



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Spring Newsletter: April 2022

Potomac Valley Chapter Calendar – 2022

- April 13: Pennsylvania Nursery Trip
- April 22 – 24: MAC Meeting, Richmond, VA
- April 27: PVC Garden Tour & Plant Sale, Maryland Gardens
- May 4 – 8, 2022: ARS Convention, Portland, OR / Vancouver, WA

Spring 2022 Newsletter (part one)

Your Spring Newsletter will come in multiple segments this time. Part of the problem is that your editor has been ill with a persistent chest cold as well as some other maladies related to old age. The other relates to a few urgent but rapidly changing developments that deserve our attention. One is the future of the White Garden which will be explained on the next page.

We first want to announce positive items like our plans to take a nursery field trip on April 13 to buy plants we don't need. Two weeks later on April 27, we expect to have a garden tour to some Maryland gardens and a plant sale. Details later.



Chapter Officers

President: Carol Segree
csegree17@outlook.com
Secretary: Diane Reinke
Isabelle49@aol.com
Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman
rittwoman@gmail.com

Pennsylvania Nursery Trip - Wednesday, April 13

This is a one-day trip but we have changed the order of the nurseries compared to what we have done in the past. We intend to drive to the farthest away nurseries first and buy the big items making sure we can get them in the car. Then we will work our way back to DC and be home by dark. Meals are on your own. Below are the nurseries and target times. Let Carol Segree or Don Hyatt know if you are coming so we can keep an eye out for you.

Conestoga Nursery: 2.5 hrs from I-495 & I-95 (Visit: 11:00 – 12:25 PM)

310 Reading Road, East Earl, PA 17519 717-445-4076

Conestoga Nursery is a smaller outlet that carries choice trees, dwarf conifers, shrubs, and some perennials. They are closed on Tuesdays and Sundays.

Black Creek Greenhouses: 5 min from Conestoga (Visit: 12:30 – 2:30 PM)

211 E. Black Creek Road, East Earl, PA 17519 717-445-5046

Black Creek Greenhouses offer an enormous selection of bedding plants, house plants, hanging baskets, and various other annuals and perennials. Prices were very reasonable.

Groff's Plant Farm: 45 min from East Earl (Visit: 3:15 – 5:00 PM)

6128 Street Rd., Kirkwood, PA 17536 717-529-3001

www.groffsplantfarm.com

Groff's sells annuals, perennials, wildflowers, hostas, and shrubs. They do not take credit cards so bring cash or your checkbook.

Back to the Beltway: 2 hrs from Groff's (Home by 7:00 PM?)

Plant Trip Treasures: *Brighten Your Garden! Brighten Your Day!*



Problems in Paradise! *What is Happening at the White Garden?*

By Don Hyatt

On January 6, 2010, when Margaret White passed away a few weeks before her 104th birthday, the title to her beautiful 13-acre property transferred to the Fairfax County Park Authority. They had agreed to develop it into a public garden for all of us to enjoy. They spent significant money to develop a Master Plan. The county approved bond referendums for improvements but year after year, we saw very little change. In fact, we watched the garden decline as the meadow transformed into an unsightly tangle of invasive weeds, thorny brambles, and trash trees. Portions of the rhododendron collection were in bad shape, too, as honeysuckle and porcelain berry vines engulfed many plantings. One cannot expect the lovely garden that she and her husband J.C. had developed and carefully tended since 1939 to sit idle for a decade and not decline.



I did find that upsetting but the county took 10 years after they got the title to Green Spring Gardens before they started to develop that into a horticultural park. The core of the garden around the Margaret's home was still OK. The most impressive asset on the property is the magnificent glass garden room the Whites built that wraps around the house and that is what is in jeopardy. We just learned that the county is planning to sign a 25 to 30 lease on the home through their Resident Curator program. This program was just established in 2014 and was designed to provide maintenance for historical homes and should not even apply to the White residence. It is not historic in any way. The problem with the lease is that it will make the home, the glass room, as well as an area around the residence off limits to the public. That is the core of the garden. Margaret and JC selected the site for the home so it would be under the shade of a 300-year old white oak and would look out on sweeping vistas of the meadow, the azalea border, and the most spectacular rhododendrons in the garden.



Up until her death, Margaret hosted our chapter in that room for various meetings and picnics. She spent all her time in that room, too, since it is the most inspiring place on the property. I had been there in



every season and it was always magical. I remember being there in winter watching the snow begin to fall, and in early spring as sweeps of daffodils at the edge of the field began to flower. They were followed by the dogwoods, redbuds, early azaleas and the deep purple 'PJM'. As the season progressed, there was a continuation of bloom of rhododendrons that seemed like a slow-moving firework display around the perimeter. It began with the brilliant red 'Taurus', peach pink 'Hanna Hersey', and blended pink and cream

blooms of 'Martha Phipps'. Several plants of the deep pink 'David Gable' were to the left and they were quickly followed by the rose red 'Atroflo' and white 'County of York'. Next came the midseason hybrids like lavender



pink Gable called 'Caroline' and pink Dexters like 'Scintillation' and 'Betty Hume', as well as an older Dutch white. 'Mrs. A. T. de la Mare'. There was also a stunning specimen plant of the yellow and pink Dexter 'Skyglow'. It was beside an opening to a secondary path.



The grand finale was undoubtedly her magnificent 'Cadis' which was surely the most impressive specimen in the Washington, D.C., region.

The home, the glass room, and the appreciation of all these plants would be off limits under the lease agreement. There are other rhododendrons on the property but this area is center stage and it upsets me to think that the development of the White Garden would be hindered by this senseless lease agreement for a period of nearly 30 years. I am in my middle



70s so there is no way that I would see it reach its potential. I will try to outline some of my best reasons to oppose the plan. We were not alerted to this plan and have almost no opportunity to comment.

Reasons to Oppose

1. The White Residence does not fit the type of property Resident Curator Program is supposed to protect. The county brochure describing the program states:

Resident Curatorship Program

The objective of a Fairfax County Resident Curator program is the preservation of historic buildings within the county... The end goal is to rehabilitate and maintain underutilized historic properties and provide periodic public access to appreciate the historical significance of the properties.

The White's residence was built in 1939 and is not historically significant in any way. It does not fit within the objectives of their program. There is a 100-year old barn on the premises but that is not the house. The purpose of Margaret White's gift was to protect and develop a spectacular garden.

2. The Master Plan on page 33 describes opportunities that would be available to refurbish the home and use it to support the garden. It specifies the first floor which is the wonderful garden room.

Residence Adaptive Reuse

The residence on the White site presents many opportunities. Consideration may be given to the conversion of the first floor of the residence to public space. The second floor may be set aside for use as an on-site caretaker's residence. Exterior access to expanded restroom facilities within the residence may be provided.



Anyone who has visited the place knows how spectacular that glass room is and how it provides the best place to view the garden. Margaret lived in that area and hosted countless plant society meetings there. A lease on the residence would tie up that asset for three decades. The Resident Curator Program restricts public access around the residence which is the very core of the garden.

3. There was only one application for the Resident Curator Position. The background of the applicant does not satisfy staffing requirements as outlined in the Master Plan on page 36.

Site Personnel

Oversight and/or staffing by professional horticulturalists and specially trained grounds staff will be required. Managing and maintaining high quality horticultural resources requires staff with specialized education, training, and experience. During peak gardening season, additional volunteer hours per week would enable the staff to maintain quality plant displays. Ideally, the primary horticulturalist would have at least a



two-year degree in horticulture plus a few years of experience. Seasonal staff with specialized training would be beneficial.

The sole application for the Resident Curator Position and was Mrs. Meg Stout. She is an engineer by trade and with special interests in history and Aquaponics, raising fish and plants in a soil free aquatic environment. That is not sufficient horticulture background for site personnel as described in the Master Plan. She introduced her family and none of them seem to have any horticultural training either.

4. The program was not properly advertised. Mrs. Stout admitted that she only learned about White Property Resident Curator opportunity two weeks before the deadline to apply. As far as I can tell, none of the people who have been supporting the White Garden since its inception heard anything about the plan. This includes members of the White Family, anyone in the Friends of the White Garden organization, members of the Rhododendron Society or the Azalea Society, or volunteers who have been helping maintain the gardens for at least the past decade. We did not know the property was being put into the program so we were unaware of the deadline date. Only one member learned of the initial online hearing of Mrs. Stout's proposal that was held on March 29. She received a flyer and that was the first she had heard about the situation. A few of us heard about the committee's evaluation of her proposal on April 6 just 30 minutes before it was about to start. The only opportunity for us to comment is now restricted to email submissions that must be received by April 13. That is not satisfactory.

Below are some links that may be of use.

Submit Questions and Comments to Fairfax County on their Resident Curator Plan by 4/13/2022:

parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov

White Garden Master Plan posted on 7/26/2006:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/plandev/master-plans/whitemp.pdf>

About the Resident Curator Program:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/resident-curator-program/about>

A links to YouTube recordings of the Zoom Meetings on 3/29/2022 and 4/6/2022:

<https://www.publicinput.com/RCPWhiteGardens>

Article in Annandale Today local paper on 3/31/2022 which encourages comment:

<https://annandaletoday.com/more-details-emerge-on-resident-curator/>

About Meg Stout, the Applicant for the Resident Curator Position

Website: <http://www.megstout.com/>

Blog: <https://www.millennialstar.org/author/megstout/>

Book on Aquaponics: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/359406/aquaponic-gardening-discover-the-dual-benefits-of-raising-fish-and-plants-together-idiots-guides-by-meg-stout/>

Washington Gardener article about the renovation of the meadow in the October 2021 issue.

<https://issuu.com/washingtongardener/docs/oct2021-washingtongardener-final>

Potomac Valley Chapter ARS - Newsletter Donald W. Hyatt, Editor donaldhyatt@verizon.net



Potomac Valley Chapter
of the
American Rhododendron Society

The Potomac Valley Chapter ARS is one of three American Rhododendron Society chapters located in District 9 which represents the Middle Atlantic region of the United States. Some of our chapter activities include:

- Regular Meetings with Speakers
- Annual Chapter Banquet
- Garden Tours
- Field Trips to Nurseries or to Wild Stands of Native Azaleas and Rhododendrons
- Local and National Seed Exchanges
- Plants for Members Program
- Flower Show
- Informative Chapter Newsletters
- Annual Photography Contest
- Access to Chapter Library Books

Our regular chapter meetings are usually held four times a year at the Potomac Community Center in Potomac, MD, on Sunday afternoons. However, we do hold occasional meetings at other locations in nearby Maryland, Virginia, or Washington, DC.

We encourage you to check out our chapter website which includes at least 16 years of previous newsletters that contain interesting articles, more color pictures, and examples of past activities:

www.arspvc.org

As a member of our local chapter you will also become a member at the national level of the American Rhododendron Society. This entitles you to a year's subscription of their outstanding quarterly **Journal** filled with information and many color pictures. You will also be invited to attend national conventions or regional conferences.

The cost of ARS membership is \$40 per year and includes membership in a chapter of your choice, such as our Potomac Valley Chapter. If you are already a member of another ARS Chapter, you may join the Potomac Valley Chapter as an Associate Member for only \$10 per year but you will need to identify your home chapter.

For more information about the American Rhododendron Society, check out their website:

www.rhododendron.org

Membership Application
American Rhododendron Society

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip/Country _____

Telephone _____

E-mail: _____

Memberships are on a calendar year basis and include the local chapter membership:

Individual/Family.....	\$40.00
Student (proof of age required).....	10.00
Commercial/Corporate.....	90.00
Sustaining	75.00
Sponsoring.....	150.00
Life, single	1,000.00
Life, family.....	1,500.00
Associate Membership*.....	10.00

**Associate Members must identify home chapter*

I would like my "home" chapter to be the
Potomac Valley Chapter

To join our chapter, send this form with payment to:

POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER ARS
PVC-ARS Chapter Treasurer
rittwoman@gmail.com

You may also send this form with US Funds payable to the national organization:

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 43
Craryville, NY 12521

To pay online by credit card, follow the link to "Membership" on the ARS website:

www.rhododendron.org

More ARS National Contact Points:

Phone (631) 533-0375

Email: member@arsoffice.org