenic mountain vistas is indeed a sight to behold.

We usually try to stay in the same motel for two or three days, hiking on the day we expect the best weather and doing some lesser exploration by car on the other. It is not wise to hike along those high ridges if thunderstorms are due.

The following is our proposed itinerary but we may make a few changes depending upon circumstances.

Part I: The Roan Highlands

Sunday, June 15 – Arrive Elizabethton, TN, staying at the Americourt Hotel, formerly the Comfort Inn.

Monday & Tuesday, June 16 or June 17 – Hike Roan Mountain depending upon which day promises the best weather. Part of the Blue Ridge Parkway is currently closed due to a collapsed retaining wall near Mt. Mitchell so we cannot tour that area on the other day. If we are able to hike Roan on Monday, we may head south on June 17 to Asheville so we have more time for the southern section.

Part II: Parkway Tour

Wednesday, June 18 – Tour the Southern section of the Blue Ridge Parkway from Asheville to Balsam Gap. This is one of the prettiest portions of the Parkway and there are many scenic vistas with native azaleas and rhododendrons that should be in peak bloom. If there is time, we may get to Wayah Bald, south of the Smokies near Franklin, NC. We can also try to visit Meadowbrook Nursery near Marion, NC. (www.we-du.com) However, it is important to get to Townsend, TN, that night so we are ready for the hike to Gregory Bald the next day.

Part III: Gregory Bald Hike

Thursday and Friday, June 19, 20 – Preferably, we will hike up Gregory Bald on Thursday, unless stormy weather is forecast. If that happens, we will

postpone the hike to Friday instead. For those who choose not to hike up Gregory, there are many other attractions near the Smokies including Wayah Bald, Joyce Kilmer National Forest, and the National Park itself. For those who may be tired of trees, there is always Gatlinburg and Dollywood. Some of us want to try another arduous hike to Mt. LeConte in the Smokies, but we have not firmed up those plans yet. On the way home, we will try to stop by East Fork Nursery near Sevierville, TN, to buy native azaleas.

Hotel Contacts for Roan and Gregory: Elizabethton, TN – June 15-17

Americourt Hotel Elizabethton
1515 Highway US 19 East Bypass
Elizabethton, TN 37643
(423) 542-4466

Townsend, TN – June 18-20

Valley View Lodge
7726 E Lamar Alexander Parkway
Townsend, TN 37882
(865) 448-2238

Preparing for the Hikes by Don Hyatt

If you plan to go with us to Roan Mountain or Gregory Bald, it is a good idea to know what to expect and do some advance planning.

The hike along the Appalachian Trail in the Roan Highlands ranges from easy to moderate depending upon the stretch of the trail. The trek can be broken into 3 or 4 segments that take about 30 to 45 minutes each, and there are rhododendrons and azaleas all along the way. The first part to Engine Gap is a rather easy walk on a gravel path but some other segments require climbing over stones and hiking narrow, eroded paths. A walking stick is helpful for balance there. The trail ranges from 5000 to 6000 in elevation with 360 degree views of the mountains and plenty of rhododendrons and azaleas. Every part is gorgeous!

The hike to Gregory is much more difficult. The first third of the trail is fairly level as it winds through R. maximum thickets paralleling the scenic Forge Creek. The rest of the trail is rather strenuous, a total

of nearly 6 miles each way and a 3000 foot change in elevation with the big azalea display waiting at the top. Those who found the Roan hike manageable should be able to make the Gregory hike.

One of the most important tasks before attempting a challenging hike like Gregory Bald is to get in shape. Now that the weather is getting better and I know I want to hike those mountains, I try to take a brisk walk in the neighborhood several days a week. I started going just 1 mile but now aim for 3 or 4 miles.

Having comfortable hiking shoes is important but never attempt to break in new shoes on the trail. It is a sure way to get blisters. Tennis shoes are fine in town but I find they lack ankle support and traction. Good traction is important on the descent since the body's weight adds momentum and shoes can slip.

Dressing in layers is best for these mountain hikes since one usually experiences significant temperature extremes... cool in the early morning but warm by afternoon. Clothing that allows perspiration to escape is good since damp clothes become cold when you stop to rest. Use a light weight pack to hold gear.

Plan for rain! Even if the weather forecast is for sunny weather, showers can pop up unexpectedly in those mountains. A waterproof jacket or poncho is great, but I carry a collapsible umbrella too. I also carry plastic bags in many sizes. They weigh nothing but can be very handy. I use zip-lock bags of various sizes for food or trash, and they are great for keeping cameras, film, and cell phones dry. Large plastic bags make handy tarps or ponchos.

It is very important to drink plenty of fluids on the longer hikes to prevent dehydration. It is surprising how much moisture the body loses on a warm day. I usually carry 2 or 3 pints of bottled water plus 6 to 8 boxes of juice for Gregory. I take a little less for Roan but it is better to have too much than too little.

The sun is quite strong at those higher elevations and it can burn the skin even on a cloudy day. Wear a broad brim hat and reapply sun block during the hike to avoid sunburn.

Some have expressed concerns about snakes and bears. Remember, those animals try to avoid people so there is less chance for an encounter when hiking with a big group. The Appalachian Trail near Roan is high and heavily trafficked. We have never seen a bear or a snake in that area. We have seen bears on the Gregory trail but we usually make plenty of noise so they know we are coming. Several times we have seen a rattle snake on Gregory but the place is not teeming with them. Just be careful where you walk, especially when exploring the less traveled areas.



Flame Azaleas at Engine Gap in the Roan Highlands

Happy Birthday, Margaret!!

Margaret White will turn 102 on March 31st so the chapter wants to wish her a very Happy Birthday. She is an inspiration to us all!

Flower Show Workshop: April 26th

Have you ever looked at the displays at a flower show and thought “I wish I could get my entries to look like that! I wonder how they do that? They seem to win half the awards every year.” Well, here’s your chance to learn how these “ribbon collectors” do it!

On April 26, 2008 a flower show workshop will be conducted at Rosa Gardens, the home of Bob and Rosa McWhorter. Speakers will include Donald H. Voss, a member of the Potomac Valley Chapter, and Helen Myers, president of the Mason Dixon Chapter and a long-time Life Member of the ARS. Don is a former ARS District 9 Director a member of the ASA, serving on the Editorial Advisory Board of the ASA journal, The Azalean. Helen and Don have both judged at numerous flower shows, and Helen is famous for winning practically everything in sight. The meeting will begin at 10:00 am.

This is an opportunity to learn valuable tips on selecting; preserving, preparing and transporting your flower show entries. Learn how your trusses and sprays are judged. What is it that the judges are looking for? Why is one truss better than another? Ever see a truss or spray at a flower show that looked like it just came off the plant that immediately drew your attention, only to be told it was cut days before? Now, you can see the little things that the “pros” do to make their trusses and sprays stand out and catch the judges’ attention.

This will be a joint meeting of the Potomac Valley and Mason-Dixon Chapters. An invitation has also been extended to members of the Ben Morrison and Brookside Garden Chapters of the ASA. Come and say hello to friends and consider sharing some of your own secrets of success. Join our speakers as they walk through Rosa Gardens while discussing possible flower show selections. If you have some flowers that look good that day, bring them to share.

Directions to Bob & Rosa McWhorter's Home :

Gambrills, Md. 21054

Email: mcwho@comcast.net

Parking:

Please car pool as much as possible. Guests are asked to park on Preakness Drive facing up the hill. It is best to keep all four wheels on the paved road.

Parking in the driveway is to be reserved for guest speakers and those having difficulty getting around.

Accommodations:

Please bring a folding chair if you have one. Also, bring some snack foods but drinks will be provided.

Wear good walking shoes or mucks and bring a walking stick if you use one. Restrooms are available on the ground level.



McWhorter Home

Rain Date: *Sunday, April 27th at 10:00 AM*

The meeting will still be held if it is misty or there is a light shower with an improving forecast. If there is steady rain, the meeting will be postponed until Sunday. If you are uncertain, give the McWhorters a call.



R. 'Peter Alan'

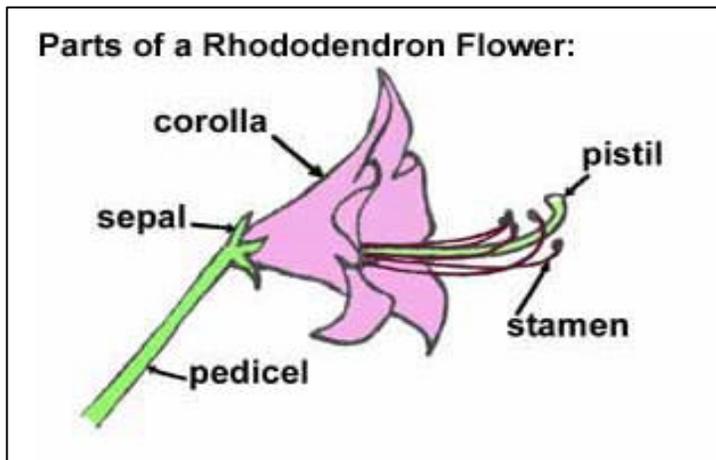


R. 'Blue Ensign'

Making a Cross by Don Hyatt

Why not try making a rhododendron and azalea cross this year. It is one of the most exciting aspects of gardening - creating new plants that never existed before. That cross could produce a future prize winner. We can always use more seeds for our local seed exchange!

Since chance is involved, hybridizing reminds me of playing cards. Not every hand is a Royal Flush since those are rare. That is why we need many raising seedlings since the more plants we grow, the better the odds that we'll get that next super plant.



To make a cross, all you need to do is transfer pollen from the stamens of one flower, and put it on the pistil of another blossom. The bees do this all the time as they randomly fly from flower to flower in the garden. Most of us prefer a controlled cross where we know what the two parents are and we have some plan in what we want the outcome to be.

Some flowers have better pollen than others, and I prefer plants that have lots of pollen dripping from the anthers. Some species like *R. fortunei* have scads of pollen but others are very stingy. For a first cross, look for flowers that have lots of pollen.

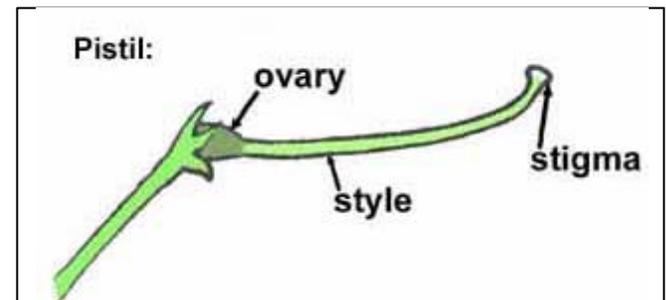
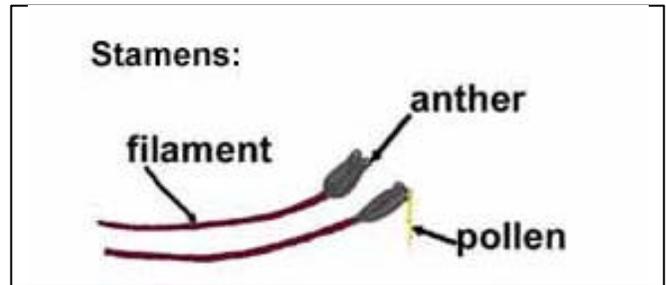
Then I look for a plant to use as the seed parent. We need to find a good pistil. The pistil is usually longer than the stamens and has a sticky surface at the end of it called the stigma. That is where we will place the pollen to make the cross.

Many people will "emasculate" the flower before making a cross. That means they remove the petals and stamens leaving only the pistil. This makes the flower less likely to be attractive to the bees and that way they won't add pollen from another source. It is not that this will add additional traits to a cross, but some of the seedlings will be the ones you planned, and others will be from what the bees have done. You may not be able to tell until they bloom.

I once made a cross onto the pink Dexter 'Scintillation' with a yellow that had a pink edge

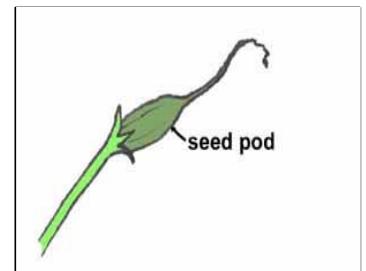
called 'Maryke' which was rather tender. Over the years, all of the seedlings died except one, a very nice light red but not likely a child of 'Maryke'.

I usually pile the pollen on the end of pistil and try to cover it completely. That makes it less likely to accept pollen from another source. Also, I try to pollinate half the flowers in the truss. If I get big seedpods on the ones I crossed, and nothing on the other ones, I feel I have made a successful cross. However, if all the flowers develop big seedpods, I suspect that the plant has either pollinated itself or the bees have done their thing instead. If no pods



develop, the cross didn't take. You typically don't need that much seed, but you will have many extra seeds to share with others and our seed exchange.

Pods will develop over the summer and should be harvested in the fall before they break open. Let them dry well, and then break open the capsules to get the seeds.



Sometime during the winter, plant the seed and tend those little seedlings carefully for the next few years. The first bloom is always exciting, but it can take a while, from 2 to 3 years for azaleas and 4 years or more for rhododendrons. When your seedlings bloom, you will be the proud parent of every one.

Not every plant will be perfection of course, so a wise hybridizer must eliminate the ones that do not make the grade. Always try to root a few cuttings of your best plants so you can test them elsewhere. You'll also have a backup should the original die.

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