



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Early Spring Newsletter: March 2017

Potomac Valley Chapter Calendar - 2017

- **March 26, 2017** – Chapter Meeting, Potomac Community Center
- **April 13 or April 20, 2017** – Pennsylvania Nursery Trip
- **April 27-30, 2017** – ARS Convention, Eureka, CA
- **May 6, 2017** – Chapter Garden Tours
- **July 15, 2017** – Propagation Workshop, Potomac Community Center
- **September 24, 2107** – Chapter Picnic, Seneca Creek State Park
- **October 28, 2017** –PVC Banquet and Speaker, Normandie Farm

Chapter Officers

President: Ginny Mohr

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Secretary: Diane Reinke

Isabelle49@aol.com

Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman

prittman@erols.com

Some Regional Activities of Note

- **March 18, 2017** – NV-ASA Gardening Symposium, Kirkwood Presb. Church
- **March 30 – April 2, 2017** – ASA Convention, Hammond, Louisiana
- **April 29, 2017** – White Nursery Open House, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
- **May 12-14** – Middle Atlantic Chapter ARS Meeting, Wintergreen, VA
- **May 21, 2017** – White Nursery Open House, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Our Next Meeting:

Speaker: Barbara Bullock

“Glenn Dale Azalea Update”

Also: A Plant Exchange

Date: Sunday, March 26, 2017

Time: 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Where: Potomac Community Center

We are very excited to be able to add an extra meeting to our spring calendar. Barbara Bullock, the Curator of Azaleas and Rhododendrons at the U.S. National Arboretum, will be giving us an update on the Glenn Dale Azaleas. In 2010, the original Glenn Dale azalea plantings planted out 60 years before were threatened due to an outrageous decision by a supervisor to cut them down and paint the stumps with weed killer. Public outrage kept that from happening, and the planting has now been renovated instead. Encouraged by Dr. Richard Olsen, the new Director at the Arboretum, Barbara has written an article on her research. It will be published in two parts in the “Azalean.” The late Don Voss did help review her work several times before he passed.

The next page has additional information about the Glenn Dales at the Arboretum, the fine work that Barbara has done, and new residents, Bald Eagles!

At this meeting, we will also be having a plant exchange. If you have an extra plant or two that you



Barbara Bullock, Curator of Azaleas and Rhododendrons

would like to share, bring it to the meeting and exchange for something else.

Refreshment Duty: We ask members whose last names are in the second half of the alphabet (N – Z) to bring a dessert or snack to share with others.

Directions: Potomac Community Center

11315 Falls Rd, Potomac, MD

From **I-270 North**, stay in the **Local lanes**

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 the Center (on the left)

11315 Falls Rd, Potomac, MD



Barbara Bullock among azaleas on the Glenn Dale Hillside



Bald Eagles nest in a tree high above the Azalea Collection at the Arboretum
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The Glenn Dale Azaleas

Ben Morrison, the first Director of the National Arboretum, started breeding azaleas in 1929 while he was at the Plant Exploration and Introduction Station at Glenn Dale, MD. Morrison raised an amazing 75,000 azalea seedlings from which he eventually selected his 454 Glenn Dale hybrids.

In 1947, Morrison began planting azaleas on a hillside to help landscape the National Arboretum. He planted about 15,000 plants that represented the 1,200 varieties he was evaluating from 1943-46 including Glenn Dales yet to be named.

Since both sets of grandparents lived nearby, I started visiting the Arboretum when only five years old. Some plantings died over the years such as all the Ghent and Knaphill azaleas given by the Dutch government, but the Glenn Dale Hillside continued to be one of the prime floral attractions in the region. Eventually those sturdy plants needed attention, so we were thankful when Barbara Bullock arrived.

Barbara came to the Arboretum in 1990. She had dual degrees, a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture, and a decade of experience as a woody plant propagator in the trade. With volunteer help and Barbara's expert hand, the Azalea Collection has once again become one of the finest evergreen azalea plantings at any public garden in the world. Not only is it diverse and well documented, but Barbara's artistic eye has created a lovely landscape carefully arranging colors to better harmonize with one another and she has included many companion plants. Thank you, Barbara!

In 2010, the very existence of the original Glenn Dale azalea plantings became threatened. Scott Aker, a supervisor at the Arboretum, decided that the Glenn Dale azaleas as well as the National Boxwood Collection should be de-accessioned. That is a fancy term for destroyed since the plan was to cut down the 60 year old plants and paint the stumps with

weed killer. Some of the reasoning was ludicrous including comments that the azaleas attracted too much attention and that caused problems with parking and restroom facility use.

His announcement elicited unprecedented outrage from the public. Friends of the National Arboretum (FONA) got an anonymous donation of \$1 million to support the azaleas and then they set up a fund to accept other donations to maintain the collections.

Steve Henning established a website called "Save the Azaleas" that helped focus public attention. By June of 2011, public pressure won out. Congress said to preserve the plants and even allocated funds to help renovate the collection. Full details are still available for review at: www.savetheazaleas.org

The azaleas are appreciated by both man and beast. In 2014, a pair of bald eagles chose to build a nest in a huge poplar tree on the Glenn Dale hillside. The eagles, named 'Mr. President' and 'The First Lady', have raised a family above the azaleas every year since then. To give them privacy, that area has been cordoned off during the nesting season until the young eaglets are on their own. This year, the first egg was laid on 2/19 and the second 2/ 23 and they should hatch in late March. The eaglets will not be leaving the nest until after the azaleas are through blooming but you can watch them and the azaleas on video from the Eagle Cam: www.dceaglecam.org

The National Arboretum has been desperately underfunded from its inception. The prospects for help in the near future look even worse due to proposed budget cuts and hiring freezes. Over the years, Barbara has done wonders using volunteers to assist with garden chores. Perhaps she will discuss volunteer needs when she speaks to our chapter on March 26. She has a cleanup session scheduled for Saturday, April 1st. For details, contact:

Barbara.Bullock@ars.usda.gov

Some Springtime Activities of Interest

Here are some details about upcoming activities this spring. Hope you can participate!

Mini Garden Symposium:

Saturday, March 18 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM

The Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASA is sponsoring a Mini Gardening Symposium at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 8336 Carrleigh Parkway, West Springfield, VA. It is free!

Attendees will have a choice of ten 25-minute presentations offered by people from various plant societies. Among those represented will be the Azalea Society, the Rhododendron Society, the Hosta Society, the Daylily Society, Green Spring Master Gardeners, and Meadowlark Gardens.

Topics will include Deer Problems, Trees & Shrubs, Daylilies, Native Azaleas, Native Plants, Azalea Gardens, Legacy Azaleas, and Propagating Azaleas. People can ask questions from experts from other plant societies and get information on how to join those groups. We hope this will become an annual event, so consider giving this experiment in broadening horticultural interests your support.

There will be a program for children 6 and up but that does require advance registration. Space is limited. More information can be found on the NV-ASA website: www.nv-asa.org

Pennsylvania Nursery Trip

Which date: April 13 or April 20?

Those who attended the overnight trip to North Carolina nurseries had a great time. We will be having another one-day trip to nurseries in nearby Pennsylvania. People can go any time but we are considering two dates. We can discuss this at the meeting. Here are the nurseries we expect to visit:

Groff's Plant Farm (9:30 – 11:30 AM)

6128 Street Rd., Kirkwood, PA 17536

717-529-3001

Conestoga Nursery (1:00 PM – 2:30 PM)

310 Reading Road, East Earl, PA 17519

717-445-4076

Black Creek Greenhouses (2:45 – 4:30 PM)

211 E. Black Creek Road, East Earl, PA 17519

717-445-5046

White Nursery Open Houses: 4/29 and 5/21

Mike and Deb White will be holding two open houses this spring, April 29 and May 21. Time: 9am to 5pm. Address: 22531 Wildcat Rd, Germantown, MD 20876 whiteaz@verizon.net



Ginny Mohr presents the Bronze Medal to Paul and Carolyn Beck

Paul and Carolyn Beck Receive the ARS Bronze Medal Award

At our Fall Banquet on October 29, 2016, Chapter President Ginny Mohr presented the ARS Bronze Medal to Carolyn and Paul Beck. The Becks have been two of our most generous and hardworking members. The incredible work they did before, during, and after the 2016 ARS/ASA Williamsburg Convention was truly phenomenal. The financial success of that meeting is primarily due to their efforts. We were able to donate \$5000 to both the ARS and ASA, and every chapter got over \$2500, too. We know words are insufficient to fully express our gratitude but we just want to say Thank you, Carolyn and Paul!

**The Potomac Valley Chapter
of the American Rhododendron Society presents
to Carolyn and Paul Beck the Bronze Medal**

For many years, Carolyn and Paul Beck have supported our chapter through their generous donations to plant sales and auctions. Their tireless efforts during the 2016 Joint ARS/ASA Convention were truly exceptional, and helped make that meeting a resounding success. Paul was convention treasurer and used his technology expertise to computerize almost every aspect of the meeting. Building on Carolyn's extensive records and excellent photographs, Paul created a huge interactive database of plant sale cultivars. He printed a barcode label for every plant and automated the sales process using networked computers with scanners. Carolyn is a superb horticulturist, and propagated thousands of rare azaleas for the sale, all expertly grown. She supervised plant sale logistics, auctions, and many other details. In deep appreciation for all they do, our chapter presents to the Becks its highest award, the ARS Bronze Medal.

Kenneth McDonald, Jr.

Remembering an Icon

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Kenneth McDonald, Jr, on January 31, a few days before his 82nd birthday. Ken eventually succumbed to cancer after a valiant battle spanning a number of years. Ken is survived by his devoted wife of 42 years, Sandra McDonald, PhD, five loving children, a granddaughter, and a sister.



Ken and Sandra McDonald on the Appalachian Trail

Ken and Sandra made a dynamic team. They were both intensely interested in horticulture and enjoyed hikes to see native azaleas in the wild. They brought different strengths to the partnership. Sandra was the scientist, writer, and hybridizer. Ken was the nurseryman and outgoing public relations expert.

What many of us remember most about Ken is his heartfelt concern for others and memorable broad smile. At meetings, Ken would reach out to new attendees to make them feel welcome, and he was always anxious to touch base with old friends. He was profoundly kind and generous, giving his time and resources to help charities, civic groups, plant societies, professional organizations, and anyone in need. Ken was an admired leader. He served as the Director of our ARS District IX.

Ken grew up in the nursery business. His father, Ken McDonald Sr., was co-founder of Le-Mac Nurseries in Hampton, VA, a major wholesale grower of azaleas and rhododendrons for the nursery trade and florist industry. Ken earned a BS degree in civil engineering from VMI and had a career in the US Army, retiring as a Captain in 1963. At that time he returned to the family business and took over full management after his father died in 1965. Ken held that position until his retirement in 2004.

It was an honor to know Ken. He has enriched our lives and he will be greatly missed.



Bea MacDonald and the Cowles Hybrid 'Bea MacDonald'

More Sad News:

Bea MacDonald - Bea MacDonald was one of the originals from the Cape Cod area who helped evaluate the Dexter and Cowles hybrids. She passed away on February 15 due to a stroke. The Cowles hybrid named in her honor is a stunning shrub with large flowers in a blend of pink and orange. A memorial service for Bea will be held in the spring.

John Rountree - John Rountree, a former member of our chapter, passed away on February 15. He is survived by his wife, Susan. John was deaf but he never let that interfere with communicating and contributing to many horticultural groups in our region. He was a regular volunteer at the White Garden and will be missed.

2017 Photography Contest Results:

Below are the top winners in our Photography Contest, as determined by a popularity vote by those who attended the meeting. The photographers who took awards were Jon and Phyllis Wallenmeyer, Carolyn Beck, and Don Hyatt. Pictures can be seen elsewhere in the newsletter.

Category I - Flowers

- 1st - 'Madeleine's Melody' - Hyatt
- 2nd - Klimavicz azalea BA-05-50 - Beck
- 2nd (tie) - Klimavicz azalea BA-05-54 - Beck

Category II - Plants or Scenery

- 1st - 'Nestucca' in the Beaudry Garden - Hyatt
- 2nd - Rhodos and Reflections - Wallenmeyer
- 2nd (tie) - *R. calendulacum* on Roan - Hyatt

Category III - People, Animals, Other

- 1st - Proud Grandpa Jon & Baby - Wallenmeyer
- 2nd - *R. cumberlandense* w/ Butterfly - Hyatt
- 3rd (4-way tie) - Azalea bud of 'Nightingale' - Beck
- 3rd - Leslie Nanney and Azaleas - Beck,
- 3rd - Grandbaby on the Move - Wallenmeyer
- 3rd - Roan Hikers - Hyatt

Category I. Flowers



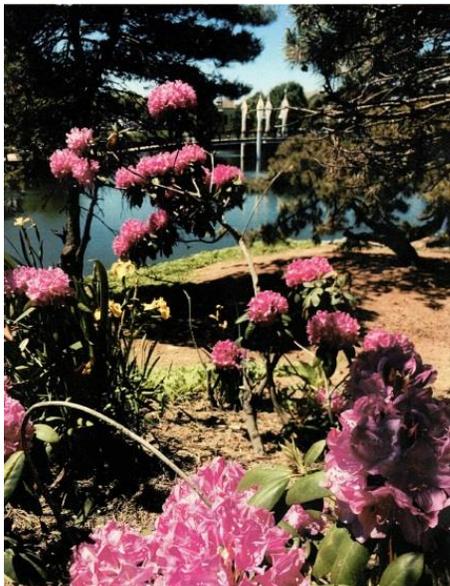
1st – ‘Madeleine’s Melody’ (Hyatt)

Potomac Valley Chapter ARS 2017 Annual Photography Contest

Category II. Landscapes



2nd – Flame Azalea on Roan Mt. (Hyatt)



2nd – Rhodos & Reflections (Wallenmeyer)



2nd – Klimavicz Azalea BA-05-50 (Beck)



2nd – Klimavicz Azalea BA-05-54 (Beck)



1st – ‘Nestucca’ in the Beaudry Garden (Hyatt)

Category III. Other

Potomac Valley Chapter ARS
2017 Photography Contest
(continued)



1st – Proud Grandpa (Wallenmeyer)



3rd – Baby on the Move (Wallenmeyer)



2nd – Butterfly on *R. cumberlandense* (Hyatt)



3rd – Leslie Nannie & Azaleas (Beck)



3rd – Roan Hikers (Hyatt)



3rd – Azalea Bud on HS 'Nightingale' (Beck)

Rhododendron Treks - 2016 Part 2

By Don Hyatt

In our last newsletter, I wrote about the first half of our trip this year to the mountains of Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee including places like Mount Rogers, Roan Mountain, and the Linville Gorge. This issue will have the second half of the trip and will discuss some of the problems I faced trying to hike when I couldn't wear shoes.

After a leisurely day driving along the Parkway looking at *R. viscosum*, *R. arborescens*, and a quick drive to the top of Mount Toxaway to see *R. minus*, we headed to the motel in Franklin, NC. After a good meal at the restaurant across the street, I hauled my luggage up to the room and was getting ready for bed. That is where I did some serious damage.

I do have a reputation for being a klutz. On one garden tour in England, I backed up to take a picture and fell into a pond up to my neck. I try not to go bathing in public anymore. Once I managed to tear some muscles from my buttocks to my ankle while making a futile attempt to chase a chipmunk off the deck. I even managed to fall out of an easy chair and break two ribs. I am a hazard to myself!

That night in Franklin, I was trying to move my heavy luggage into a closet and somehow caught my toenail on the suitcase, ripped off the nail, and then dropped the luggage on my foot. Like any good horticulturist, my first thought was that I would try to graft the nail back on my big toe. It didn't work. My toe was swollen and painful so I could no longer wear shoes. That does present a problem for hikers.

The next morning, as the rest of the group headed to Wayah Bald, I went to Wal-Mart. I bought open toed sandals and a whole arsenal of medicines and gauze pads. I wanted to participate in the hikes but knew I had to curtail some of my plans.

By lunchtime, I met the group on top of Wayah and admired the beautiful display of kalmia and *R. arborescens*. It was probably the heaviest bloom up there we had ever seen. The group had already hiked to the top of nearby Wine Spring Bald. I missed that part but did enjoy their pictures.

Unfortunately, Wayah Bald was one of the areas hit hard by the wildfires in November. We have seen pictures of the damage, and it seems clear that the beautiful display we have admired is gone.

The next day we drove to Hooper Bald and I could make the hike to see the *calendulaceum*. It is a leisurely walk on a gravel path for about a quarter of a mile which was no problem in sandals. The azaleas were spectacular, as always.



Rustic Cabin in Cades Cove

The next day, the rest of the group planned to hike to Slaughter Mountain in the Blood Mountain Wilderness area of northern Georgia. It is a difficult trail where George McLellan once got lost. I was happy to have an excuse not to go so I drove parts of the Blue Ridge Parkway instead. It was a wonderful day. I stopped at almost every overlook and took pictures of native azaleas, rhodos, and wildflowers.

The following day, we drove to Clingmans Dome. I was able to walk up the paved road to the observation tower but I didn't attempt to hike with the others to Andrews Bald. It is quite rejuvenating to take some quiet time to study plants up close, smell the fresh air, or just watch the clouds race by.

The final major hike was to Gregory Bald and that was out of the question. While everyone else hiked to the top, I spent the day exploring lower elevations along Forge Creek and Cades Cove. We often rush past that on our way to the bald. I had time to admire the rushing waters, the stands of *R. maximum* in bloom, rustic cabins flanked by Black-eyed Susans, and the sweeping vistas in the Cove.

Ralf Bauer was anxious to hike out to Mount LeConte to see the dwarf purple *R. minus* we call "smokianum." Everyone else was recovering from Gregory and slept in the next morning. At dawn, I drove Ralf to Newfound Gap to drop him off. He said he could make the 17 mile hike and would meet us in Gatlinburg that evening at 5:00 PM. Ralf does a lot of hiking where he lives in Germany near the Black Forest. He knows how to pace himself. I was skeptical, and took a final picture of him to show authorities. I made some notes about his next of kin.

George and I drove to the Rainbow Falls trail head near Gatlinburg, and right on time, Ralf came bouncing down the trail. His photos are spectacular and we all want to do that trip one day. Sadly, much of the scenic area from Gatlinburg up the side of Mount LeConte was also destroyed by wildfires.

The final point I want to make is if one cannot make all the hikes, it is still possible to join us and have fun. There are so many beautiful things to see!

Additional Rhododendron Trek Photos



Wayah Bald Vista



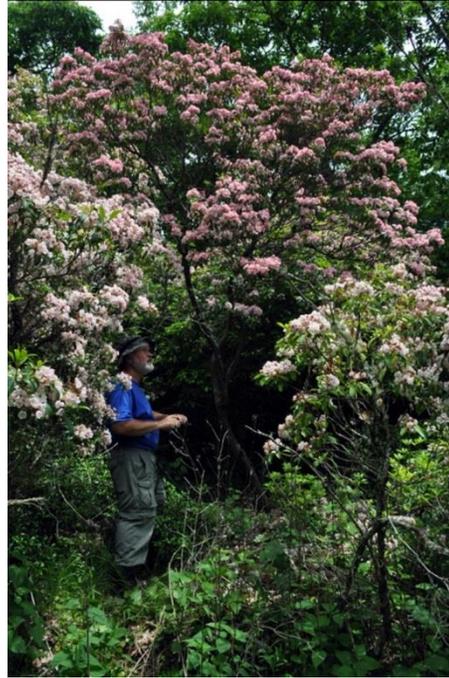
Wayah Bald – *R. arborescens*



Hooper Bald – “Best Red” *calendulaceum*



Gregory Trail – Forge Creek



Wine Spring Bald Kalmia Photo: G. McLellan



Hooper Bald – *R. calendulaceum*



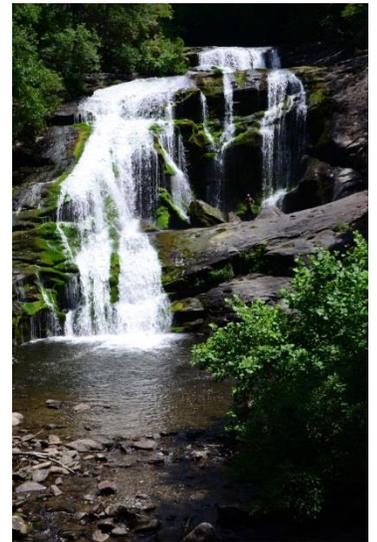
Hooper Bald – Bicolor Flame Azalea



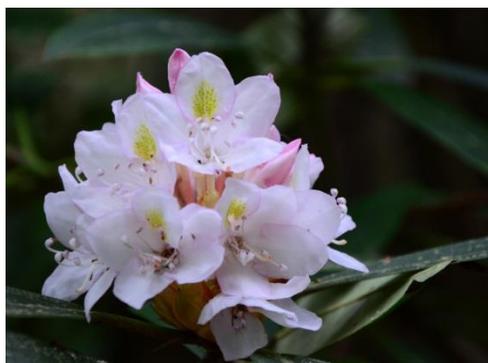
Wayah Bald – Kalmia



Wayah Bald – Double Flame Azalea



Hooper Area – Bald River Falls



Cades Cove / Gregory Trail – *R. maximum*



Cades Cove Vista - Butterfly Weed