



Potomac Valley Chapter American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Summer Newsletter: July 2011

Calendar

- * **July 30, 2011** – Chapter Picnic, Seneca Creek State Park
- * **September 25, 2011** – Regular Meeting, Potomac Community Center
- * **October 7 - 12, 2011** – Hooper Bald Project, North Carolina
- * **October 21-23, 2011** – ARS Eastern Regional, Richmond, VA
- * **November 5, 2011** – Fall Banquet, Normandy Farms
- * **January 29, 2011** – Regular Meeting, Potomac Community Center

Chapter Officers

President: Richard Mohr
rngmohr@msn.com
Vice-President and Secretary:
Still Available!
Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman
prittman@erols.com

Chapter Picnic and Plant Exchange Saturday, July 30, 2011: 1 – 5 PM Seneca Creek State Park

It is time for our annual picnic and plant exchange again. We will hold the event near Gaithersburg at Seneca Creek State Park from 1:00 – 5:00 PM. We have rented the Fawn Pavilion for the day, the same covered picnic facility we have used before. It is located in the park on the south side of Clopper Lake.

The chapter will be providing hamburgers, hotdogs, and buns, plus standard items like drinks, ice, condiments, plates, and eating utensils. Please bring some other picnic type food to share with others. Alcoholic beverages are no longer allowed so please leave your wine or other spirits at home.

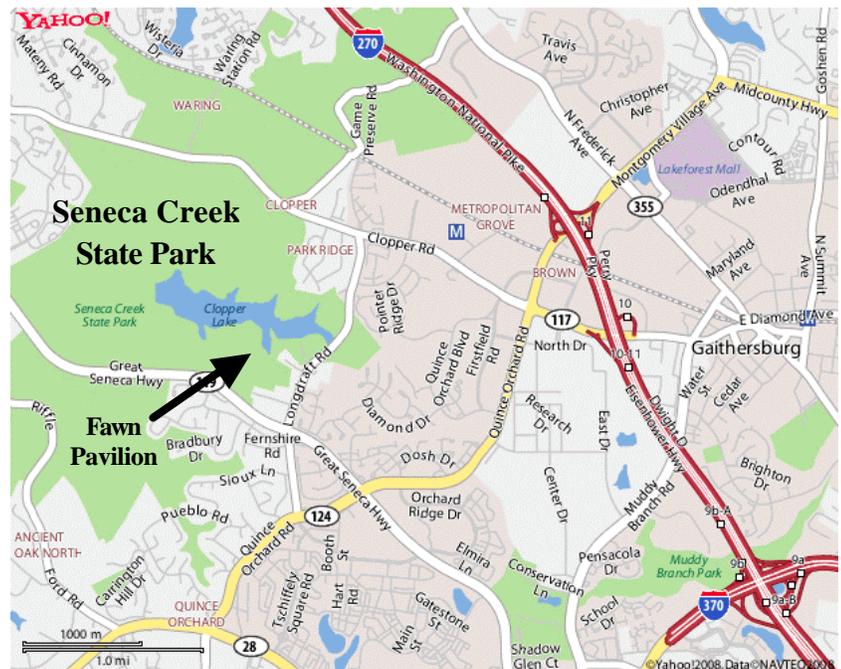
We will have some choice rhododendrons for sale. These are primarily rare Gable hybrids we picked up at the 2009 Northeast Regional as rooted cuttings, and have grown them on to larger sizes. They should go to local people.

We will be having a plant exchange at the picnic, so if you care to participate, please bring a plant worth about \$5 to trade with others.

Reminder: Seneca Park does charge a nominal entry fee but Maryland residents get a discount and senior citizens 62 years and older have not had to pay anything.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Take I-495 to I-270N toward Frederick
2. Merge onto I-270 Local N
3. Take the Exit #10 West, toward MD Rt. 124
4. Turn RIGHT onto MD 117 (Clopper Rd)
5. Turn LEFT into the Park: 11950 Clopper Rd



Seneca Creek State Park - Fawn Pavilion
11900 Clopper Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20878

Upcoming Fall Events

We have a number of exciting meetings coming up this fall. Please mark your calendars.

For September, we expect to have a program on the ARS Convention in Vancouver, WA. Those of us who attended had a phenomenal time. Gorgeous!

In October, there are two multi-chapter activities. Over the extended Columbus Day weekend, we hope many of you will join us in western North Carolina to help plant native azaleas on Hooper Bald and enjoy the glorious fall foliage. More about that in the newsletter.

Two weeks later, there will be an ARS Regional meeting in Richmond hosted by MAC.

Don't miss our Fall Banquet in November. Steve Hootman from the Rhododendron Species Foundation near Seattle, WA, has agreed to be our speaker.

Gray Carter Turns 90

We hope you were at our March meeting. We had a surprise party for Gray Carter in order to help celebrate his 90th birthday (below). Gray's kindness and generosity has been such an inspiration to all of us in the Potomac Valley Chapter, and it was a delight to be able to share this milestone with him. Congratulations!



The Latest on the Arboretum

There have been some interesting developments regarding the fate of the azalea collection at the U.S. National Arboretum. In November when we first heard that the azaleas on the Glenn Dale Hillside were going to be destroyed, it was very tense. Eight months later, their demise seems no longer imminent.

As reported in the last newsletter, there was a meeting at the Arboretum on March 10 where stakeholders had a chance to air concerns to Dr. Colien Hefferan, the new Director of the Arboretum. On June 8, FONA arranged second meeting with her. This was a smaller group and less formal, so we were free to ask questions. Dr. Hefferan was very straightforward in her responses, but also reassuring that the azaleas will stay.

Dr. Hefferan said that the Arboretum has multiple missions. Although the original Glenn Dale azaleas on the hillside may not have much scientific research value, they are among the most cherished plantings at the Arboretum and that satisfies a secondary mission, to serve the public as a display garden.

Funding problems are a reality, though, since the budget for USDA may be cut as much as 13% this year, back to 2009 levels. Dealing with reduced revenues will not be easy. She did note that the House of Representatives included the following directive in the Agricultural Funding Bill for Fiscal 2012 that did provide some direction:

H.R. 2112: "National Arboretum.—The Committee directs the National Arboretum to maintain its National Boxwood Collection and the Glenn Dale Hillside portion of the Azalea Collection. The Committee encourages the National Arboretum to work collaboratively with supporters of the National Arboretum to raise additional funds to ensure the long-term viability of these and other important collections."

The bill was approved on June 16. Even though there was no increased funding for the Arboretum, it seems that our concerns did reach Capital Hill. With such a directive, it doesn't seem likely that they will be spending money to cut down the azaleas anytime soon. Even so, they need adequate funding to assure that collections at the Arboretum are maintained properly.

There was the anonymous million dollar donation to FONA in February that went into an endowment fund to protect the azalea and boxwood collections. The reality is that the interest it generates will not support two gardens, so FONA launched a campaign to raise a second million. At the ARS Board meeting in May, our society approved a \$5000 donation from the Endowment Fund to FONA for the campaign to Save the Azaleas and Boxwood. We have a long way to go to raise the second million to secure those collections in perpetuity, but we are making progress.

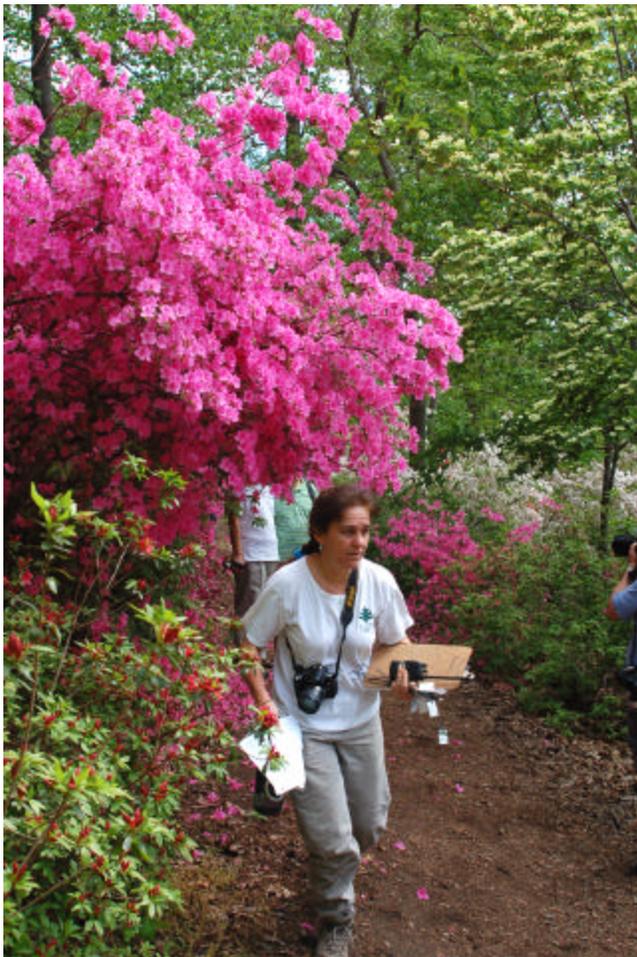


Arboretum Field Trip

On April 26, at least 30 members from various rhododendron and azalea society chapters convened on the Arboretum to see the azalea display. The weather was excellent and the flowers were lovely. Walking along the trails on Mount Hamilton with the Glenn Dale azaleas in full bloom, it seemed impossible that anyone would ever want to cut those specimens to the

ground and paint their stumps with herbicide as had been proposed last November.

As is typical during bloom time, we found Barbara Bullock, the Azalea Curator, gathering data on those plants while checking with her able volunteers. For a number of years, Barbara has been marking large blocks of the same variety, recording flower and foliage details, taking photos, and of course, weeding and pruning as she makes her rounds (below).



After more than 60 years, the labels that Ben Morrison put on those plants when he set them out are no longer attached. Barbara has given those blocks of plants metallic labels and an identification code, but for anyone familiar with the Glenn Dales, many of those varieties are unmistakable. Who could miss the early pink 'Dayspring' even though it was just about through. The huge swath of deep glowing purple with the tag "MH-GD 041" for Morrison Hillside Glenn Dale 041, is without a doubt the original 'Seneca'. There is not another purple azalea with that undertone of yellow in the throat. The flowers literally glow when lit from behind. We should make this an annual event, a trip to the Arboretum at peak azalea time.



Joint Flower Show with Mason-Dixon

Because the Arboretum Administration Building is closed for renovation, on the weekend of May 7-8 this year we held a joint flower show with the Mason-Dixon Chapter in Westminster, MD.

Previously, PVC President Richard Mohr had announced a new chapter honor, the Gray Carter Judge's Award that would be given at the next flower show. Gray's horticultural expertise is legendary, and this will be prize given to a chapter member whose entry in the flower show is of outstanding horticultural merit. Pictured above is this year's winner, a flawless azalea spray of 'Elsie Lee' entered by Richard and Ginny Mohr. It took Best Azalea in the flower show in Westminster. Sonny Coble's truss of the deep red 'Trilby' took Best Rhododendron and Best in Show.

Update on the White Garden

Mary Olien, the Director of Green Spring Gardens, is trying to gather a team of volunteers to assist in maintaining the garden of Margaret and J.C. White that is now a public park. We had a gathering on April 27 when the azaleas and early rhododendrons were in bloom, but Mary arranged a couple of work days on June 6 and June 15, too. She will have another work session this summer and again in the fall. Thanks to all who assisted. We hope to get more volunteers in future sessions. The next dates will be:

Wednesday, August 17, 8 AM – noon

Saturday, October 15, 9 AM – noon, followed by a BYO picnic.

I was able to assist on the June 6th date. It was good to see that Margaret's garden was still in good form. There were some broken branches caused by heavy snows this winter and a few plants had died, but in general, everything looked like it was in good shape.

In April, the rhododendron 'John C. White' put on the best I had ever seen, but in June, the garden still had quite a bit of bloom. There were many deep orange-red native azalea seedlings that have become rather large now, mostly *R. cumberlandense*. There were also a number of late blooming rhododendrons I had never seen bloom before. Those plants were along the path leading to the back of the property beside the tennis court where 'John C. White' is growing.

My suspicion is that the rhododendrons are probably Swarthmore hybrids developed by John Wister. Wister, desiring some late blooming hybrids that would be in flower when Swarthmore College held its graduation in June, made a number of hybrids of *R. maximum* with Dexters and other rhododendrons. Of course, the college has now changed its graduation date to May, but the Swarthmore hybrids are still great, and most of them late blooming rhododendrons.



Some plants have lost their labels, but I recognized 'Judy Spillane' (above), a cross of (*R. maximum* x 'Janet Blair'). It is the only Swarthmore hybrid I have, but it is one of the nicest foliage plants in my garden. It has deep green leaves, a natural branching habit that does not require pruning, and a modest sized truss of blush pink to white with a gold blotch. The other hybrids I saw that day were new to me, but most of them had the distinctive foliage of *R. maximum* hybrids. Perhaps someone familiar with the Swarthmore hybrids can help identify them one day.

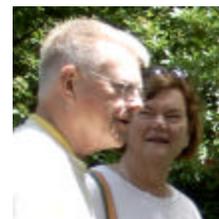
Some Sad News

Our Chapter extends its deepest sympathy to Bob and Rosa McWhorter over the loss of their daughter, Jennifer Marie Thomas, who passed away on April 25 after a 15-month battle with melanoma cancer.

We also send our sincerest sympathy to Joe and Marge Marsala who also lost their daughter, Laura Cross, in late April. Our thoughts and prayers are with both families during these very trying times.

District Director's Report Ann Mangels

American Rhododendron Society Board Meeting May 11, 2011, Vancouver, WA



Bill and Ann Mangels

The meeting began promptly at 8:30 a.m. with Ted Stecki presiding at his last board meeting. Ted described his concerns about the dropping membership in the ARS and discussion ensued regarding what new members want and need, educational opportunities and meeting activities. He also mentioned the critical situation at the National Arboretum with the possible demise of the azalea hillside.

Elections approved by the Board followed with the slate as follows: Don Smart, President; Western Vice President, Bob MacIntyre; Treasurer, Bill Mangels; Secretary, Kath Collier. Bruce Feller will continue as Eastern Vice President and follow Don Smart upon the completion of his term. As it goes with ARS presidents, a candidate has a two year term. Since Don Smart is from Washington State, the candidate succeeding him will be Bruce Feller, Eastern Vice President, and then Bob MacIntyre will follow him as the current Western Vice President.

An ad hoc committee was formed to look at options for ARS board meetings (frequency, format, ways to reduce costs, etc.) Bruce Feller and Ann Mangels are members from the East. A report will be made this fall.

The Asheville ARS/ASA Convention planning in spring, 2012 is going well, and costs are being held down. Among the options for attendees will be a "Judges Training" class at which time Bruce and Marianne Feller will teach about techniques in grooming and selecting specimen trusses for show. Ray Smith (MD) had remarked that the Fellers had done such a nice program for Mason Dixon several years ago, and because of the difficulty tracking down judges during the first couple of weeks in May, additional judges are needed to help with our shows. The Fellers will not get into judging ethics and practices – just preparation for showing.

Laura Grant reported that Walter Przypek (MAC) has volunteered to replace Wing Fong to lead the Program Library. Don Hyatt (PV) has agreed to make DVD's, while other suitable programs are also being developed for chapter use.

The Endowment Fund recommended that grants be awarded to Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park, Oyster Bay, New York; Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society (B.C.) Memorial Park; and Humboldt Botanical Garden Foundation, Eureka, CA;

and to Friends of the National Arboretum (FONA) for the preservation of the Glenn Dale azaleas. There was a caveat included with the donation of \$5000 that assurance of donated funds would be returned to the ARS if the arboretum elects to destroy the azaleas.

There is continued movement to consider an electronic edition of the ARS Journal. The costs associated with the publication/mailing of the Journal in its present format are a significant portion of the annual budget. Further considerations for changes and/or distribution will be followed up by a committee, including Sandra McDonald from MAC. There is no move afoot to remove the delivery of the JARS away from its present form and that will be available to those who want it. There will be a chapter newsletter contest in an attempt to enhance local publications. There will be a judging committee. Chapter calendars, speakers' names, educational material, etc. are often included in newsletters, which are currently being delivered to members either by US Mail service or electronically. Dee Daneri was asked to write an article for the Journal relating to the process for nominating honor recipients, and Bill Mangels will write an article describing the procedure for writing grant requests.

The proposed budget was accepted. Salary increases will be awarded to Glen Jamieson, Sonia Nelson and Laura Grant in the amount of 3% beginning September 1st.

The Annual Meeting was held in two sessions – on Thursday and Saturday nights. The annual roll call of districts with members standing to acknowledge their attendance took place on the first evening. The following meeting included awarding of two Gold Medals: one to Kathy VanVeen and the other to June Sinclair. There were no Silver Medals given. The Pioneer Award was given to Edward John Penworthy Magor. Don Hyatt and Dr. Hartwig Schepker were the two meeting speakers.

A large number of people attended the convention, which overflowed into several nearby hotels. The quality of tours and educational sessions were well handled, and cost related activities were kept to an affordable level. There was not a roster of attendees, but District 9 had a good representation present from all three chapters. If there are any questions or comments about this meeting, or if you have something you'd like to see discussed, please let me know.

- Ann Mangels, Director, District 9

Color Insert – Photo Contest Winners

The color insert with this newsletter has the top vote getters in our 2011 Photo Contest. Congratulations!



Hooper Bald Project

The MAC Species Study Group under the initiative of Jim Brant has been involved with restoration projects for two balds in the Southern Appalachians. These balds are open mountain tops where rare native azalea populations grow, but trees and other vegetation were beginning to take over, threatening the azaleas.

One of those sites is Gregory Bald in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. The other is Hooper Bald, south of the Smokies near Robbinsville, NC. Hooper Bald has some of the largest flowered forms of the flame azalea, *R. calendulaceum*, we have seen in the wild. Some of the flowers exceed 3 inches across.

After getting approval from the U.S. Forest Service, Jim has organized volunteer groups to clear small trees and brush around the existing azaleas on Hooper Bald. That bald is very easy to access, about 1/4 mile from a parking lot on a gravel path.

We also collected seed off of some of the better forms of those plants. The Southern Highlands Reserve has been raising seedlings for us to replant on Hooper and another nearby bald, Oak Knob. It is important to have a backup for that rare germplasm.

About 800 seedlings will be ready to plant out this fall, and we have selected the Columbus Day weekend in October as the time to plant. We really need people to help, so we chose that weekend because it is usually peak fall color at the upper elevations in that area. We decided to combine a planting trip with a fall foliage tour of the mountains in North Carolina and Tennessee.

A tentative schedule is listed below but details are still a bit sketchy. Some of us will probably go down early to get ready, but if you want to be kept informed, please let Don Hyatt know: (Don@donaldhyatt.com)

October 7: Head to Elizabethton, TN, for Roan Mt.

October 8: Travel the Parkway to Asheville, NC

October 9-10: Drive to Robbinsville, NC. Plant azaleas and admire the fall foliage as time permits

October 11: Tour Parkway. Stay in Mt. City, TN

October 12: Visit nurseries and head for home.



James Wallenmeyer – Troop 457, Upper Potomac



**Jon Wallenmeyer
*Angel in White Lights***



**Best in Contest: Don Hyatt
*Lütetsburg Castle Gardens, Germany***



Jon Wallenmeyer – *R. alabamense 'Frosty'*



Bill Wallenmeyer - *Snow*

**Potomac Valley Chapter ARS
2011 Photo Contest
Winners**

These photographs were selected by popularity vote as the favorites in our annual photo contest. Don Hyatt's picture of garden reflections he saw on a tour in Germany was judged the Best in Contest.

Rooting Rhododendron Cuttings *by Don Hyatt*

Late summer and fall are good times to root cuttings, so I reprint this 2004 article for the benefit of new members and to remind the rest of us that we should be propagating our plants so we can share.

Selection: *Choose smaller cuttings without flower buds*

I prefer cuttings made from the smaller shoots on my plants rather than big strong growths. I look for branches on the back side of the plant or in shaded spots and try to get stems that do not have flower buds. For one reason, smaller cuttings seem to root more easily for me since they don't need quite so many roots to support a new plant. Also, I hate to cut off any branches that might bloom the following spring. If any cuttings do have flower buds, I remove them since the energy wasted on flowering can go toward root formation

Preparation: *Make short cuttings - trim larger leaves*

Rhododendrons are shallow rooted plants and therefore cuttings do not need to be very long. I make short cuttings about 1.5 to 2 inches in length. I also trim the ends of large leaves to make them more manageable. Long shoots can sometimes be cut into several sections to get additional cuttings. If a variety is scarce I might try a few leaf-bud cuttings too. A leaf-bud cutting is single leaf with some woody stem and a growth bud. Leaf-bud cuttings will often root just like normal ones but it is important to keep that bud above the soil line. If that bud rots, new growth will never emerge.

Sterilization: *Soak cuttings for 5 minutes in a Clorox solution*

After trimming leaves and stems, I usually sterilize my cuttings in order to lessen insect and disease problems. I mix 1/4 cup of Clorox with about 5 cups of water to make a sterilizing solution. I submerge the cuttings in that solution for 5 minutes which usually kills most bugs and mold spores. Then I rinse the cuttings well and shake off excess water. Cuttings will remain enclosed inside plastic bags for months, so sterilization minimizes potential problems.

Wounding: *Remove a thin piece of bark from both sides*

As the cutting begins its healing process, new roots will develop from callus tissue that forms at the cambium layer of the cut stem. In order to have a larger area for callus development, I cut away a thin sliver of bark from both sides of the bottom part of the cutting. I use a sharp knife so as not damage to the remaining bark. Azalea cuttings do not need to be wounded in this way.

Hormones: *Dip cuttings for 5 seconds in Dip 'N Grow*

To encourage root formation, most rhododendrons need a little help. I use the liquid rooting concentrate called Dip 'N Grow. For hard to root rhododendron cuttings I dilute in the ratio 1 part hormone to 5 parts water. Azaleas root well with a 1 to 10 dilution. I dip cutting ends in the solution, let them stay for 5 seconds, and then remove.

Potting Up: *Insert cuttings, enclose in a clear plastic bag*

I insert the cuttings in pots containing a porous medium of equal parts peatmoss and perlite with a bit of coarse sand. The medium should be damp but not too wet since excess moisture can encourage rot. I enclose each pot in a clear plastic bag and place these mini-greenhouses under my fluorescent lights that stay on for 18 hours per day. Cuttings should require no water or care for months. I keep them under the lights until new growth emerges the next spring and then transplant. Some varieties root in 2 to 3 months but stubborn types might take a year. I often wait until the next spring to replot.



Long cuttings may be cut in shorter pieces



Trim leaves; Remove buds; Wound stem



Try Some Leaf-bud cuttings too



Enclose pots of cuttings in a plastic bag

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