



Potomac Valley Chapter American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Winter Newsletter: January 2011

Calendar

- * **February 6, 2011** – Regular Meeting, Share & Photography Contest
- * **March 4-6, 2011** – Plant Trip to North Carolina Nurseries
- * **March 27, 2011** – Regular Meeting – National Arboretum!!
- * **April 26, 2011** – Arboretum Trip to See the Glenn Dales in Bloom
- * **May 7-8, 2011** – Joint Flower Show with Mason-Dixon Chapter
- * **May 11-15, 2011** – ARS Convention, Vancouver, Oregon

Chapter Officers

President: Richard Mohr

rngmohr@msn.com

Vice-President and Secretary: Open
Any takers? It really isn't hard!

Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman

prittman@erols.com

Next Meeting: Photography Contest

* **Richard Mohr: *Camellia Culture***

* **Annual Share Session**

Date: Sunday, February 6, 2011

Time: 1 – 4 PM

Location: *Potomac Community Center*

Our next meeting will include a number of different activities. First, it will be our annual Photography Contest, so be sure to look through the photos you took in 2010 and find some pictures to enter into our competition. Pictured to the right is the top prize winning photo from last year by Dan Neckel.

Full contest guidelines are provided in the newsletter. We have three categories as before, and people are reminded that cannot enter more than two entries in any category. We do have a restriction that no individual can win more than one of the physical prizes. In past years, almost everyone who entered went home with a prize so be sure to enter.

For our second activity, we will have a 30 minute presentation by our President, Richard Mohr about *Camellia Culture* in the DC area. *Camellias* make wonderful companion plants with rhododendrons and azaleas in the shady garden and it will be great to hear from the expert what these plants need.

At our winter meeting, we usually have a chapter "Share Session" where people bring in a few pictures from their garden or scenic places they have visited. We want to know what you have been doing, so bring in some digital images on a CD or memory stick to share with us. We ask you to limit your presentation to no more than 5 to 10 minutes. In addition, Don Hyatt will give a brief update about the proposed destruction of the Glenn Dale Azaleas at the National Arboretum. Details about that appear in this newsletter. If you want to join the share session, let Don Hyatt or Richard Mohr know so we can plan the program.



"Garden Reflections, Maine"- 2010 Best Photo by Dan Neckel

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

Directions to the Potomac Community Center:
From **I-270 North**, stay in the **Local lanes** and take exit **#4B/ MONTROSE RD WEST**. Continue west on Montrose Rd. for **1.7 miles**.

Turn **LEFT** on **FALLS RD (MD-189)**. Continue **1.4 miles** to **11315 Falls Rd on the Left**.

2011 Photography Contest: *Categories*

We have established the following rules for our chapter photography contest. Please enter!

Category I: Flowers - Close up of flowers, such as a rhododendron truss or an azalea spray.

Category II: Scenery - Rhododendron or azalea plants in the landscape or in the wild.

Category III: Other – This category is for any photographs featuring rhododendrons or azaleas that don't seem to fit into the first two categories: pictures of foliage, creative effects, people, or whatever.

2011 Photography Contest (cont.): Rules

1. Open to chapter members or associates only.
2. Exhibitors may not enter more than two pictures in any category.
3. Photos must have been taken in 2010.
4. Photos must be naturally occurring, no composites.
5. Photos may be matted, but no frames or glass is allowed.
6. Prints no larger than 8" x 10" including matting.
7. Photos should be backed with mat, foam or cardboard no thicker than ¼ inch.
8. Name, address, picture title and category should be entered ON BACK ONLY.
9. Photos remain the property of the exhibitor and will be returned, but we request permission to reproduce a copy of the winners in our newsletter.

Exhibitors should bring their photos to our February 6th meeting. Attendees will vote for their favorites with prizes awarded at the end of the meeting.

North Carolina Nursery Trek: March 4 - 6

If you haven't been on our annual Nursery Trek in early March, consider joining us this year. It is always fun. Several mail order nurseries in Southern Virginia and North Carolina hold "Open Houses" in late February and early March, and it is a great time to get out of the house. Most of us have a severe case of spring fever by then. We usually see some early spring flowers and we buy plants we don't need but we have lots of fun. For most of us, it is an opportunity to hang out in the company of good friends and talk plants.

The trip is very informal. We have no strict itinerary and people can join us for any part of the trip. You will need to make your own transportation arrangements and hotel reservations. This newsletter will let you know where we intend to be and invite you to join us. We usually have "Happy Hour" in the evenings, so bring your favorite refreshments.

Joe Marsala will continue to coordinate this effort for the Potomac Valley Chapter. Thank you Joe! If you think you might want to go, be sure to send Joe an email so he can keep you posted about any updates:

Joe Marsala: joe-marsala@comcast.net

As in the past, we intend to use the following motel as our base for two nights, March 4 and 5. The facility is close to Raleigh-Durham and near the Interstate. Make your reservations directly with the motel. Look for discount coupons at rest stops on your way down.

Comfort Inn – Garner

126 Cleveland Crossing Drive
Garner, NC 27529 (919) 773-1110

We usually stop at Pine Knot Farms on our way to Garner on Friday. Pine Knot is only open to the public those two weekends for their Hellebore Festival. They have a big display garden that is usually in full bloom with many hellebore including doubles and unusual colors, as well as early spring companion plants. In the greenhouses will be plants in flower or tissue culture selections. Some of us try to get an early start so we have time to get to Big Bloomers in Sanford, NC, that afternoon to check out what they have in stock before heading back to Garner for the evening. Big Bloomers has wonderful plants at bargain prices.

On Saturday, we try to go to Tony Avent's Plant Delights Nursery for his open house as well as Big Bloomers. For those of us who had a few hours at Big Bloomers on Friday afternoon, a second trip is not too much. They have many greenhouses and thousands of varieties so it is not easy to see everything in one trip.

On Sunday, we hope to see Camellia Forest Nursery in the morning and are still looking at options for the afternoon. Below is a summary of the nurseries we intend to visit, their locations, and website links:

Friday, March 4:

Pine Knot Farms – Hellebore Festival (10 am – 4 pm)
681 Rockchurch Rd, Clarksville, VA 23927

www.pineknotfarms.com

Saturday, March 5:

Big Bloomers Flower Farm

275 Pressly Foushee Road, Sanford, NC 27330

www.bigbloomersflowerfarm.com

Plant Delights Nursery

9241 Sauls Road, Raleigh, NC 27603

www.plantdelights.com

Sunday, March 6:

Camellia Forrest Nursery (Sunday at 10:00 AM)

9701 Carrie Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516

www.camforest.com

Looking Ahead:

We will have a number of activities coming up this spring, and some of them follow rather close after our February meeting. We wanted to alert you to some of the details now so you can put the events on your calendar. We already noted the plant excursion to North Carolina from March 4-6, but look ahead to the following activities.

March 27 – Regular Meeting at the Arboretum

Barbara Bullock: "Designing with Azaleas"

We have decided to hold our regular March meeting in one of the trailers at the National Arboretum. We

have asked Barbara Bullock to present a new talk she has prepared on “Designing with Azaleas.”

We must be very sensitive about Barbara’s position as Curator of Azaleas at the National Arboretum. She is not at liberty to answer *any* questions about the pending destruction of the Glenn Dale Azaleas. Her supervisors made that decision and neither she nor any other staff members are allowed to comment. At present, the sole spokesperson is Dr. Ramon Jordan, the Interim Director who approved the plan.

This should be a great time to visit the Arboretum, so come early and leave late. The Daffodil Collection should be lovely and it is planted in the Boxwood Collection. The Camellias should be starting to flower and the Magnolia Collection should be in bloom. Some things in the Asian Valley might be in flower, too.

April 26 – Azalea Field Trip to the Arboretum

We are planning a multi-chapter field trip to the National Arboretum on the Tuesday after Easter, April 26. That is the week when the early Glenn Dales begin to peak, and it may be our last chance to see the plants in bloom if we fail in our crusade. The trip will be very informal, and people are encouraged to carpool.

Most of us will head down to the Arboretum after the morning rush hour is over and will probably arrive around 10:00 AM. We expect to return before the evening rush and should be on our way by 200 PM. Bring a bag lunch if desired, and something to drink since there are not many places nearby to have lunch.

May 7 -8: Flower Show with Mason-Dixon

Since the Administration Building at the Arboretum is closed for renovation, we will be unable to hold our annual Flower Show there this year. Many of us are already Associate Members with the Mason-Dixon Chapter, so we appreciate the opportunity to join with them this year for our annual Flower Show. More details about times and location will follow later.

Some Sad News:

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of some wonderful friends. In October, a long time member, **Margaret Church** passed away. Pictured to the right is Margaret Church walking with Margaret White (far right) in the White Garden. About the same time, **Velma Haag** passed away. She was the last of the Gable Study Group and had lovely garden in North Carolina that many of us visited in May of 2009. Also, we just learned that **Mary Beasley** of ‘My Mary’ fame and Transplant Nursery in Georgia passed away in August. They will all be missed but have left us lasting memories that we will cherish.



Gray Carter Receives the Distinguished Service Award

In the picture above, President Richard Mohr presents to Gray Carter the Distinguished Service Award at our Fall Banquet. The Potomac Valley Chapter has previously honored Gray with the Bronze Medal, but this award was a way to say thanks for his continuing support of our chapter over so many years. Incidentally, Gray will celebrate his 90th birthday this spring. Congratulations Gray, and thank you so much for everything you do. Below is the official citation on Gray’s Distinguished Service Award.

Henry “Gray” Carter has been an inspiration to members of the Potomac Valley Chapter ARS for many years. He has served as chapter treasurer, and has shared his expertise in propagation and rhododendron culture with our members and the public. A remarkable horticulturist, Gray raises plants to perfection and then generously donates them to various chapter functions providing door prizes at regular meetings, prized specimens at auctions, and choice plants for public sales.

Gray has already been awarded the ARS Bronze Medal. With deepest appreciation for his continued generosity, kindness, and dedication to the American Rhododendron Society and its goals, we present to Henry G. Carter the Distinguished Service Award. We thank you, Gray, for your never-ending support of our society.



Proposed Destruction of the Glenn Dales

In early November, we learned some devastating news. The National Arboretum announced at a staff meeting that all the original Glenn Dale azaleas on Mt. Hamilton at the Arboretum would be cut down in 2011 and their stumps painted with herbicide. The approximately six acre site was planted in 1947 by the Arboretum's first Director, Ben Morrison. These azaleas have provided one of the most spectacular floral displays in our Nation's Capital for over 60 years. Below is one of many vistas of those plants, and there are more images on the color insert page.



People could not believe what they had heard and contacted the Arboretum, assuming this was some kind of hoax. Scott Aker, the Gardens Unit Director, confirmed our fears and the Interim Director, Dr. Ramon Jordan, backed the decision. A big problem at the Arboretum is that they no longer have an Advisory Board so there is no expert opinion in decision making.



The Glenn Dale Hillside was not the only targeted collection. The Arboretum announced that they plan to cut down the National Boxwood Collection pictured above, as well as the associated Perennial Collections including the Daffodils, the Daylilies, and the Peonies. The Boxwood Collection is also a National Treasure,

the most complete and well documented collection in the world. Some of its plants came from countries to which we no longer have access. Destroying them is senseless, too. Deer do not eat boxwood so they are very popular plants where deer browsing is a problem.

FONA, the Friends of the National Arboretum, has come out strongly against the proposal to destroy these rare plant collections. They were not consulted in the decision process.

Aaron Cook, the President of the Azalea Society of America, was outraged and alerted ARS and ASA members by email, calling us to action. He documented the reasoning behind the destruction of these irreplaceable plant collections. The flawed logic is almost laughable except for the fact that the threat is real. The following summarizes their reasoning:

The Azaleas Attract Too Many Visitors

One of Scott Aker's reasons for cutting down the azaleas was that they attract too many visitors and that creates problems. He wrote Aaron, "... we are now unable to accommodate the crowds of visitors in April and May when the azaleas are in bloom. We have inadequate parking and restroom facilities."

Of course, our Potomac Valley Chapter has regularly held the Flower Show during peak spring bloom at the Arboretum for 40 years, and we have not noticed any difficulties. FONA always holds its main fundraiser during that same time frame because of the visitors and last year, our Flower Show was on the same weekend. We were not aware of any problems.



As for insufficient restrooms, the Arboretum was granted \$9 million in federal stimulus funds that they are now using to renovate the Administration Building. It does include improved public restroom facilities. With respect to parking, there is a huge lot at the New York Avenue entrance that FONA uses for their Plant Sale and the Arboretum offers shuttle service to the various exhibits.

The Arboretum Lost Two Private Gardeners

There is no question that the Arboretum has been under-funded for years. It is also true that they will soon lose two privately funded gardeners because the donor who gave those staff positions has passed away and her estate will not continue the gift past 2012. The reality is that those positions have nothing to do with the azaleas or the boxwood. The lady specified that the gardeners she funded were only allowed to work in the Asian Valley, and that two federal positions already assigned to that region were not to be used elsewhere. That meant that there were 4 people grooming the 6 acre Asian Valley, and now there will be only two. Essentially, Barbara Bullock tends the 25 acre Azalea Collection. The Boxwood Curator, Mr. Lynn Batford, does the same. Why the destruction of the other plant collections makes no sense whatsoever.

The Oldest Azaleas Have Lost Their Labels

After 60 years, all of the old azaleas on the Glenn Dale Hillside have lost their labels but that doesn't mean that many plants cannot be positively identified. Morrison raised between 50,000 to 75,000 azaleas and selected the 1200 best that he propagated and planted on that hill. From those he selected the 454 Glenn Dale hybrids. Morrison's records exist, so we know what he planted. In time, we should be able to identify most of those azaleas, especially when better DNA techniques become available. Some of the plants on that hillside have stood the test of time and are better than many of the named Glenn Dales. The azalea 'Ben Morrison' (below) is one of those hybrids of unknown parentage named by Dr. Creech to honor its originator.



The Current Situation:

A new Director, Dr. Colien Hefferan, was named in December but she is an economist who was appointed to that position because her prior job was eliminated. She is not familiar with the plants at the Arboretum so she is relying on Dr. Jordan's advice. We encourage

all of our members to get involved. Write letters to the decision makers at the Arboretum and their supervisors at USDA. Write letters to your Senators and Congressmen. Complain about this travesty to fellow gardeners, and anyone who will listen. Steve Henning has set up a website called "Save the Azaleas" with details and recommendations for action. The URL is:

www.savetheazaleas.org

The Seed Exchange by Don Hyatt

The rest of this newsletter is devoted to the seed exchange. Please return your orders to Don Hyatt by February 15 with a check made out to Potomac Valley Chapter ARS. Available seed will be divided among those who have requested it, and orders mailed to participants as soon as processing is complete.

We do not have as many selections this year as seed donations were less than usual. Perhaps some of you will make a few crosses for us next year.

There are several seed selections from the wild and although all of those listed under my name, they were actually collected by George McLellan, Jim Brant, and me this October during an extensive collection trip through the south. It is a good year for seed of the very late blooming native azalea *R. prunifolium*.

We do some open pollinated rhododendrons from Tom Ahern who spoke at last year's March meeting. He has some wonderful foliage plants in his garden. One that caught my eye was a hybrid of (Janet Blair x Rosevallon) that has burgundy coloring underneath the leaves. Below is a picture of Tom gathering pods from the dwarf (*roxieanum* x *pseudochrysanthum*) which, like so many of his plants, has that "species look."



We also have some seed of the Zo Warner native azalea hybrids from Lindy Johnson and J. Jackson of Mountain City, TN. The Zo hybrids are descendents of the azaleas on Gregory Bald, so expect late blooming plants in varying colors, hybrids of *cumberlandense* and *arborescens*. They are all incredibly beautiful!



**What We Stand
to Lose**

**The Glenn Dale
Hillside**

These photographs were taken of the Glenn Dale Azaleas on Mt. Hamilton at the US National Arboretum. These magnificent azaleas were planted in 1947 by Benjamin Y. Morrison, the Arboretum's first Director. They are one of the prime floral displays in the region and a National Treasure.

Sadly, Arboretum officials have announced that they plan to cut them down in 2011 and paint their stumps with herbicide. We must get them to change their minds!

www.savetheazaleas.org



**Save the
Azaleas!**



