

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

A Publication of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American
Rhododendron Society

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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

April 15-17, 2011	Lake Wright Quality Suites & Sleep Inn, Norfolk, VA
Oct. 21-23, 2011	Doubletree Inn near Richmond airport (with ARS Board Meeting)

Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

American Rhododendron Society	http://www.rhododendron.org/
MAC Website (UPDATED REGULARLY)	http://www.macars.org/
U VA Science & Engineering Libraries	http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm
UVA Special Collections	http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/
Henry Skinner Website	http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/collections/projects/rhodo/skinner/
Old Quarterly Bulletins ARS	http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/

2011 SPRING MEETING by Celia Dollarhide

Our Middle Atlantic Spring Meeting will be at the Norfolk Botanical Garden the weekend of April 15 - 17. The featured speaker on Friday evening, April 15, will be the renowned Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery (www.plantdelights.com) and Juniper Level Botanic Gardens, Raleigh, North Carolina. The nursery features rare and unusual perennials, hostas, and U.S. natives while the botanical garden is a five acre display garden and research facility containing over 17,000 different plants. Tony will enliven the evening with a discussion of his botanical explorations in Taiwan.

Saturday's activities will include tours of the outstanding Norfolk Botanical Garden. On Saturday evening, Marcus Jones, Curator of Woody Plants, will give an overview of the Botanical Garden with an emphasis on the extensive azalea and camellia collections.

The hotel we will use is the Sleep Inn and Quality Suites Lake Wright. It is somewhat unusual as the building has two wings; one is the Quality Suites (group rate \$99.00 plus tax) and the other the Sleep Inn. (group rate: \$79.00 plus tax). Rooms have been reserved at both for MAC and the rates include a hot breakfast. The hotel is a short drive from the Botanical Garden.

We were most fortunate that Tony Avent's schedule could accommodate us and that the Botanical Garden graciously agreed to host our meeting. It should be a most interesting weekend with glorious bloom and we look forward to seeing you there.

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC – by Jane McKay



I have had my fill of winter, sleet most of yesterday changing to snow as evening approached. We didn't have much accumulation, maybe an inch, but a nuisance none the less. I'm tired of being cold, this is the first winter that I haven't done any outdoor

work in the garden. I still haven't cut down the perennials or pulled the leaves out of the azaleas. I'm not sure if it's the weather or if I'm using my age to blame it on. It's always easy to say 'at my age I'm entitled to goof off'.

The first information that I received that there was a problem at the National Arboretum was when they announced that they would be destroying the Glenn Dale Azalea collection. They first claimed it was too expensive to maintain and would need

\$150,000 to maintain it. The next excuse was that the azaleas attracted too many visitors when in bloom and the Arboretum had inadequate parking and restroom facilities. Don Hyatt noted in the Potomac Valley Newsletter that they held their flower show at the same time in that area of the Arboretum and had never noticed any problem with the above facilities. I later learned that the National Boxwood Collection along with the National Daffodil Collection were also slated to be destroyed.

The latest information came to light in an announcement on the Department of State website:

"The State Forestry Administration of the Peoples Republic of China and the Department of Agriculture of the United States intend to cooperatively construct a Classical Chinese Garden as a gift from the Chinese people to the American people on approximately 12 acres within the boundaries of the United States National Arboretum in Washington D.C. Upon completion, the U.S. National Arboretum will have sole ownership of the China Garden, and Chinese cultural events will take place onsite to enhance the traditional friendship between the Chinese people and the American people. The Peoples Republic of China is to provide some 22 structures, classical Chinese art and furnishings, as well as the landscaping and rockeries, while the United States will provide site preparation and maintain the completed Garden."

The above is just part of the full document. I'm including the link to the full document – note that it does not print – if you cannot read this call me and I will read it to you, my number is on back of the Newsletter.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/01/154947.htm>

Don Hyatt has done an extensive amount of work on this project, as has Jay Gillenwater and others. What I have written is just the tip of the iceberg. An agreement on the Chinese project has already been signed.

OUR EXTREME WEATHER by Sandra McDonald

It's hard to know what to do in the garden and what plants to use with the extreme weather we have been having. Here in tidewater Virginia we had an extremely hot and uncomfortable summer, and in our garden we did not have much rain although some areas not far away had more rain than normal. It is discouraging to hear the TV weather man talk about

the above normal rainfall when we ourselves had below normal rainfall and had to do a lot of watering.

Then the winter of 2010-2011 brought below normal temperatures. I guess that was to average out the hot summer temperatures we had! We were fortunate and had only one significant snow so far. Watching the news with the monster snow storm and blizzard that swept across the Midwest was sobering since we have family in various locations out there. We also remember the excessive snows that the Washington, D.C. area had last winter.

All this is difficult to understand. It is weather, not climate. As for climate, the World Meteorological Organization ranked 2010 as the warmest year on record, together with 2005 and 1998. Average temperatures globally last year were 0.95 degrees Fahrenheit (0.53 Celsius) higher than the 1961-90 mean that is used for comparison purposes according to the WMO. That is a bit lower than what the U.S. National Climatic Data Center announced, but the WMO also uses figures based on data collected by Britain's Meteorological Office and NASA.

THE LEGACY OF THE MID ATLANTIC MEN: *George Harding:* by Deborah Sauer

Every year, when the Satsuki, Glendale and Linwood azaleas bloom in our garden, the image of George Harding comes to mind along with memories of many trips to Gaithersburg, Maryland, for a weekend strolling with George in "Harding's Folly", conversation in the kitchen with Jack Daniels (black) followed by fried chicken (a Harding favorite) and then a wrap-up in the den with slides of the many azalea hybrids and hollies in his famous garden.

Most of the trips began something like this: up at 7 am, on the road by 8 am to assure a 1 pm arrival. Every time the car pulled up in the parking place across from the barn, George would "know" we were there and, straw hat in hand, would meet us at the car before we could get to the door. The tour would begin, usually with the stroll through the 8-12 foot azaleas in the back of the house where the oldest azaleas had been planted under white pines. Footpaths meandered through the gardens, revealing huge 30+ year old plants that had been pruned only by Mother Nature and rightly so. Most of us do not see how magnificent azaleas can be when left in their natural state. The white pines provided shade for the plants under the heat of the summer sun without

competing for water. George's garden was mainly composed of a clay soil, so watering in the summer wasn't as crucial for him. The tour led by the side gardens, lined with smaller azaleas, then a side trip through the lathe houses to see new seedlings, and then the tour ended in the famous area known affectionately as "Harding's Folly", a grassy, sloping area in the front of the house which was a test area for the Linwood azaleas. They were planted in clay soil in the full sun and heat that a Maryland summer provides, and one of his nurseman friends, Frank White, predicted they would never make it on "Harding's Folly", and the name stuck. So did the

a z a l e a s .
Everyone knew of the extensive collection of azaleas but few realized that his holly collection was one of the finest in the Mid-Atlantic region. We never missed a visit through the huge hollies.



George Harding. Photo from Deborah Sauer

If we look at George's background as a horticulturist, it was no surprise that "Harding's Folly" proved to be successful. As the chief horticulturist at the White House through the USDA for many years and many Presidents, it was his responsibility to care for the plants and landscaping, and a broad knowledge of plants was required to maintain the collection and replace as needed. George recalled the time Harry Truman decided he didn't like the mature fir trees planted on a slope on the White house property and wanted them removed and replaced. When the request hit George's desk, he immediately "vetoed" it. Several weeks later, he was called into the President's Office where he was informed by the President that he wanted those trees replaced, but was outgunned by some "son of a bitch" in the USDA! "Yes, sir, Mr. President, that's correct", murmured George. The subject never came up again. Now, that's clout.

George was a very generous gardener and always opened his garden to those who wanted to take cuttings, his philosophy being that sharing plants assured their survival. That was always next on the agenda after the stroll through the garden. After some

iced tea, we went into the garden to take cuttings of some of the plants that George said were "must haves" for any garden. Yes, there was a ritual for the task: David and George took the cuttings, handed them to me, I wrote the name tags and put them in the plastic bags. The "quiz" at the end of the day was to see if Miss Debs spelled the names correctly.....

For dinner, David, George and I piled into his Datsun and headed to Gaithersburg, gravel flying, as we rode down Wildcat Road. We always went to the local restaurant featuring family style cooking and picked up the fried chicken, cole slaw, and potato salad. In the late afternoon, after dinner, we settled in the den with Jack Black (not me, of course, as I was always assigned as the designated driver). This was where the real information passed hands: the stories and experiences that made the visits, and George, so memorable. There was the time when Frank White sprayed a grass patch near his azaleas with Roundup and the drift accidentally landed on his azalea stock. He returned to George's for replacement cuttings. The cuttings, as I understand, came from plants on "Harding's Folly." Oh, sweet irony. We always wrapped up the evening with several hours of slides which clearly showed that George took an academic approach to the documentation of plants in his garden: his slides included the entire plant to illustrate the growing habit, and then a close-up of leaves and blooms, usually at different times of the year to illustrate any color change in the leaves in the fall and winter seasons and finally the bloom. George believed that learning to appreciate and understand the entire azalea was crucial to the cultivation of the plant. His extensive notes of his plants included the source, height, width bloom time, leaf shape, plant habit and the date of acquisition. Part of his legacy to the azalea world was to donate his notes to the Alderman Library, MAC collection, at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

I'll always be grateful for those years with George and the Harding family. Plants can be replaced, but the memories will last me a lifetime.

DD9 REPORT FROM FLORENCE, OREGON, ARS BOARD MEETING, OCT 2010

First, please accept my apologies for the lateness of this report. Unfortunately by the time it had been approved by all the necessary people, Bill and I were on our way to Italy, then came Thanksgiving, a family wedding, etc. Anyway, here we go.

The ARS Board voted to sponsor a \$600 paver for the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in Federal Way, WA. A new conservatory has been erected to house vireyas and other tropical plants, with funds donated by a member who was very philanthropic to our organization over the years. The widow of another gentleman who died this year, Dr. Franklin West, has donated 300 copies of his book to the ARS. Dr. West has also named both the ARS Research Foundation and ARS Endowment Fund as beneficiaries of 10% of his trust.

There was further discussion about distribution of the ARS Journal in a manner other than is used now—Email, CD, PDF, etc. It will be looked into and brought up again in May at the Annual Meeting. Costs and savings are the major issues. Many board members expressed concern about the delays in delivery, but others questioned whether the option for hard copy shouldn't be available to those wanting it. It costs about \$42,000 to publish and distribute each Journal.

Chapters are reminded to send copies of all newsletters to Laura Grant for our archives.

The present accountant, Julie Rizzo, is retiring and a new person has been mentioned as a possible replacement.

Chapters are requested to amend their By-Laws to include the following verbiage:

"In the event of the dissolution of a chapter, any ARS property in possession of said chapter shall be promptly returned to the Society. Any other monies and property of the chapter shall be disposed of in the manner specified in the Chapter By-Laws in a manner which is approved by the United States Internal Revenue Code for U.S. Chapters. Non-U.S. Chapters must comply with applicable country statutes and regulations. Suggested disposal would be to the General Fund of the ARS or to a botany-related organization of the Chapter's choice."

This change in the By-Laws must be voted on and sent to Laura Grant for coordination.

Fred Whitney moved that a third consecutive term be accepted for the current Treasurer's position.

Newsletter distribution should include Laura Grant and Shirley Rock membership chair, as well as Glenn Jamieson (journal) and Marty Anderson (electronic media).

The Society is looking for someone who is knowledgeable in writing grants and who could find sources for grants.

There are some new DVD's available from the ARS Library. A list will be published in the Journal and is also available on line. Wing Fong is looking for someone to take over the Program Library Committee.

Another committee needing future replacement is Registrar. Jay Murray has held the position for many years and transitional planning is necessary for a smooth changeover. Concern was expressed about making sure that data is not lost and protected well.

The Seed Exchange program had a successful year.

MAC had requested information regarding a possible speaker for the Fall, 2011, meeting in Richmond. As a follow up and not part of the discussion at Florence, I contacted three individuals who were available to speak and MAC selected Tim Walsh for either Friday or Saturday night. MAC will advertise the meeting as its fall meeting, open to the ARS membership, with the Board Meeting held on Friday. They will also write an article for the Journal and provide registration information.

The following individuals have been nominated for election at the convention in May:

President: Don Smart

Eastern Vice President: Bruce Feller

Western Vice President: Bob McIntyre (announced after the meeting)

Secretary: Kath Collier

Treasurer: Bill Mangels

Director at Large: Paul Anderson

Future meetings

2011

ARS Annual Convention, Vancouver, WA May 11-15

ARS Eastern Regional, Richmond, VA Oct. 21-23

2012

ARS Annual Convention, with the ASA, Asheville, NC May 4-8

ARS Western Regional Conference, Nanaimo Chapter, BC TBA

2013

ARS Eastern meeting, convention or conference, Halifax, NS TBA

I continue to enjoy serving as your District Director and appreciate your generous monetary subsidy. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. I am here to help!

Ann Mangels, District 9 Director

NATIONAL NEWS

ARS President Ted Stecki notified officers and committee chairs that Program Library Chairman Wing Fong passed away on January 18, 2011.

Memberships and renewals should be sent to Jane McKay, Membership Chairman, 3 Cobb's Ct., Palmyra, VA 22963.

Annual membership dues are \$40 per year.

Miscellaneous inquiries may be sent to the editor (address below) for forwarding to proper individual.

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