



Potomac Valley Chapter American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Fall Newsletter: September 2008

Calendar

- * **September 21, 2008** - Regular Meeting, National Arboretum
- * **October 4, 2008** - Banquet – JR's Stockyards, Tysons Corner, VA
- * **January 11, 2009** - Regular Meeting, Potomac Community Center
- * **March 15, 2009** - Regular Meeting, Potomac Community Center
- * **Late April or Early May, 2009** - Flower Show, TBA
- * **April 30 - May 3, 2009** - National Convention, Everett, WA

Chapter Officers

President: Bob McWhorter

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Vice-President: Richard Mohr

rngmohr@msn.com

Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman

prittman@erols.com

Next Meeting: September 21, 2008

Garden Woes, and some Goodies, too!

Where: National Arboretum

Time: 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Our next meeting will be held at the U.S. National Arboretum on Sunday afternoon, September 21, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. We will be addressing a number of garden woes at this meeting, beginning with a presentation by our President, Bob McWhorter, on a new threat to our plants, the Asian Ambrosia Beetle. We introduced this pest in our last newsletter, but Bob will tell us much more about constructing beetle traps and other measures we can take to fight the spread of this destructive insect.

We will also have a panel of experts including members and Master Gardeners to answer questions about problems you might be facing. The panel will begin with a few short examples of common insect, disease, and weed threats that should be of concern to most people, but we ask you to bring in examples of problems you have encountered in your gardens. We will do our best to answer your questions.

Since we don't want this meeting to be all gloom and doom, we will have a lighter side including the sale of some rooted cuttings from our plants for members program available at \$5 per plant. A list of plants available is listed elsewhere in this newsletter.

We will be meeting in the downstairs classroom this time rather than the main arboretum auditorium. Please sign in with the attendant at the front desk who can direct you to the classroom area.

Refreshment Duty: Persons whose last names begin with **A** through **H** 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



Windmill and Vista at the Dexter Estate, Sandwich, MA

Fall Banquet: Saturday, October 4, 2008

John Delano and Friends Present:

**"A History of the Dexters, Cowles,
and Related Rhododendrons"**

Our popular fall banquet will be held once again at JR's Stockyards Inn at Tysons Corner, VA, on Saturday, October 4th, from 4:30 to 8:00 PM. Look for the official registration form with more details which accompanies this newsletter. Please note that the date is on **Saturday** and not Sunday this year!

Our primary speaker, John Delano, is well known as "THE" expert on the Dexter rhododendrons, especially by anyone who has attended a Sandwich Club meeting on Cape Cod. His knowledge and enthusiasm for these plants are unequalled.

It has been extremely hard to get John and his wife Donna to leave their lovely home overlooking the bay in Duxbury, MA, but they have agreed to join us for the banquet this year so we can have a one-of-a-kind program on the Dexters. John will be joined by two familiar faces from our chapter, Norman Beaudry and Don Hyatt, so expect a trio of experts to share their best pictures and thoughts on the history

of the Dexter rhododendrons and related hybrids including those of Jack Cowles, Tony Consolini, the Pilikingtons, and others from the region.

In order to whet your appetite on the subject matter, Norman Beaudry has written an article on the 2008 Sandwich Club Trip which appears elsewhere in this newsletter. In addition, we have devoted a full color page showing a few of the magnificent Cowles and Dexter rhododendron hybrids. At the banquet, though, expect a colorful multi-media presentation including beautiful pictures, valuable information, and a few touches of humor, too.

As in the past, we will have the same excellent meal at JR's, a choice of prime rib or grilled salmon, or, if you prefer, a vegetarian option. Identify your preference on the registration form, but be sure to register early as the space at JR's does have its limits.

Dues are Due!

In order to save on postage, we have included not only the fall banquet reservation form with this newsletter, but also your dues notice for the coming year. Please do not overlook the small envelope that accompanies this newsletter so you can pay your dues. You can write a single check to the Potomac Valley Chapter ARS that will cover your banquet costs and dues. Send everything to our treasurer, Phyllis Rittman. Her address appears on the dues renewal notice and banquet forms.

In Memory of George T. Miller

It is with great sadness that we must report the loss of yet another one of our chapter members, George T. Miller, of New Oxford, Pennsylvania. We apologize for failing to report his loss in the prior newsletter. Jane Goodrich, one of the other original members of the Gable Study Group, the committee that helped document the work of pioneer hybridizer Joe Gable, shares a few of her thoughts:

“Rhododendron and azalea lovers lost a good friend when George Miller passed away this spring. It is difficult to name anyone as knowledgeable as George, or as kind in sharing his expertise.

“George was a premier member of the Gable Study Group. He knew his Gable plants from hands-on experience, and this knowledge he gave freely.

“When George was a judge at a flower show, he admitted a disdain for a lax truss, so he would just step back and let a co-judge take over.

“George was generous in sharing cuttings, seed, and know-how. He helped beginners without their ever knowing how experienced he was. That was difficult diplomacy.

“Our sympathy goes out to his wife, Anita.”

Jane Goodrich

Chapter Picnic is a Grand Success

We had a good turnout for the chapter picnic at Seneca Creek State Park on July 27. Despite a rather threatening weather forecast, we missed the severe thunderstorms in the area and spent a wonderful afternoon grilling hot dogs and hamburgers at the Fawn Pavilion, a covered picnic shelter in the park.



Chapter Picnic at the Fawn Pavillion

Chapter members provided additional side dishes and desserts, all of which were delicious. We concluded the day with an auction including a number of azaleas kindly donated by Joe Marsala. Also, Nan Barchowsky gave us small plants that were under her late husband Paul's care before he passed away this spring. We sold those and used the money to purchase a book for the library in Paul's memory.



Joe Marsala and Richard Mohr: Checking the Auction Plants

New Library Book: *Rhododendrons & Azaleas - A Colour Guide* by Kenneth Cox

Jean Beaudry reports that we used the money from the sale of seedlings from Paul Barchowsky to purchase the latest book from Kenneth Cox. This attractive book has 240 pages, most of which contain color pictures and descriptions of rhododendron and azalea plants that are commercially available. If you would like to check out this book or anything else in our library, contact Jean before the next meeting:

beaujean@verizon.net

2008 Heritage Sandwich Club Trip

by *Norman Beaudry*

This past May, one week after the Memorial Day weekend, after most of our rhododendron and azalea blooms were past, a group of about twenty members of our chapter motored to Sandwich, MA on Cape Cod. The trip was a three day journey with the primary destination of Heritage Plantation, the Dexter Estate. We were there to view some of the two thousand Jack Cowles rhododendron hybrids left to thrive on their own in the hills surrounding the estate. Jack was the horticulturist there for many years, but left in 1967. For more than 40 years, the rhododendron seedlings he planted at the estate have been growing there, unattended.



Rhododendrons in the Cowles Garden at Heriatge

Our group was made up of Bob and Rosa McWhorter, Dick and Ginny Mohr, Sam and Ginger Burd, Joe and Marge Marsala, Phyllis and Bill Meyers, Bill and Ann Mangels, Karel Bernady, Hank Schannen, Jim Hayes, Dan Neckel, Will Smith, Bill Bedwell, Don Hyatt, and Jean and Norman Beaudry. Some of us stayed at the Shady Nook Motel in Sandwich which was to me reminiscent of the Bates Motel from Hitchcock movie "Psycho," with perhaps a few less amenities. Others stayed at more desirable places nearby.



Unnamed hybrid in the woods: HP 65-2002 or (2-89)

We were not disappointed with this year's flower display. Due to the cool evenings on Cape Cod, that are usually engulfed in fog, rhododendrons do bloom better, longer, and maybe even with a more intense color. We were there primarily for the annual Sandwich Club plant distribution auction on Saturday, May 30th, but many of us visited some or all of the seven open gardens nearby.

On Friday morning, we toured John and Donna Delanos' home with its perfect view of the Kingston Bay. Their garden features Jack Cowles hybrids that John studies and also many deciduous magnolias and lilacs.



John Delano leads a tour through his private garden

Our second stop was at Henry and Barbara Wrightington, who possibly own the largest collection of Dexter / Consolini / Cowles rhodys all planted tightly together.

The third and last stop that day was made at the home of Gene and Barbara Gingras in Norwell. Their place is a sheep and rhododendron farm surrounding a small pond with many acres of mature well grown rhodys.



Gene Gingras with the rhododendron 'Jack Cowles'

Gene and Barbara treated us to a light lunch before we headed back to Heritage for an afternoon

guided tour of the woods we call “first hill” and “second hill” where many of the better Jack Cowles hybrids were planted.



Sandwich Club members set out for First Hill

We were all rewarded to see the hybrid ‘Bea MacDonald’ this year in full bloom and so many other specimens that maybe could be purchased the next day, at our meeting. Of course one of the best perks of a visit to Sandwich is an evening meal of perhaps a lobster roll or a lobster salad.

Following our Saturday morning meeting and auction, a bench in the dell honoring Dick Gustafson was dedicated. Dick’s wife, Jeannie Gustafson, and other family members were in attendance.



The Real Bea McDonald (left) with Jeannie Gustafson at the Dick Gustafson Memorial Bench

On Sunday, we traveled out to Brewster to Bob and Audrey Furman’s garden to see some new introductions from one of the ARS’s better rhodo hybridizers. Bob gave us a demonstration of his hybridization goals and we were asked to evaluate about ten of his newest creations. Yes, he showed us his new “Big Yellow”, possibly the most intense and huge yellow flower rhododendron on the east coast.

On our way back to Sandwich, we stopped at Monument Beach to see Harold and Eveline Pilkington’s garden. The Pilkington’s are both in their 90’s but still able to spend almost every day

outside maintaining her annuals, perennials, umbrella pines and of course their large Consolini collection.

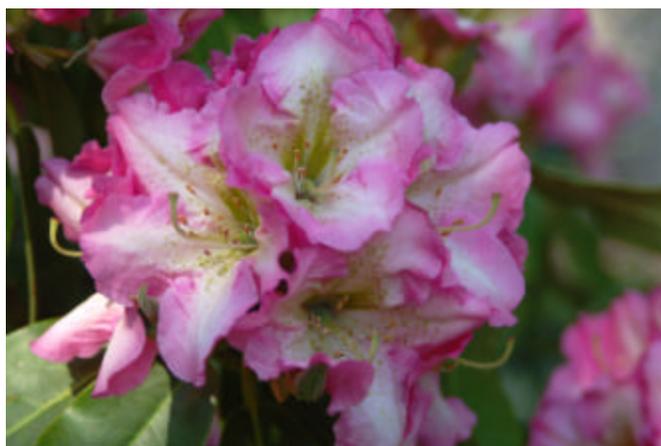
On our way back to Sandwich, our last stop was at the Dick and Cathy White garden where our group was treated to more big blooming plants along with wine and cheese.

You may wonder how the name Sandwich Club (SC) originated? One would think that someone could have come up with a better name, but it was actually the founders (Don Kellam & Dick Gustafson) idea, perhaps made with little thought and with an idea to include an evaluation of the Cowles-Consolini hybrids in Sandwich but also an evaluation of the work of three lesser known Sandwich hybridizers, Fred W. Schumacher, Eveline Pilkington and Hay Reid.

The group was born at the annual 1988 ARS Williamsburg meeting with a proposal to the board by Don Kellam and Dick Gustafson (both now deceased) and with the encouragement of past presidents Austin Kennell and Harold Greer. It was approved by the ARS with goals to study and evaluate the two thousand or more Jack Cowles hybrids growing at Heritage.

Some well known Cowles hybrids include Jack Cowles,’ ‘Kabuki,’ ‘Shaker Sunrise,’ ‘Shaker Red,’ ‘Main Street,’ and ‘Mary Collins.’ Some of these are pictured in the color insert in this newsletter.

Some Tony Consolini /Eveline Pilkington hybrids at Monument Beach include a huge deep pink called ‘Big Dome,’ ‘Taj Mahal,’ a pink and white bicolor with green throat, and the deep red ‘Pride of Cape Cod.’ These plants, and to a lesser extent the Schumacher and Hay Reid Sandwich hybrids, are being evaluated for adaptability in an area from Georgia to Massachusetts.



‘Taj Mahal’ – Bicolor Pilkington hybrid with Green Throat

What has the SC accomplished so far? First, we have instituted a program to distribute, evaluate, and grow many of the better clones, recording their adaptability in selected regions.

Second, we have registered many familiar clones including favorites like the bicolor red and white 'Consolini's Windmill' and striking pink-orange hybrid heavily spotted with red named 'Don Kellam'.



'Don Kellam'

Third, we have provided some financial support of the host organization, The Heritage Museum and Gardens in Sandwich. The SC donates the proceeds of each year's plant auction in support of summer interns (college students) at Heritage. This year, \$3600 has been donated to Heritage from the plant sale. An additional \$2500 was raised for a memorial bench to honor one of its founders, Dick Gustafson. Two teak benches have now been placed in the Dexter Dell area as a place for visitors to rest, read or just enjoy the beautiful surroundings.



The Dexter Dell

Finally, the biggest undertaking has been a long term effort to catalog the Cowles hybrids, identifying them by name, Heritage log number, description, location, and probably most important, listing the various numbers and names given to them over the years. In some cases, these plants may have seven or eight identifying names/numbers attached to them and our list tries to make sense of these synonyms for anyone who may be studying these gems either now or in the future. Eventually, this list which now is about 70 pages of data may be placed on a web site

but in the interim can be purchased for \$5. Contact Norman Beaudry: beaunorm@verizon.net

Many knowledgeable ARS members have studied these plants seeking out of better clones of the collection. Among these enthusiasts were Ed Collins, Don Kellam, Marshall and Peggy Stilwell from North Carolina, Jean Beutler, Dick and Jeanie Gustafson, Ed Connors from New Jersey and Jonathan Leonard, Bea MacDonald, Henry and Barbara Wrightington, and Bob Hickey from Massachusetts. Probably our most enthusiastic members have been John and Donna Delano who visit Heritage weekly evaluating the collection and collecting data.

During this twenty year time span, the Sandwich Club has named and registered over thirty selected clones as the best of the group, including many rhododendrons that you may be growing, or want to grow, in your gardens, such as 'Cape White,' 'Consolini's Windmill,' and 'Spectacular.' These and many others are all available commercially.

The SC will meet again in 2009 and perhaps as long as there is an interest. We plan to visit the Polly Hill Arboretum and the Peter Norris Garden on Martha's Vineyard next year. As it can be a little expensive to ferry to Martha's Vineyard by car, Peter is planning to arrange a bus to pick us up at the ferry terminal. He is also on the board of the Polly Hill Arboretum, so he can give us a personal tour there and also of his garden.

The date for next year has not been confirmed but it is tentatively scheduled for the weekend following Memorial Day, May 30th, 2009. We hope that you can join us.

Plants for Members

At our September 21st meeting, we will have about 70 young plants for sale. These are cuttings we had rooted last fall for our "Plants for Members" program. With some there may be only one or two cuttings available but for others we might have five or six. We will sell them at our cost, \$5.00 each.



'Cornelia Sanders'
(*hyperythrum x degonianum*)

Here are the plants we propagated last year: 'Crete', ('Kluis Sensation' X 'Caroline'), 'Carol's Superwhite', 'High Esteem', 'Dexter's Champagne', Whitney *R. yakushmanum* #7, 'Rheins Blue Ridge', *R. makinoi* Smith form, 'Cornelia Sanders', *R. insigne*, 'Irrestible', 'Gordon Jones', *R. keiskei* Reiley form, 'Bob Bovee'.

Sandwich Club: *The Cowles and the Dexter Rhododendrons*



'Kabuki'



'Cape White'



'Consolini's Windmill'



The Cowles Garden



'Jack Cowles' - Plant



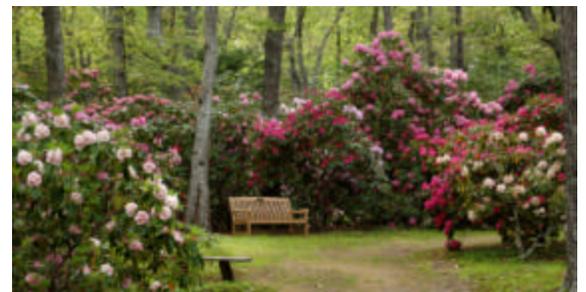
'Campfire Peach'



'Golden Ager'



'Shaker Red'



Gustafson Bench in the Dexter Garden



'Main Street'

Local Chapter News

Board Meeting : *August 18, 2008*

President Bob McWhorter convened a Chapter Board meeting at the Beaudry's home on Monday, August 18, 2008 at 7:00 PM to discuss some of the upcoming plans for the calendar year. Those in attendance included Bob and Rosa McWhorter, Norman and Jean Beaudry, Richard and Ginny Mohr, Carol Segree, Sam Burd, and Don Hyatt. Two board members Phyllis Rittman and Joe Marsala, had prior commitments and could not attend.

Among topics discussed included several items related to capital outlays in the coming months. It was noted that we no longer have a plant sale at our Annual Flower Show, and since all other activities were essentially at cost, our current source of income is limited. We did obtain a substantial windfall from the 2006 Convention that we can use for expenses in the interim, but we need to look for ways to raise money for the chapter in the future.

The Board recommended that we send \$500 to Ken McDonald to help defray his expenses as the District IX Director. In addition we also suggested an additional outlay of \$300 to help support Mary Reiley who will act as substitute Director at the September ARS Board meeting in Hilo, Hawaii. We do recommend that in the future, the fall ARS Board meetings could be handled by telephone conference or other method so as not become such a financial burden for Directors and Officers. It was noted that Don Hyatt has agreed to serve as the next Alternate Director for our District.

Because of low attendance, the ARS experienced a substantial loss at the 2008 convention in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In an attempt to match what other chapters are doing, the Potomac Valley Board recommended a donation of \$400 to help the ARS offset their convention loss. We were more fortunate when we hosted the 2006 Convention, and had a net profit of nearly \$16,000, or net return of \$4000 for each participating chapter.

Our Board also recommended that we approve a standing policy until further notice, that should a member of our chapter pass away, the Potomac Valley Chapter will automatically make a \$50 charitable contribution in that person's name to either the ARS Endowment Fund or the ARS Research Foundation as a remembrance.

Other items discussed included the ARS insurance policy and how that might relate to organized tours of private members' gardens. Rather than relying on an individual home owner's policy to cover liability, does the umbrella policy we have through the ARS cover that garden tour? We are still not clear on that aspect but will follow up with it later.

There is a desire for our region to have an official test garden that we can support, but we need someone to head up that activity and work with the ARS to follow some guidelines. Bob McWhorter also submitted to the ARS a list of public gardens in our region that visitors might enjoy seeing.

Due to the possibility that the auditorium at the National Arboretum would not be available for our meetings in 2009 due to budget cuts, we approved a move to the local Community Center in Potomac, MD, for both the January and March meetings. The Camellia Society, which also has met at the Arboretum for many years, is using that facility now. We would like input from our members as to whether that facility is adequate, or if members would prefer some other meeting locations.

Plans were finalized for the upcoming September meeting as well as the Fall Banquet.

The Board also spent considerable time discussing proposed chapter committees and how we can get more people involved. Those committees are presented below.

Proposed Chapter Committees

We propose the following committees, and we hope that every member will find some way to help contribute to the success of our organization. If you would like to chair one of these committees or at least participate in some way, please let Bob McWhorter know. We want you to be involved!

1. **Program Committee:** Help obtain speakers for meetings; plan outings and events such as the annual picnic and banquet, or field trips.
2. **Education and Special Projects:** Work on special projects to educate and inform members; organize or create study groups on various topics of mutual interest, such as photography, insect and disease control, test gardens, plant ratings, specific hybridizers or plant groups like rhododendron species, Dexters, or Gables.
3. **Fundraising:** Find ways to help raise money for the chapter including plants for members programs, plant sales to the public, or auctions
4. **Membership & Hospitality:** Work with the Treasurer to keep membership roster current; work with new members to make them feel welcome; assist with meeting refreshment duties; find ways to get new members.
5. **Publicity and Public Relations:** Publicize regular meetings so as to attract new members; submit articles to national and local news media.
6. **Newsletter & Special Mailings:** Write or help edit articles and secure photographs for our newsletter; suggest topics needed or desired for future publications.

The June Chapter Field Trip *by Don Hyatt* Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald

If you didn't have a chance to join us on the field trip to Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald this year, you missed one of the best flowering seasons ever. Last year's hot dry summer seemed to cause a very heavy bud set, and then the relatively moist cool spring brought on a superb display.

Several of us including Richard and Ginny Mohr as well as Associate Members Doug and Anita Burke from Ontario, Canada converged on Elizabethton, TN, for the first part of the hike, the Roan Highlands. This area is on the mountainous border of North Carolina and Tennessee, just south of Bristol, VA.

The weather was lovely that Sunday afternoon and so we decided to drive up to nearby Carver's Gap to take a short 30-minute hike along the Appalachian Trail to Engine Gap. This area has such beautiful views as well as large expanses of orange and yellow flame azaleas, *R. calendulaceum* and purple rhododendrons. We would be hiking that same trail the next morning, but the scenery is so spectacular it is nice to see it under different lighting conditions. We managed to hit peak bloom, and the mountain vistas were incredible.



The Top of Grassy Ridge

Richard and Ginny Mohr with Anita and Doug Burke

The next day we returned to Carvers Gap but took the all day hike out to Grassy Ridge. This year, that entire mountain top was covered with the rosy purple blooms of *Rhododendron catawbiense*, and the color seemed deeper than usual. Just breathtaking!

The next day we headed south toward Asheville, to drive along the southern stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway. The native mountain laurel, *Kalmia latifolia*, was fantastic. It was the heaviest bloom we have ever seen, all shades of pink to white on every terminal. We took a few shorter hikes that day and spent the night in Franklin, NC, where we met up with George McLellan, Jim Brant, and Jim Gears.



Kalmia in Bloom along the Parkway

The following morning, we drove up to Wayah Bald which was in peak bloom, too, not only for the *calendulaceum* but also for the fragrant white *R. arborescens*. From there, we headed out to Hooper Bald, and eventually made our way to Townsend, TN, for the night to prepare for the hike to Gregory.

The next morning, we rose early, and drove to Cade's Cove in the Great Smokey Mountain National Park. We arrived at the locked gate before sunrise but at dawn, they opened the gate and we drove to the trail head on Parson's Branch Road. We parked our cars and began the 3 to 4 hour hike to the bald. By that time we had had a large crowd including our own Frances Plunkett, associate members Karel Bernady and Billy Constable and her friend Kelly, and several people of national note including Buddy Lee of Encore azalea fame, and Dr. Tom Ranney, research scientist and frequent ARS Journal author.

The weather continued to hold and the flowers on top of the bald were fantastic. The display on Gregory Bald is always beautiful, but this year it was the best we had seen because the Park Service had managed to cut back almost all of the weeds, brush, and small trees that had been threatening many of the azaleas. Plants were no longer overgrown.



Admiring the Azaleas on Gregory Bald

Doug Burke, Karel Bernady, and Frances Plunkett

The credit for the new look on Gregory is due in part to Species Study Group of the Middle Atlantic Chapter ARS. They had written a grant through the ARS to purchase a powerful bush hog for the Park System to use. With this new equipment, the staff could clear large areas in a day or two, regions that would have taken weeks or even months to maintain by prior methods. The top of the bald looked like a park. We noticed an added benefit of the short grass in that there were no hiding areas for snakes anymore. With so many people on the bald that day, perhaps 60 or more from various places, one could stroll almost anywhere with little concern.

We were tired when we finally made it down off the mountain, but we headed out for a good meal in town and then a good night's sleep. Most people headed home the next day although a few of us stayed on since we were considering a hike to Mount



On the trail to Mt. LeConte

LeConte the next day. It is a beautiful trail but almost as strenuous as the one to Gregory Bald. With a weather forecast of thunderstorms, we decided to only go part way. Besides, the dwarf purple *R. minus* that we wanted to see on that mountain was still in bud at lower elevations. We decided to postpone that hike to another year.

When we head down to the mountains again, I hope you will consider joining us. The bud set for next year might not be as good as this year, but there is nothing more inspiring than seeing our native azaleas and rhododendrons in full bloom in their natural setting. It is really hard to improve on nature's garden.



Swallowtail Butterfly on R. calendulaceum

A New Invasive: *Mulberry Weed*

If you don't already have the new invasive pest called Mulberry Weed or Hairy Crabweed (*Fatoua villosa*), consider yourself lucky. Unfortunately, it is probably coming to your garden soon so keep an eye out for this invader so it doesn't get the upper hand.

Young seedlings of this new weed resemble those of a mulberry tree. In fact, it is in the mulberry family, but an annual from tropical Asia. The problem with this weed is that it can produce so many seeds it can quickly take over a garden.



Mulberry Weed Seedling



Mulberry Weed with Seeds

Mulberry Weed first appeared in Louisiana in 1962, but wasn't of too much concern. By the 1990's, though, it was starting to spread across the country through sale of nursery plants. Now it seems to be everywhere!

This invasive weed looks similar to a green coleus plant, but it soon begins to produce tiny green clusters of flowers at each leaf node as early as the second or third set of leaves! As the plant grows, it continues to produce multiple clusters of flowers at every leaf node all season long and it can get 3 to 4 ft. tall. Apparently, seeds don't mature immediately, but when they are ripe they will eject from those clusters to a distance of 4 feet. A single plant allowed to grow unchecked can produce a frightening number of seeds in just a single season.

If you see Mulberry Weed, pull it up right away. Put it in a plastic bag and dispose in a way so as not to spread those seeds. Avoid using a weed eater since those tiny seeds will likely ripen before the plant tops wither. Whatever stub remains in the soil is probably still producing seeds, too. Tossing plants in the compost pile may not be wise either, since those seeds may not be killed but will germinate later.

Learn more about this weed and other potential problems at our next meeting on September 21st.

Donald W. Hyatt, Newsletter Editor
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