



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Summer Newsletter: July 2015

Chapter Officers President: Dan Neckel vaneckel@verizon.net Vice President: Ginny Mohr rngmohr@msn.com Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman prittman@erols.com
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Calendar

- * **July 31, 2015** – Work Day at the White Garden, Falls Church, 9am – noon
- * **September 19, 2015** – Chapter Plant Sale, Green Spring Gdns, Alexandria
- * **September 20, 2015** – Chapter Picnic, Seneca Creek Park, Gaithersburg
- * **October 16-18, 2015** – ARS Fall Conference, Long Island, NY
- * **October 24-25, 2015** – MAC Fall Meeting, Richmond, VA
- * **November 7, 2015** – PVC Chapter Banquet, Wildfire Restaurant, Tysons II

Upcoming PVC Activities

Since we had such a busy spring and early summer, your chapter officers did not plan any midsummer activities. Many of us are focused on the rapidly approaching 2016 Convention next April 20-24 in Williamsburg. We hope you will all help us out when the event arrives. Here are some of our chapter's activities planned for the fall season.

Chapter Plant Sale

Date: Saturday, September 19, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Location: *Green Spring Gardens*

4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria, VA 22312

In September, Green Spring Gardens holds its annual Fall Garden Day and Plant Sale. Sponsored by FROGS (Friends of Green Spring), various plant societies and vendors converge that day to sell plants and answer questions. A portion of our sales will help support Green Spring but the rest will go into our chapter treasury. We will provide details in the next newsletter, but if you have plants to donate or if you can help out that day, let Dan Neckel know.

Chapter Picnic

Date: Sunday, September 20, 2015

Time: 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Location: *Seneca Creek State Park*

11950 Clopper Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20878

After trying to hold our picnic outside during the oppressive heat the last two summers, we decided to move the date from July to September. Surely it will be cooler at that time. In addition to having a party where we bring picnic foods and grill some hotdogs and hamburgers, we usually have some plant other activities. Please save the date! We will have details in the September newsletter.



Azaleas at the White Garden in Falls Church in May

Work Day at the White Garden

Date: Friday, July 31, 2015

Time: 9:00 AM – noon

Location: *3301 Hawthorn Lane*

Falls Church, VA 22042

For the past two years, donations from the ASA, ARS, and FROGS have allowed Green Spring Gardens to hire an intern in the White Garden. The 13-acre property transferred to Fairfax County Parks after Margaret White died. It is maintained by volunteers. If you can spare a half-day, please come help prune, pull weeds, remove vines, and help clean up that day. Come meet this year's intern, Jessica.

Fall Banquet – November 7, 2015

Location: *Wildfire Restaurant, Tysons II*

Speaker: *Steven Kristoph*

Save the date for our Fall Banquet. Steve Kristoph, a nurseryman and educator from New Jersey, will be our speaker. Details later!

District 9 Director's Report – July 2015

By Donald W. Hyatt

I want to thank our Potomac Valley Chapter ARS members for your kindness and support during my term as your District 9 Director. My three-years are now over, so Dave Banks of the Middle Atlantic Chapter has become our new Director. Bill Meyers of the Mason-Dixon Chapter is our new Alternate.

The ARS has been experiencing some serious financial problems in recent years. At the May 6 ARS Board Meeting I attended in Sidney, BC, that tended to dominate the discussion. Our financial troubles are primarily due to declining membership since we had over 5000 members when we hosted the 2006 Convention, but the ARS now has only 2800 members. Income from dues is approximately half of the 2006 levels, but many costs are unchanged and some have actually risen.

Dave Banks, chair of the ARS Budget and Finance Committee, worked with ARS Treasurer Sam Burd, as well as Dave and Kath Collier to develop a balance budget to present in Sidney. Dave's report was clear and concise, and reflected our financial situation. Expenses must not exceed our income which comes primarily from four sources: the \$30 the ARS keeps from your \$40 dues, miscellaneous sales including Journal advertising and commissions from the ARS Store, income from investments, and various donations or bequests.

The primary expenses of our society fall into two categories: the publication of the ARS Journal and the cost of running the ARS Office. The Journal is essentially our "product" and Editor Glen Jamieson has cut costs significantly. We need to maintain a high quality Journal so there were no additional cuts.

The new budget did call for cuts from the ARS Office. Whereas many non-profit organizations try to keep administrative expenditures at no more than 10 to 15% of income, our ARS Office has now exceeded the 50% level of total income, or \$25 out of the \$30 dues from each member. The new budget specified reduced expenses, better banking policies, a 20% reduction in compensation for the Executive Director, and some mailing addresses changes.

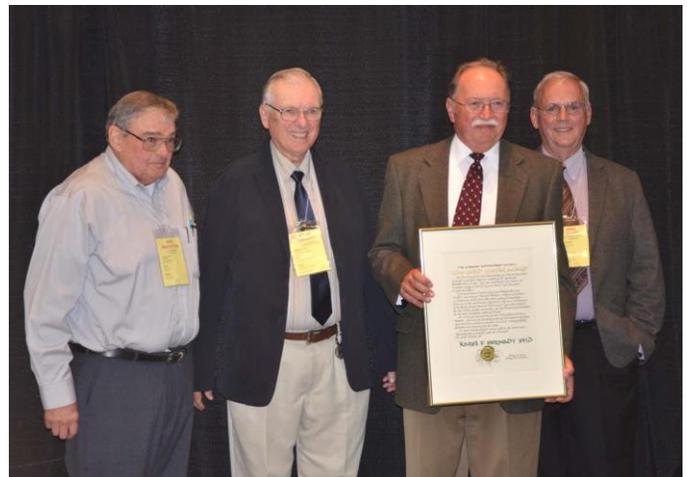
Past budget shortfalls caused the ARS to suspend the grants from the Endowment Fund, but since that assists in our mission, those have been reinstated.

After a rather heated discussion, we did adopt the budget by a narrow margin. Laura Grant indicated that she would not serve as the Executive Director after April 2016, so we will be looking for suitable replacement. Laura said she would not provide any

membership renewal materials to the chapters this fall since that will save her office time and money. The responsibility will fall to each local chapter, so expect to see a slightly different format when we request renewals in September. We did discuss other membership concerns, but a new task force will be put in place to look for ways to restructure the entire ARS Office and make it more efficient. An updated website is on the way, too!

The 2015 Convention put on by the Chapters in District 1 (Victoria) was excellent. The gardens were lovely, but so was the weather. The speakers who came from around the world were superb, and they were funded by corporate sponsorships so that did not add to convention costs.

At the annual meeting on Saturday night, our good



Karel Benady receives the ARS Gold Medal. Left to Right: Bob MacIntyre, Steve Henning, Karel Bernady, Don Hyatt

friend Karel Bernady received the Gold Medal. As discussed before, some tension on the Board led Bruce Feller to resign as President last fall. The ARS did honor his service and invited him to serve on the Board as Immediate Past President. He accepted.

It has been an honor to serve you, and I hope we will all assist the new leadership team in the ARS.

Fall Regional on Long Island: October 16-17

Don't forget the Fall Regional on Long Island. Details can be found on the ARS Website.

Sad News - Audrey Furman

Audrey Furman, one of our good friends and chapter members on Cape Cod, passed away on April 14. Her husband, Bob, died 4 years before. Many of us expressed condolences to their daughter, Debbie Humphries, when we were on the Cape in late May.

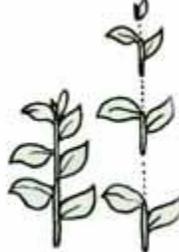
It is Propagation Time!

Now is the time to root azalea and lepidote cuttings. The Don Hyatt approach is on the next page.

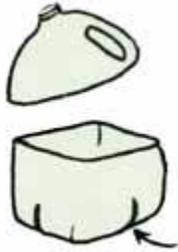
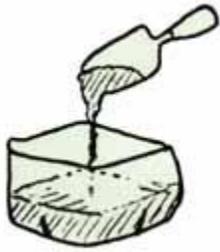
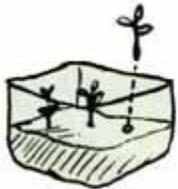
Rooting Azalea and Lepidote Rhododendron Cuttings

by Don Hyatt

Cutting Preparation:

 <p>Select new growth that is starting to hardening off.</p>	 <p>Carefully remove lower leaves. Pinch out any soft tips and flower buds.</p>	 <p>Dip end of cutting in a rooting hormone like Dip 'N Grow or Rootone.</p>	 <p><i>Note:</i> Long cuttings may be cut in shorter sections if many plants are desired.</p>
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Planting:

 <p>Use a cut-off plastic jug or any clean pot. Make slits in the bottom for later drainage.</p>	 <p><i>Medium:</i> 1/3 Peat, 1/3 sand, & 1/3 perlite Fill about 2 to 3 inches deep. Soil should be damp but not too wet.</p>	 <p>Insert cuttings, but not too deep. If bugs were present, spray with insecticide or give quick dip in a 10% Clorox solution.</p>	 <p>Enclose in a clear plastic bag. Grow under fluorescent lights, 16 to 24 hours a day. No need to water or fertilize.</p>
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Procedure Details:

- Make short cuttings, 2 to 3 inches long. Pinch out the soft growing tip to stop flower bud formation. Remove excess foliage at the base. Long cuttings can often be cut into several sections if desired.
- Optional: To combat insects or disease, submerge cuttings in a 10% Clorox solution for 5 minutes and then rinse very well. You can also spray with an insecticide / fungicide mix after the cuttings are stuck.
- Dip the end of each cutting in a rooting hormone such as Dip 'N Grow or Rootone. Shake off excess.
- Insert the bottom inch of the cutting into a container filled with a porous medium (1/2 Peat, 1/4 Sand, 1/4 Perlite). The medium should be damp but not wet since too much moisture encourages rotting.
- Enclose containers in clear plastic bags and place under fluorescent lights with "long day" conditions (16 to 24 hours of light each day). A bright north window out of direct sun can be used in lieu of lights.
- Cuttings should root in 2 to 4 months. They usually require no water and are best kept on the "dry side" since most problems are caused by excess moisture. After well rooted, gradually remove plastic bags and continue growing under lights the first winter or else provide cold frame protection. Avoid fertilizer under low light conditions as it encourages disease. Don't fertilize cuttings that will winter outside for they must go dormant before frost.
- Keep deciduous azaleas growing under lights until the new growth starts. Otherwise they often will never break dormancy and die the next year.



Butchart Gardens near Victoria, BC



R. 'Susan' at Butchart under *Cornus controversa variegata*.

***Garden Travels* by Don Hyatt**

I didn't see much my garden this spring because I was traveling... three trips of at least 10 days each plus minor excursions. All the gardens I saw were better than mine, though, so I share a few highlights.

2015 ARS Convention: Sidney, BC

It is really hard to beat the rhododendron gardens in British Columbia. This year's convention was in Sidney (Victoria) and their climate must be ideal. It never gets too hot or cold, and everything seems to grow to perfection. We seemed to hit peak bloom.

The convention planners canceled their tour to Butchart Gardens, and suggested that people visit on their own. It is an all day affair, and well worth the time. I have been to Butchart a number of times, but the garden this spring seemed more charming than ever. I know that the designers change color schemes from year to year, as well as throughout the seasons. In spring, they feature large beds of tulips, daffodils, cinerarias, forget-me-nots, and other seasonal plants to complement the rhododendrons and flowering trees. Throughout the summer, bedding plants, summer bulbs, roses, and perennials create the big floral show, and by fall the chrysanthemums, asters, roses, and dahlias take center stage.

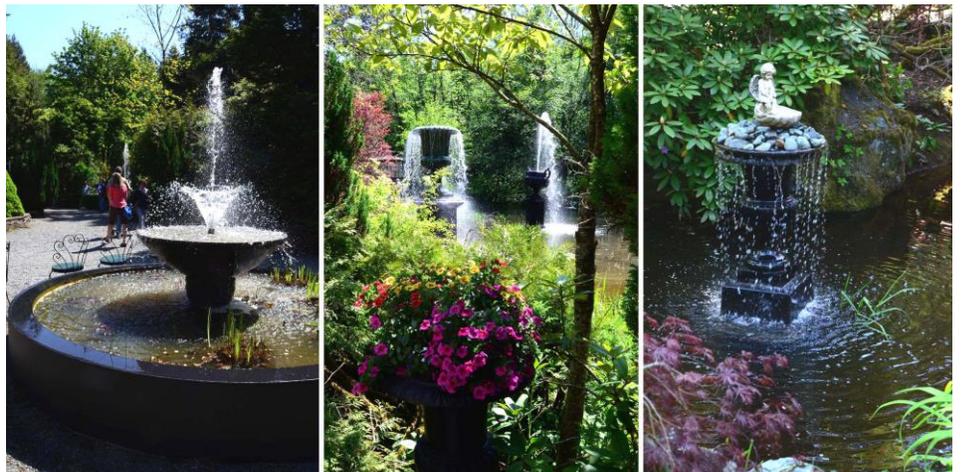
Although I have enjoyed the brilliant swaths of contrasting colors I have seen before, the hues selected for this spring's display were more subtle and very refined. Rather than bright reds and pinks, oranges, yellows, and blues that often shock the senses, the color scheme this year was dominated by delicate blush pink, white, lavender, peach, soft blue, and cream that blended so well with the many shades of green and

bronze of the expanding foliage. Gorgeous!

For me, one of the most memorable gardens on tour was the private home of landscape architect Paul Lewis in Cowichan Valley, BC. He called his place the Bright Angel Water Garden and it had ponds and fountains and other water features on a grand scale, his specialty. In the center of a lake was his "rain gazebo." It had a fountain on top that constantly showered water on the roof. Throughout the garden were huge urns with water spilling over the edges,



The "Rain Gazebo" in the Bright Angel Water Garden



More water features in the Bright Angel Water Garden

other fountains that shot water high into the air, various pools with different fountain types, and small water features tucked in shady nooks.

Another amazing garden was the home of the late Prince and Princess Abkhazi in Victoria. Started in 1946, this is now a public garden with enormous old rhododendrons that towered overhead and a wonderful rock garden. I did remember people raving about this garden at the 2005 Convention, but I had signed up for another tour and missed it. Not this time!



Vista with azaleas and pond in the Abkhazi Rock Garden

Some of the rhododendrons in the garden were huge, towering 40 ft or more with trunks nearly a foot across. It is hard to see any blossoms when the plants are so tall.

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Pile of deadheaded rhododendron blossoms

At Misty View Farm, the home of Allan and Liz Murray, their garden was reaching maturity. Plants were large, but not overgrown, and in full bloom. It was midseason but it was clear that someone had been deadheading the spent blossoms of the early bloomers since there wasn't a dead flower anywhere. We finally noticed where they had taken the blooms because there was a huge multi-colored pile of blossoms at the edge of the vegetable garden that must have been 6 or 7 feet tall. They had been busy!



Vista in the Webb Garden

Another favorite garden was that of Ken and Madeleine Webb. Ken was the Director of District 1, the hosts of the convention, but he is now the West Coast Vice President. As we got off the bus, we were met by the yellow-orange hybrid 'Nancy Evans' and a lovely grassy lawn flanked by large rhododendrons including blue *R. augustinii* plants led to the house. It is a shame that those plants are so difficult to grow in our area. We also saw a new Jim Barlup hybrid, 'Madeleine's Melody', named for Ken's wife. It had deep green foliage and light yellow flowers.



Golden Yellow: 'Nancy Evans'



Light Yellow Barlup Hybrid: 'Madeleine's Melody'

Like most of my trips to conventions on the West Coast, I try to add some extra time before or after the event for additional sightseeing. Prior to the meeting, Bill Bedwell and I flew to Seattle, rented a car, and saw Meerkerk Gardens on Whidbey Island, drove to Vancouver to see VanDusen Botanical Gardens, and then took the ferry across to Sidney. On the way back, Karel Bernady joined us and we stopped in Seattle to see Jim Barlup before heading home.

I took over 5000 pictures on that trip alone, so expect to see some of them in upcoming newsletters!

Cape Cod 2015

After Massachusetts endured one of their worst winters in recent memory with record snows 8 to 10 ft deep in places and very low temperatures of -10° F or worse, I was expecting the bloom on Cape Cod to be disappointing this spring. How wrong I was! Many of the gardens we visited this year had the best displays we have seen in years. It is certainly nice to experience spring again after our gardens are over. This year, I was in Canada when my garden bloomed.

We visited a number of the same gardens we always see including Heritage Plantation where Charles Dexter and his head gardener, Tony Consolini, started breeding rhododendrons. Jack Cowles continued to create many wonderful hybrids there and planted them out in the woods on the estate.

Those of us who have been going Heritage for a many years feel that many of their rhododendrons have become overgrown and not as impressive as before. They are still pretty, but some pruning and renovation of those older plants might improve the display. It has to be done gradually over several years, though. An alternative would be to propagate the big plants and plant younger clones in the garden that will reach their prime in about 10 to 15 years.

I remember seeing 'Consolini's Windmill' in 1980 when I attended my first Cape Cod convention. It grabbed the spotlight with its large rounded trusses of rose red with a white star shaped area in the center of each blossom. At that time, the plant was probably less than 4 ft tall and growing among some other rhododendrons including the light creamy yellow 'Bellringer'. All of those plants are still in the same spot, but are now approaching 20 ft tall or more, but they have not had space to spread out and become rounded and full. The flowers are still beautiful, but the landscape effect is no longer as impressive.

One of the large original plants, 'Dexter's Brandy Green', seems to be the equivalent of "Rhododendron Kudzu." It was huge the first time I saw it but has continued to spread out and smother nearby

competitors. It is now the size of a small house and was in full bloom. I have rarely seen it in flower at Heritage since tends to bloom late, but it was doing its thing this year. The hybrid has huge trusses of a buff pink with bronze and green in the throat. It was spreading out over a bed of ferns and flowering all the way to the ground. One realization is that I certainly don't have room for that plant my garden!



Admiring the Dexters at Heritage Plantation



Bicolor red and white: 'Consolini's Windmill'



Buff pink: 'Dexter's Brandy Green'

There used to be a circular paved walk around the rhododendrons but part of it vanished. Heritage has constructed a building and put in a parking lot and fence. The walk in that area is gone. A tall fragrant pink rhododendron known as 'Spectacular' is still there, but the path stops just beyond it now.

Some areas where we used to admire seedlings are getting overgrown including a path called the Campfire Trail. Small trees are growing up around those plants, and the trail is barely visible. The plant named for Dick Gustafson known as 'Rhody Gus' is completely overgrown. It has large trusses of pale lavender and is heavily spotted, but it barely had any blossoms this year. 'Heritage Campfire Peach' is still alive, but it is rapidly getting overgrown, too.

We visited many other areas in Massachusetts, too. Norm and Jean Beaudry, Bill Bedwell, and I left early on this trip so we could visit the Garden in the Woods in Framingham. It is the display garden of the New England Wildflower Society. They have suffered some serious storm damage in the past few years which took down many large trees. They are re-landscaping, and expanding their native azalea displays. We also dropped by to see Joe Brusco who has an impressive garden of species. He does have an 8-foot deer fence, but his garden suffered some heavy browsing when the snow got so deep that the deer could cross at will during the winter.

We did stop by to see Harold and Eveline Pilkington who are now in their 90's. They rescued Tony Consolini's plants and the garden was the best in years. Many old specimens like 'Bellringer' have had room to grow and were spectacular.



One of many 'Bellringer' plants in the Pilkington Garden

We visited John and Donna Delano's garden which was stunning, as always. Their garden has reached that stage where plants are big but not overgrown so they put on a great show. Gene and

Barbara Gingras kindly invited everyone to a picnic at their garden. We admired their huge rhododendron collection in their woods. We also visited Dick and Cathy White whose garden keeps expanding every year. I had to check on one of their introductions, 'Catherine White', which is gorgeous ruffled cream.

The final day of our trip, we took the ferry to Martha's Vineyard where we toured the Polly Hill Arboretum as well as the garden of Peter Norris and his wife Amy. The Arboretum suffered quite a bit of deer damage in areas, but their native azaleas were in good form. I particularly enjoyed seeing the rare yellow selection of *R. flammeum* known as 'Hazel Hamilton'.



R. flammeum 'Hazel Hamilton'

Peter Norris has been planting rhododendrons on his fenced acreage on Martha's Vineyard for a number of years. He has a large collection including many Dexter, Consolini, and Cowles from Heritage, an extensive collection of rhododendron species, and other rare plants and trees. We had visited his garden in 2009 when many plants were small but they are now maturing and look great. The landscape is lovely with sweeping vistas and several ponds.



Vista across a pond in the Norris Garden



Our group on Roan Mountain as clouds begin to clear



J. Jackson, Lindy Johnson, and George McLellan admire a compact yellow *R. calendulaceum* at Engine Gap.

Mountain Hikes 2015

We had many different people join us on the mountain hikes this year. Regulars included J. Jackson and Lindy Johnson, George McLellan, Buddy Lee, and me. The Wetmore family including Chris and his wife, Beth, as well his dad came from Charlotte, NC for only the first day. Chris and Beth did leave the new baby at home but he will be joining is one day. Wesley and Denise Greene as well as their dog Holly came from Williamsburg for several days. Charlie Andrews from North Georgia and Dr. Ralf Bauer from Germany joined us for the entire trip and Ron Hooper from South Carolina came for the last part. We met up with Dr. Tom Ranney and some of his NCSU graduate students on Wayah Bald. Jim and Pam Brant met us at Hooper.

We did hike Roan Mountain on Sunday. We arrived at the parking area early so everyone got a good parking spot. It must have been mobbed later that day since we saw many people on the trail that afternoon. The top of the mountain was gripped by clouds when we first arrived but it cleared off as the day progressed and was absolutely beautiful.

The rhododendrons had lost some buds over the winter, so the *R. catawbiense* was only 40% of normal but still pretty. The flame azaleas along the Appalachian Trail at Engine Gap were gorgeous.

We drove the Parkway to Asheville but stopped by to check on the “Red Max” on the way. It is a solitary plant of *R. maximum* in the wild that has red blossoms and grows near Mount Mitchell. It was not in bloom yet but it was loaded with buds. We drove to Wayah Bald to admire the fragrant *R. arborescens* and unusual forms of *Kalmia*. The *Kalmia* buds seemed to have been hit by a late frost this year.

The next stop was Hooper Bald to check on the restoration project. The *R. calendulaceum* was in prime form, but we were disappointed in some of the seedlings we set out. They had come through the winter in good form, but deer seem to be browsing the plants we set out on nearby Oak Knob.



Ralf Bauer on Gregory Bald beside the ‘Pink by the Path’

Our final trek was to Gregory Bald. We had not been up there for several years because of bad weather, but we made it this time. We used Parson’s Branch Road that cuts through the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to get to the trail head but it was in terrible shape. We can’t rely on that road so the next time we hike Gregory we will have to take the longer Gregory Ridge Trail from Cades Cove. If you missed this year’s hikes, we’ll go again in 2016!

Convention Reminder!

Please remember that we will need your help to host the Williamsburg Convention next spring. The dates are April 20-24, 2016. Please volunteer!

www.arsasaconvention2016.org

Potomac Valley Chapter ARS - Newsletter
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