

# MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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September 2008

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

October 24-25, 2008

MAC meeting, Holiday Inn Patriot, Williamsburg, VA

### Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

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

### MAC FALL MEETING TO BE AT HOLIDAY INN PATRIOT, WILLIAMSBURG, VA, OCTOBER 24-25

by Sharon Horn

Our Fall 2008 MAC meeting will be held the fourth weekend in October this year in Williamsburg, Virginia with the theme "Our Colonial Gardening Heritage". Our base for the weekend will be the Holiday Inn Patriot, located on Williamsburg Road, from Friday, October 24, through Sunday, October 26, 2008. Fall is a beautiful season anywhere in the Middle Atlantic Chapter, and Williamsburg will be a distinct pleasure to visit in late October. The meeting planning team is still working on a weather guarantee for the weekend, but regardless of the weather, we can guarantee opportunities to relax and visit with new and old MAC friends, talk about plants, visit gardens, talk about plants some more, purchase plants for our gardens at the Plants-4-Members Sale, take pictures of gardens and plants, talk about plants not already talked about, and make wish lists of plants to search out when we return home.

Our program will begin on Friday afternoon with registration from 4:00 – 6:00 pm and at the same time the Fall Foliage Show and the Photography/Art Show will be open for entries. We have not had a Photography/Art show as part of a MAC meeting for several years, so we are

expecting great exhibits from the artistic members of MAC. Doug Jolley will be director of the Photography/Art Show, so please contact him if you have questions about the show guidelines. Foliage Show guidelines and classes were included in the meeting registration packet mailed to all MAC members. Following a break for dinner on your own, our weekend program resumes with our MAC Chapter business meeting, followed by Laura Viancour, Colonial Williamsburg Garden Programs Manager, providing "An Introduction to the Gardens of Colonial Williamsburg" with the Plants 4 Members (P4M) Sale, Book Sale, and Hospitality Room rounding out the evening. The Photography/Art Show and the Fall Foliage Show will again be open for entries following the speaker and continuing until 11:00 pm for later arrivals.

Saturday morning will begin with a breakfast buffet from 7:00 – 8:30 am (included in your meeting registration) followed by our guided tours of Colonial Williamsburg gardens, lead by Don McKelvey, Garden Historian and Susan Dippre, Landscape Supervisor. The buses will depart from right outside our meeting room. Our lunch on Saturday will be a Picnic Buffet cookout at the hotel leading into the afternoon series of three workshops with the chance to hear

tips from three of our MAC experts. The first workshop will feature Don Hyatt discussing the best methods for propagating azaleas and rhododendrons (so that you can produce far more plants than you will ever need or want in your own garden). Doug Jolley, our resident West Virginia Hands-In-The-Dirt expert, will cover the methods he has found to be best for potting, repotting, planting and transplanting all of the plants you will be raising from the Don's workshop. Following a short break to refresh ourselves with caffeine and answer nature's call, George McClellan will lead the third workshop with tips for taking care of the plants in our gardens, including pruning as needed and the pests and diseases we encounter (usually only on our most prized and favorite plants). Saturday evening begins with the Photography/Art Show and the Fall Foliage Show open to see the entries and winners, another chance to add to your bookshelf at the Book Sale and a cash bar leading up to our always entertaining Plant Auction, then a dinner buffet featuring Roasted Herb Chicken, Roast Beef with Cabernet Mushroom Sauce and Pork Loin with Apricot Brandy Sauce with all the trimmings. We have seen the wonderful entries that have been shared in our Flower and Foliage Shows for quite a few years, and now we will have the opportunity to hear Bruce Feller as our featured speaker on Saturday evening, sharing his experiences on "Three Seasons of Color – Fall, Winter, and Spring". The evening will wrap up with last chances to visit the P4M and Book Sales and more time to visit with MAC friends and talk about plants in the Hospitality Room. The weekend will conclude on Sunday morning with breakfast on your own, followed by the Species Study group meeting and several options for tours on your own as you return home.

We hope you will make plans to bring some cuttings from your garden for the Fall foliage Show (remember there are classes for fall-blooming specimens and related species), your entries for the Photography/Art Show, a wish list for purchases at the P4M Sale and the Book Sale, choice plants to donate to the Plant Auction, and

join us to explore "Our Colonial Gardening Heritage" in Williamsburg, Virginia for the weekend of October 24 – 26, 2008. Oh, and maybe we'll have some time to talk about plants we love, plants we want, plants we can't stand, and plants that give us trouble!

MAC meeting information and registration form, etc. are available to print out on the chapter web site if you did not receive yours in the mail.

<http://macars.org/events.html>

## DEATHS

Longtime MAC member **Jim Bowyer**, 84, of Mt. Nebo, WV, died on June 30. His widow, Doris, two sons, three daughters, and grandchildren survive him. Jim was the owner/operator of Bowyer Mining Supply established in 1961.

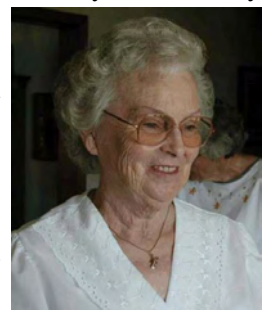
Alton Hall's mother, **Bertie Hall** died on July 21th.

**Frank Arsen**, a MAC associate member who lived on Long Island, died on June 25. Frank was 93 years old. Frank was a long time hybridizer. His hybrids include 'Agateen', 'Amber Lantern', 'Ambrose Light', 'Arsen's Pink', 'Arsen's Rose', 'Bud's Yellow', 'Dora Frank', 'Gay Arsen', 'Irene Virag', 'Jim Fry', and 'Pride of Lindenhurst'.

Former MAC member **Nancy Swell** died on June 30 at the age of 80. She and her husband Leon ran a gardening business, Swell Azaleas, for 23 years in Henrico County. Nancy maintained over 700 azaleas at her home. She is known for discovering 'Pocono Pink' azalea and for the Ghost Fern.

## FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

**NOTE:** You should be receiving the Fall Meeting Notice, if you haven't already, and it should contain a cover letter, meeting registration form, hotel registration form, events page and four pages of "Plants for Members' Please notify Theresa Brents at [jane.mckay@cfw.com](mailto:jane.mckay@cfw.com) or me at [wbjlmckay@embarqmail.com](mailto:wbjlmckay@embarqmail.com).



or me at [wbjlmckay@embarqmail.com](mailto:wbjlmckay@embarqmail.com).

if you did not receive the whole packet. I only received the cover page the rest was lost somewhere along the way.

**NOTE # 2:** I have lately received lots of ‘Spam’ all addressed to ‘boardmacars’, none mentioning my name. One of the latest said they were charging my credit card for airline tickets of United Airlines. I have been advised to contact my server and not to open any of these messages. Some of the messages are very explicit and I am grateful there are no children with access to my computer. I don’t know if any of you have received any of these messages addressed this way but thought it best to advise you.

We in central Virginia experienced another summer drought from mid July to the last week in August when we were grateful to receive 5” of rain. As I write this we are in the midst of ‘Hanna’, receiving heavy rain but so far very little wind. As long as my trees remain upright (some are 80’ to 100’) I’ll be happy. I did lose a few rhododendrons this summer since I was away twice for a week or more each time and not available for watering. Evergreen azaleas seem to handle the lack of water better than the large leaf rhododendrons.

We did have magnificent bloom this spring due to the heavy bud set last summer. Next spring will not be so good not only due to the lack of water but I did not get to do much dead heading. (I’m still trying to catch up).

This Spring, before Wally died, we had a physical therapist come to the house and as she looked out the window at all the rhododendrons in bloom she said “you should have met my husband Mike's grandfather he had a Rhododendron farm over near the mountains”. We both smiled and asked “was that in Afton by any chance” and she said “yes” we asked if his name was Austin Kennell, she was amazed that we had known him. It’s a small world.

As most of you know, since I’m frequently quoting from them, I subscribe to the newsletter *The Avant Gardener*, issued monthly. The August issue has some information about *Phytophthora ramorum*. Sandra McDonald recently wrote an article on this subject in a previous ‘News and Notes’ and I believe there has been information printed in the *Journal*. This new information states that the HEARTWOOD of certain trees especially conifers such as cedars and junipers contain compounds that destroy the spores of *Phytophthora ramorum*. This fungus has killed millions of oak trees in California and can kill other plants such as rhododendrons. These compounds can be applied as mulch or dug in as chips.

I’m looking forward to seeing you all at the Fall Meeting in Williamsburg.

### **TALKS GIVEN BY MAC MEMBERS**

The MAC board would like to have members who give talks about rhododendrons and azaleas and other plants let the editor know about the talks they have given so that information can be published in the newsletter.

Doug Jolley has given several talks this year. He spoke about West Virginia's Botanical Gems: Native Orchids at the Garden Festival in Charleston, WV on March 29<sup>th</sup>. In April he spoke at the WV Master Gardener Program in Charleston on Native Plants for WV Gardens. In May he spoke to the Brooks Bird Club in Charleston on Orchids of Newfoundland. Then at the Native Orchid Conference at West Virginia University in Morgantown July 18 - 21, Doug talked about Appalachian Culture and its Impact on Native Orchids.

### **DONATION**

Dr. Jay Gillenwater donated a large number of plants for the spring meeting at Canaan Valley. Thanks, Jay. The members enjoyed them.

### **AAB – A BAD GENIE IS OUT OF THE BOTTLE** by Bob McWhorter

To some members of the American Rhododendron Society and the Azalea Society of America the Granulated (Asian) Ambrosia Beetle is old news. But at Rosa Gardens, located in central Maryland, it is new news that is all bad.

On May 7, 2008 while taking a leisurely walk in the garden my wife Rosa noticed some strange ‘stuff’ on the main stem of Windsor Buttercup, a beautiful 9 year old deciduous azalea. Rosa called me to take a look. When I saw the plant I could not believe my eyes. There were over 50 light yellowish, toothpick like projections, some 1.5 to 2 inches long, all up the main stem and on a number of large branches.

Looking closer I found that the material was borer frass. I had seen the frass from the clear wing rhododendron borer but it looked nothing like this. It didn’t take a genius to figure out it was a borer, some new pest in our garden and the future of

Windsor Buttercup was very ominous. Little did I know what lay ahead.

Looking further I discovered that two more nearby deciduous azaleas, 'Rosey Lights' and Redletter had also been attacked. After this I found, 90 feet from the first three plants, that yet a fourth deciduous azalea, *R. calendulaceum* had been infested.

As chance would have it Bartlett Tree Experts were at Rosa Gardens a few days later to spray the native dogwoods for anthracnose. After hearing a description of the frass projections the technician/applicator immediately said it sounded like the 'ambrosia beetle'. He said he had worked in North Carolina for a while and there was a lot of it down there. He suggested I check the NC State University Extension Service website for information. I checked every website I could find.



Frass toothpicks

The female beetles bore nearly perfectly round 2 mm holes into the stem or trunk of host plants and trees, creating a gallery where it lays its eggs. They prefer thin-barked hardwoods or branches from 1 to 2 1/2 inches in diameter.



Frass toothpicks

There are no systemic or other chemicals that can kill the AAB

The Asian ambrosia beetle (hereafter AAB) is a tiny insect just 2 to 3 mm long. It attacks a host plant in large numbers. Approximately 50 had attacked 'Windsor Buttercup', about 20 had bored into each of 'Redletter' and 'Rosey Lights' and ten were found in 'calendulaceum, which

The AAB carries the ambrosia fungus, which infects the plant and becomes food for the AAB and its progeny. It is the fungus that kills the host plant. Once inside the plant there is nothing that can be done to control the AAB. There are no

inside the plant. The recommended course of action is to cut out all infested stems and branches and burn them.

There is no systemic chemical to control the ambrosia fungus. Left alone the female ambrosia beetles will emerge from the infested plant in about 55 days and disperse to find new host plants and start the cycle over again.

### More Bad News

There are quite a few species of AAB, some domestic. But it is the exotic Asian species that are being reported as one of the major killers of nursery and landscape plants. These include *Xylosandrus crassiusculus* and *Xylosandrus germanus*. Samples from Rosa Gardens were sent to the University of Maryland Plant Diagnostic Clinic Department of Entomology. The sample was examined and identified as *Xylosandrus crassiusculus*. Rosa Gardens was the first reported attack of azaleas in Maryland.

The AAB attacks an astounding number of 'host



Frass on W. Buttercup. Photo from Bob McWhorter.

plants'. The following list is probably not all inclusive but will give the reader a good idea of what



the home gardener is up against: sweet bay magnolia, Styra, yellowwood, dogwoods, sugar maple, holly, birch, London plane tree, golden rain tree, Oriental persimmon, flowering cherry and weeping willow.

The Granulated (Asian) ambrosia *Xylosandrus crassiusculus* beetle was first detected in the U.S.

in peach trees at Charlestown, S.C. in 1974. Since then it has become widespread, but localized in many North Carolina counties and most of the southeastern, Gulf coast and surrounding states from Texas through Oklahoma and east to Virginia and Maryland. Recent reports of the AAB in Oregon and Massachusetts have also been received.

The AAB is truly a genie out of its bottle! It spreads through natural distribution and shipment of contaminated plant material. Nurserymen appear to be doing what they can to ensure that contaminated plants are not released but it is happening. Gardens and collections like those of ARS and ASA members are at serious risk. There are a few measures that can be taken but knowledge of the ambrosia beetle's life cycle and timing of protective measures is very important.

Further discussion of the AAB, its life cycle and protective measures will be presented at a meeting of the ARS– Potomac Valley Chapter to be held at the U.S. National Arboretum on September 21<sup>st</sup> between 1 and 4 p.m.

**BEWARE OF NEW WEED**

Barbara Hall brought to our attention a new weed: Hairy crabweed or mulberry weed, Latin name: *Fatoua villosa*. It looks like a mulberry tree seedling and produces lots of seeds at a young age. To read more about this pest go to:



Asian Ambrosia Beetle on a dime.



Asian Ambrosia Beetle.



Mulberry weed

<http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/plantoftheweek/articles/mulberryweed.htm>

**MAC BOARD**

The MAC board met in Charlottesville on August 2<sup>nd</sup> to transact chapter business. MAC now has a laptop computer to go along with the digital projector. This new equipment will allow us to have the newer digital slide presentations and should be a help to our speakers.

The chapter received a thank you note from the University of Tennessee for our donation of a Gregory Bald aerial photo to them and a thank you from a staff member at the Smoky Mountains National Park thanking the chapter for the \$2500 donation to the park for work on Gregory Bald.

Plans for the fall meeting were discussed as well as other chapter business.



MAC board at work. Photo by S. McDonald.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** To see all photos in color go to our MACARS.org website and look at the newsletter there.



MAC board at work. Photo by S. McDonald.

GARDENS OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS - New members are encouraged to visit members' gardens in their area. The officers and board members have agreed to show new members through their gardens if the member will call ahead and arrange a convenient time. Telephone numbers and towns are listed below.

MIDDLE ATLANTIC CHAPTER OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Annual membership dues are \$35 per year.

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

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