

1992 Annual Meeting and Convention

Robert W. Hobbs
North Beach, MD



Top: Jim Thornton receives the Charter for the newly formed Oconee Chapter

Middle: Tony Dove addresses the attendees on Friday evening

Bottom: Lunch was served Saturday at historic Sotterly

The Annual Meeting and Convention of the Azalea Society of America was held at Solomons, MD, May 14-16, 1992, sponsored by the Ben Morrison Chapter. Eighty seven members registered for the meeting. The meeting featured talks, a visit to the collection of Beltsville hybrids, tours of pri-

ivate gardens, and a tour of historic Southern Maryland.

Three talks on Thursday evening focused on hybrids developed in Maryland and Maryland hybridizer Ben Morrison. Richard West spoke to the group about his research at Ten Oaks Nursery where many Glenn Dale hy-

"Switzer's Land" George and Sue Switzer

"Switzer's Land"¹ is our home. The origin of the name is obvious and needs no explanation.

We acquired the property in 1961 (30 acres). We now have 16.1 acres, thanks to the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company transmission line from the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plants, and the right of eminent domain.

We built our home in 1972 and the first plantings were done at that time. What has slowly evolved over the past 20 years is a woodland garden in a typical eastern hardwood forest. The dominant trees are several species of oak, hickory, beech, and sweet gum with an understory of holly, dogwood and mountain laurel.

The landscape plantings consist primarily of evergreen azaleas, perhaps as many as 20,000 mature plants and approximately 1,000 varieties. These are complemented by companion plants such as rhododendron, pieris, boxwood, leucothoe, franklinia, and perennials. We also have an orchard, vegetable garden, and propagation facilities (hoop house, cold frames, and His and Her greenhouses; we don't quite agree on how to manage a greenhouse!).

The principal landscape plantings, several acres in extent, are interconnected by a network of winding paths and roads. Some are mass plantings of one variety, others are mixed, and there are areas set aside for collections, such as Glenn Dales, Robin Hills, Back Acres, etc.

In 1991 we granted an easement on our property to the Maryland Environmental Trust, which assures that it will remain the beautiful woodland we cherish in perpetuity.

Sue and George Switzer also own Cavalier Nursery (appointment only). They provided the plants of Ben Morrison at each place setting at the Banquet on Saturday night and Sue arranged the centerpieces for the tables. They also ran the plant sales with their plants and plants from Azalea Trace (ed.).

1. 2870 Scientists Cliffs Road, Port Republic, MD 20676

brids were planted and raised after their distribution from the USDA Glenn Dale facility. George Switzer talked about the collection of Beltsville hybrid azaleas at the community of Scientists Cliffs, located about 15 miles north of Solomons, the convention site. The third talk of the eve-

ning, by Bill Miller, was about the life and work of Ben Morrison, hybridizer of the Glenn Dale azaleas. Articles based on these three talks are printed in this issue. Bob Stelloh, Chairman of the Harding Memorial Garden project at the American Horticulture Society River Farm, described plans for

the garden in the final talk of the evening. Friday evening Tony Dove, horticulturist at Tryon Palace in New Bern, North Carolina, talked on "B. Y. Morrison Hybrid Azaleas". He described his experience in using the Glenn Dale and Back Acre hybrids in formal gardens and landscape settings. An article derived from this talk appears in this issue.

The group visited the gardens of Sue and George Switzer, Charles and Wanda Hanners, and the Beltsville hybrid collection at Scientists Cliffs on Friday. Despite intermittent rain and drizzle throughout the day, the

"Wake Robin" Joe and Nuran Miller

"Wake Robin"¹ was named for the title of the book first published in 1871 and authored by the great naturalist, John Burroughs. Wake Robin is also the common name for Trillium. We acquired the property in 1986. We were captivated by the woodland setting, the existing gardens (although unkempt), and the challenge of leaving behind our "two-story colonial" for a problematic older river cottage with abundant charm but few closets! The property, originally part of Kingston Manor (a few hundred yards to the northwest on the Patuxent River), fronts on two sides of Big Kingston Creek which flows through a jetty to the Patuxent River. The Creek is tidal in nature and supports turtles, muskrats, Maryland blue crabs, great blue herons, and egrets. Red foxes, owls, rabbits, raccoons and deer frequently share our space here. This tidal ecosystem ensures warmer late autumn days and prevents late spring frosts from damaging the gardens. The north end of the property with its high cliff, however, is quite windblown and exposed to storms.

Wake Robin is a woodland garden. Oaks, tulip poplars, and common pines predominate with numerous dogwoods, hollies, wild cherry, gums, mountain laurel and cedars competing for space. Wildflowers include ground pine, lady slippers, and mayapples. Soil conditions range from a very porous sand to a light clay. In general the soil dries out rapidly and plants require heavy mulch to survive the summer heat, even though the gardens are almost entirely shaded. These conditions promote slow growth and somewhat open, leggy habits.

Approximately 115 azaleas were planted by Lester and Pearl Schlup, probably around 1965. The original beds were planted with Kurumes and Glenn Dales. Most plants are early bloomers with the height of the springtime display bursting forth in late April and early May. There are some mid-season and a few late blooming plants, probably Macrantha. All plant records have been lost; therefore, we are in the process of mapping beds and identifying the older plants. We are attempting to retain the original garden form, while expanding as time permits. We have added an herb garden, some perennials, irises, and many early spring bulbs. Our latest interest is an attempt to propagate and add an interesting, broader collection of azaleas, with the goal of extending the azalea blooming season and collecting a greater variety of cultivars.

'Nannie Angell'

Evergreen azalea. (Parentage unknown). Hybridizer unknown; raised, selected (1965), named, introduced (through Cavalier Nursery) and registered (1992) by Sue J. Switzer, Port Republic, MD; described by George S. Switzer. Slightly fragrant, pure white flowers, 2.75-3" wide x 2-2.4" long, are 5-lobed with individual, strap-like, smooth-edged petals, each 0.4-0.5" wide, with rounded tips. Occasionally, adjacent petals are fused together for a short distance. The green calyx is 0.6" long. Leaves are narrowly elliptic, convex, acute at apex, cuneate at base, 1.6-2" long x 0.6" wide; hairy above and below. The shrub is upright with an open growth habit, 6-8' high x 4-6' wide in 25 years from cuttings, moderately floriferous, and blooms late April to early May. It is plant and bud hardy to at least 0 F.

1. 2190 Kingston Village Road, California, MD 20619

sun broke through for these garden tours. Both of these gardens are described as part of this article. Lunch was served at historic Christ Church where we were able to tour the biblical gardens. On Saturday, the group toured the garden of Joe and Nuran Miller (see accompanying description), preceding the historical tour. The featured speaker at the Saturday night banquet was Fred Galle, former Director of Horticulture at Callaway Gardens, who talked about "My Favorite Azalea(s)". A transcription of his talk is printed in this issue.

A newly registered cultivar 'Nannie Angell', a white spider azalea, was introduced at the convention by George and Sue Switzer. The cultivar was named after Sue Switzer's mother.

President Malcolm Clark presided at the annual meeting. The results of the election of officers and directors were announced:

Secretary: Carol Flowers

Treasurer: Glenn Taylor

Directors: Tony Dove

Denise Stelloh

George Switzer

The current president (Malcolm Clark) and vice president (Bill Miller) were elected last year for two-year terms.

The Charter for the new Oconee Chapter was presented to Chapter President Jim Thornton.

A Distinguished Service Award was presented to Belinda Hobbs. The citation reads: "As the Society has grown, so too its workload. The great volume of this burden has fallen on one person. Measured only by the drudgery of words processed, envelopes stuffed and the like, your service is unsurpassed. But you are everywhere! Assistant to one, substitute for another, you cover every empty base within reach, all with a warmth and good cheer that belittles your efforts. Titles? None tell the story. 'Utility Infielder' won't do. 'The Great Facilitator' seems near the mark. Whatever, you have taken to heart the aims of the Society like no other. You are our model." □

"Azalea Trace"

Charlie and Wanda Hanners

Azalea Trace¹ is a new place; we are now enjoying our fifth growing season. We would like to suggest that the site was selected because the hilly terrain, large trees and acid soil are well suited for azaleas. In fact, we purchased the land as a country homesite more than 20 years ago. Job changes precluded settling here until we retired and had outgrown our one-acre lot in Bowie, Maryland. The seven-acre site looked like an ideal home for our "new" hobby, azaleas.

The house at Azalea Trace was completed in late summer of 1987. We moved 8,000 potted azaleas including our collection of 1,200 named varieties and many seedlings. The azaleas are planted in areas divided by trails or paths, hence the name Azalea Trace. We now have about 1,500 named varieties. The collection serves several purposes including a baseline for evaluating seedlings.

Most of our mature seedlings, more than 500, are planted on a hill facing the house front. Most of our named plants, about 1200, are planted on a hill facing the west and north sides of the house. New named plants and seedlings being evaluated, more than 5,000, are in pots on the hill-top to the rear of the house.

We have location charts of the azalea plantings and each azalea has a "permanent" label. The seedlings have numbers that enable us to trace them back to their seed lot. Of course, some tags have been lost.

We enjoy growing azaleas from seed, some from our own plants and some from the plant societies. Our objective is very broad—"better" azaleas for the local area. In growing from seed one of the problems is selecting the "best" plants. Some seedlings show unique characteristics early in their life, others mope along for four or five years and then could turn out to be excellent plants. Those susceptible to cold temperatures, root rot, etc., die out early. From those that survive very, very few have proven to be "worse" than some of the already named varieties.

We have established a computer data file for each of the named varieties and the seedlings we have selected to save. It will take many years to complete the file; data collection will never be finished. Much of the initial basic information in the file has been gathered from external sources and our work includes both evaluating existing information and gathering new information.

We are still clearing land, planting azaleas and collecting new varieties. Some we get from other Azalea Society members, some from commercial growers and some from local retail outlets. Mis-identification is a common problem so we try to sort out the "real" names and characteristics. Last year we thought we had found a source for 'B. Y. Morrison', but the plant proved to be 'Ben Morrison'. We have at least two very different versions of 'Tradition', both from reliable commercial sources.

While our primary interest is azaleas we have not neglected the companion plants, Japanese maple, holly, magnolia, hosta, laurel, boxwood, hemlock, dogwood, daffodils, cryptomeria and of course Rhododendron. Our task appears to be finding the best plant for each spot and planting with a minimum disturbance to the terrain and native plants.

Azalea Trace Nursery also provided many plants for the plant sale room and the beautiful plants for the registration desk (ed.).

1. 5510 Stephen Reid Road, Huntingtown, MD 20639