
IT'S ATLANTA

The 1997 ASA Convention

April 17, 18, 19, 20

James O. Thornton
Conyers, GA

We didn't exactly have fanfare at the 1996 ASA convention as when Atlanta was declared the host for the 1996 Summer Olympics, but ladies and gentlemen....IT'S ATLANTA... for the 1997 Azalea Society of America Convention and Annual Meeting—your host, for the first time, the Oconee Chapter.

If you haven't already made up your mind to attend, then sit back and let us convince you to come. We're "gonna have fun," and you don't want to miss out!

The committees have been hard at work on their specific tasks, and we think we can come up with better than a "Most Exceptional" declaration for an Atlanta event.

First of all we'll start congregating April 17, at the Ramada Inn Northlake, located off I285 at Exit 28 LaVista Road. (See registration form for details.) You know the drill, come in and register, pick up a ton of info and get ready for the activities to begin with a social hour along with plant sales. We'll have the usual room for the plant sale, a cash bar, and a place to just visit with the folks you haven't seen since Dallas or an earlier convention. Really now, "ain't that what it's all about?"



Garden of Dr. Charles and Virginia Owen

You can see you are coming to the deep south, so brush up on "yore" second language (southern). If you can't get the hang of it "not to worry", we'll have plenty of interpreters on hand to help you. When we say deep south, can't you just see the azaleas, the magnolias, the crepe myrtles, the dogwoods, the kudzu....don't laugh, when viewed with a critical eye, kudzu can be quite picturesque—just use your imagination. Anyway, we have only one caveat....the weather! Horticulturally, Atlanta is shown on plant hardiness maps as being in zone 7b, but we've been higher and much lower, creating much confusion for our plants during our spring season. We never know what or when things will really be in bloom, even though for the convention we tried to be scientific about selecting the dates. You see, Dick Clapp, one our members, provided the tour committee with first bloom dates of over 100 varieties of azaleas for the last ten years in Atlanta. With this and using the old "SWAG," the committee committed! So..... whatever the weather, we'll have a good time.

Speaking of good times, our convention might coincide with a recent phenomenon that has been "happening" for the last few years..."freaknik"! It's when a whole bunch of young folks flock to Atlanta to do their thing, which is mostly "party" by driving around downtown Atlanta, around the clock, having a good time and tying up traffic. But don't worry, we'll be out of harm's way on the outer edge of the perimeter, which is another phenomenon and a down right hazard, so be careful if you are driving to the convention.

Thursday night we officially welcome you to the 1997 convention, and we'll have James Harris, long-time member and well known hybridizer, to give us an update on the Harris hybrids. Next we'll introduce a new hybridizer and chapter member, Fred Sorg. Fred has been crossing some of the Harris azaleas and some of the late

Satsuki varieties, and has come up with some interesting results. He'll have some for sale, so make sure you check them out.

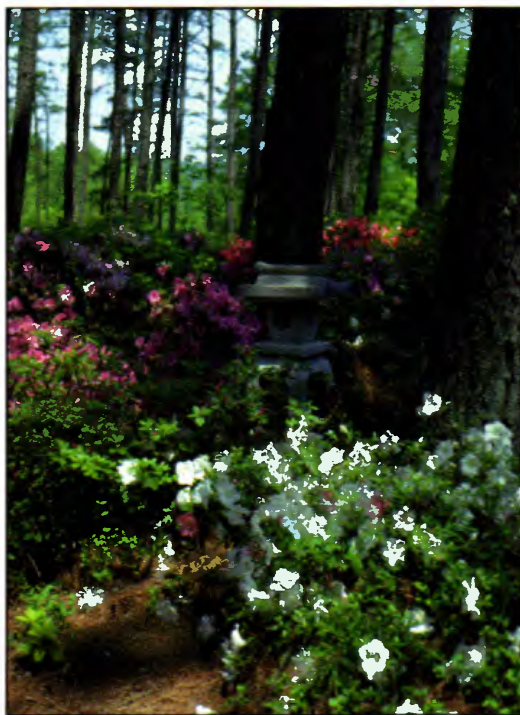
Following Fred is George Sanko, a chapter member and co-director of the DeKalb College Botanical Garden. George will tell us about using the rare and unusual native plants in and around azalea beds. By the way, as we travel to and from some of our tour gardens and during lunch breaks, we'll have several of our members share their experience and knowledge with us.

The tours start early Friday morning when we visit the garden of Lewis and Ginny Shortt. Theirs is a 35-year-old garden that continues to develop. It features perennials, rhododendrons, evergreens, and native azaleas, as well as other native plants. There is also a gorgeous moss garden. Lewis says it is a shady rock garden; anyway, it's beautiful.

Next, we will head for Earl and Verdie Sommerville's garden, which is located at the foot of Kennesaw Mountain. This large, beautiful garden features many unusual deciduous and evergreen azaleas collected by the Sommers. Along with rhododendrons, Mrs. Sommerville's tall bearded irises are a pleasing display. A small stream enhances this beautiful garden. This is an immaculate garden with a variety of trees and shrubs.

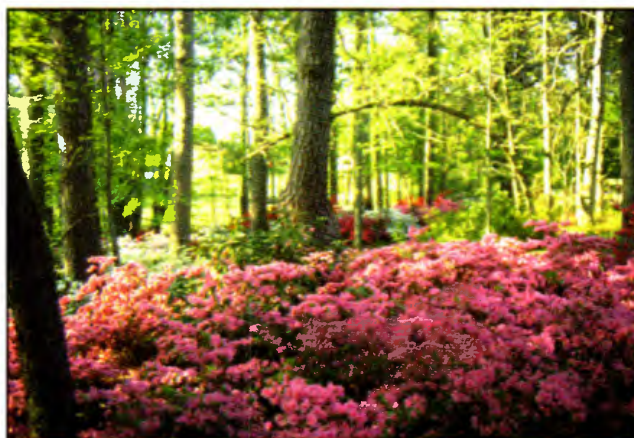
Dr. Charles and Virginia Owen's garden is our next stop. This garden is six acres, one-half of which is in wetlands, and host to many plants, such as: Gentian, Lobelia, Iron Weed, Bur-Marigold, Black Eyed Susan, Jack-in-the-Pulpit and many others. The "Hill" was planned by close friend and fellow chapter member Lewis Shortt; it features a scree with rocks, miniature plants and moss and is surrounded by rhododendron and deciduous and evergreen azaleas. Dr. Owen's main interest lies in breeding of the deciduous azalea with the Florida native varieties. Many of these fine azaleas can be found in this garden.

After touring the Owens' garden, and lunch, we head back into town, splitting up, to tour the garden of Dr. Gerson and Avis Aronovitz and the garden of Richard and June Clapp. The Aronovitzes have a beautiful early spring garden. Not only are deciduous and evergreen azaleas featured but also rhododendrons. This is a collector's garden, also featuring perennials and wildflowers. Here is an opportunity to study and learn plants because of the extensive labeling. The Aronovitzes have imported many unusual plants from their travels abroad.



Garden of Dr. Joe and Donna Coleman

At the Clapp garden, we'll find about 180 varieties of mature evergreen azaleas and a number of deciduous azaleas. An assortment of wildflowers, 25 rhododendrons, native shrubs and ornamentals are to be found surrounding the Clapps' home. Hopefully, at the time of our visit the garden will be in peak bloom.



Garden of Jim and Patsy Thornton

Now we head back to the hotel for a break and time for supper before we get back together for another group of speakers.

Friday night we'll present two fine speakers starting with member and hybridizer Raymond Goza. Raymond is known to many of us as an expert on rhododendrons and azaleas, both natives and evergreens. Ray will take us on a slide trip to Roan Mountain, Tennessee. I'm sure you'll enjoy the show and will want to plan your own trip to the mountain later this spring (or is it early this summer). Anyway, Ray will let us know!

Next, another expert in his own right, Dr. Joe Coleman. A noted collector, as you will see when we visit the Coleman garden on Saturday, Joe has exceptional knowledge of the Kurume azalea that he will share with us.

On Saturday, again bright and early, we head for the gardens of Dr. Martin and Carrie Hicklin. This garden features rhododendrons, evergreen and deciduous azaleas, hostas and other companion plants. It also highlights a number of unusual evergreen azaleas cultivated by Mrs. Hicklin from seed from the ARS Seed Exchange program. The blooms occur in a wide range of sizes, shades and colors. Next we're in for a treat as we tour the garden of Dr. Joe and Donna Coleman.

This four-acre garden mixes extensive collections of hundreds of varieties (they have stopped counting) of evergreen azaleas, hybrid rhododendrons and forms of both native and hybrid deciduous azaleas.) This collector's garden is also home to numerous Japanese maples, viburnums, laurels, hosta, daylilies, perennials, bulbs, wildflowers and several water gardens. "You can experience blooms from early March until it's too darn hot to get out and enjoy them."

Then it's on to Jim and Patsy Thornton's garden after a stop for lunch. On this three-acre garden spot you'll find a variety of evergreen, native and hybrid deciduous azaleas. Some of which are seedling plants grown by the Thorntons. Starting with a small stream, with its fountain, rock walls, you'll find many native ferns and other odds and ends of plant life. You'll see various varieties of trees and shrubs along with a spring vegetable garden. All-in-all, a nice place for a stroll.

By the way, on Saturday, we'll introduce Robert E. Lee and wife Dixie from the Louisiana Chapter. Robert, a.k.a. Buddy, has been developing some late-blooming evergreen azaleas that are now being distributed by Flowerwood Nurseries out of Mobile, Alabama. I'm sure you'll want to hear about these new plants. Just a few minutes and a few miles away, we'll be at Reid's Azalea Farm, owned by Dr. Ben and Lea Reid. This 20-acre farm and nursery is home of over 18,000 plants...over 1,300 varieties of azaleas. You'll also find native azaleas, rhododendrons, dogwoods, blueberries and a host of exotic plants. Ben and Lea are participating in the Ten Oaks Glenn Dale project and are avid collectors of all kinds of plants. (P.S.: Ben is unsure about keeping the nursery open in 1997 but bring your pocketbook anyway; there may be some leftovers.)

Our final stop is a bonus when we visit the DeKalb College Botanical Garden, with host and co-director George Sanko. This wildflower center of Georgia, started in 1990 for educational purposes, features the state's native

plants. Today the garden's three and one-half acres are planted with over 1,300 native plant species and still growing with new varieties. It contains the largest collection of rare and endangered plant species in Georgia, or for that matter, the U.S. Over 11 federally endangered, 50 Georgia endangered, and more than 60 that are classified as rare species are now safe and sound at home here. It is also home for over 80 fern species.

Most of these plants are being propagated by George and his staff and will be available for sale, so if you're looking for the rare or unusual, bring your list! On my last visit I became the proud owner of a bunch of "White Top Sedge," a weed by heritage, but nonetheless, a unique plant!

We're only a short distance from our hotel for the final convention activities, where we'll take care of business and present our keynote speaker. We had a lot of input for tonight's speaker, but friend Bill Miller came up with the best. It was hands down, Dr. Kathleen A. Kron, Assistant Professor, Department of Biology, Wake Forest University. Since we'll provide you with a copy of Dr. Kron's curriculum vitae, I won't go into any details. [An article by Dr. Kron is on page 72 of this issue, ed.] Let's just say you'll be impressed! You don't want to miss this part of the convention. Finally, we come to the business meeting where we take care of the affairs of the society, and I'm sure all of you will want to participate. When we adjourn the plant sales room will be open (and again Sunday morning) for you to take something special home as a reminder of the 1997 convention and to help renew your support of the Azalea Society of America.

Jim Thornton is a long-time azalea enthusiast. Jim is retired from the telephone company. He is the founding force behind the Oconee Chapter, and is currently Vice President of the Azaleas Society of America.

Photographs by Dr. Charles Owen, Dr. Joe Coleman, and Jim Thornton



PRIZE FOR BEST ARTICLE IN THE AZALEAN—1996

In 1989, the Board of Governors authorized the editor of **THE AZALEAN** to establish an annual prize for the best article to appear in **THE AZALEAN**. The concept was to acquire through donations, a fund which when invested would provide an annual prize for the best article published in **THE AZALEAN**. Funds were donated by the following chapters to establish the "CHAPTERS' PRIZE":

**Tri-State
Richmond, Virginia
Ben Morrison
Northern Virginia
Brookside Gardens**

As stated in the September 1990 issue, the best article each year will be selected by a poll of the membership. The prize will be announced and awarded at the Annual Meeting of the Society.

A ballot for the prize for 1996 is on the wrapper of this issue. **PLEASE VOTE.** The prize for best article in **THE AZALEAN** will be awarded at the 1997 Convention and Annual Meeting.

Dues Notices Mailed

Dues notices were mailed to all members in October. Please send your dues in the envelope provided in a timely manner to ensure that you continue to receive **THE AZALEAN**.

Prompt return of your dues in the envelope means that the Membership Committee will not be required to send you a second notice.