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# 1998 CONVENTION AND ANNUAL MEETING

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## Sponsored by the Northern Virginia Chapter

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The 1998 ASA Annual Convention and Annual Meeting will be held April 30 to May 3 at the Holiday Inn, Tysons Corner, McLean, Virginia. This hotel is located southwest of Washington, DC, near the Capital Beltway (I495), Route I66, and the Dulles Airport Access Road, where VA Routes 7 and 123 intersect. Next to the hotel are the Tysons Corner Center and the Galleria, featuring one of the nation's largest shopping complexes, including eight major department stores, hundreds of other fine stores, and theatres. The hotel is located midway (12 miles) between Washington National and Dulles International Airports.

### Convention Overview

The theme for the 1998 ASA Convention is "Hybridizing Fever." After a review of past creations by some of our Northern Virginia azalea hybridizers, you will see and hear what is going on throughout the community of azalea lovers. Included is one example of how the activities of two local hybridizers, working in their own homes and yards, have produced some fantastic azaleas. The first evening program will be a panel discussion, from which it will be obvious how very exciting and rewarding this hybridizing hobby can become. You may even catch the fever yourself, and start experimenting with some crosses with your own plants. On Friday evening, Sandra McDonald and George McLellan will be the speakers. Harry Weiskittel will be the keynote speaker at the banquet on Saturday evening. Tours are scheduled on Friday and Saturday of ten local gardens, including the George Harding Memorial Garden, which has been established by Northern Virginia and Maryland chapter members on the grounds of the American Horticultural Society in memory of George Harding.

### Thursday Events

The Convention will open officially at 7:30 PM Thursday evening (April 30). Prior to this, the Board meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Registration will begin at 3:30 PM, and plant sales will be open at 5:00 PM. You should plan to arrive in the afternoon, so you can be settled in for the opening meeting. Access to the hotel can be pretty congested during the afternoon "rush" hour, which begins around 3:00 PM, coming from Maryland or Washington, DC. Approaching from the west, to include Dulles Airport, will be easier.

Following welcoming announcements at 7:30 PM, the evening's program will set the stage for the theme of the convention. After a short moment to look back on the azalea heritage and contributions of several significant people in the Northern Virginia Region, we will begin our look to the future. Although Don Hyatt will give a brief slide preview of some of the gardens we will visit on Friday and Saturday, the primary focus of the evening program will be an introduction to the hybridizing efforts of several azalea breeders in Virginia. Featured hybridizers will include Joe Klimavicz, Bob Stewart, Walter Przypiek, and Don Hyatt.

### Friday Events

The garden tours planned for the 1998 ASA Convention will include a variety of garden types ranging from large estates to small private homes. On Friday, we will begin with a nostalgic look to the past as we visit the Harding memorial garden and some older, established gardens in the region. We will finish up with an exciting glimpse of the future as we see the latest creations in the seedling beds of Bob Stewart.

**George Harding Garden** - We will begin our tour by heading south of Alexandria to visit the George Harding Memorial Garden, an ASA display garden established at the headquarters of the American Horticulture Society at River Farm. Dedicated in May of 1994, this garden is a lasting memorial to one of the founders of the ASA, George Harding, and is a tribute to his work popularizing the beauty, variety, and versatility of azaleas. The garden contains over 500 plants contributed by individuals and nurseries, and demonstrates the wide diversity of flower, foliage, and form available in azaleas. Located on the Potomac River not far from historic Mount Vernon, River Farm Plantation was once owned by President George Washington.

**Frazer Garden** - Very close to River Farm is the Frazer garden, formerly Columbia Nursery, which was founded by the late Art Frazer and his wife, Anita. Established in 1960, their small nursery operation was one of the first places in Northern Virginia where azalea enthusiasts could find some of the more unusual azalea varieties including rare Glenn Dales, Back Acres, and Satsukis. Their one-acre residential landscape still has many of the original azaleas the Frazers used for nursery propagation, but also includes a wide range of other interesting plants. Anita has added to the wooded garden over the years.

**Raden Garden** - For lunch, we will stop at Dave Raden's beautiful two-acre garden overlooking parkland and the rushing waters of Accotink Creek. Dave and his wife, Sharon, moved to the majestic site only three years ago, but were able to bring hundreds of mature plants from their former garden to this new location. They truly enhance the existing landscape along this wooded glen.

**White Garden** - Margaret and her late husband, J. C. White, have been raising azaleas and rhododendrons on their 11 acre estate near Falls Church, VA, since 1939. The spacious setting,

garden vistas, and mature plantings make this garden one of the horticultural show places in Northern Virginia.

**Stewart Garden** - Bob Stewart, one of the region's most active hybridizers, is currently evaluating thousands of seedlings he is raising on his one acre hillside garden in Springfield, VA. Visitors are impressed not only with the healthy plants he maintains in framed nursery beds, but also with the next generation of superior azaleas varieties he will be introducing in future years.

We will return to the hotel late in the afternoon. Again, the plant sales will be open at 5:00 PM. Dinner for Friday evening is on your own. The meeting will commence at 7:30 PM with presentations by Sandra McDonald, followed by George McLellan.

Sandra McDonald has a Ph.D. in plant genetics and an M.S. in horticulture from the University of Connecticut. She and her husband, Ken, own and operate a nursery, Le-Mac Azaleas, Inc. in Hampton, Virginia. Sandra has been growing and hybridizing azaleas for many years. Some of her hybrids are listed in *Azaleas* by Fred Galle (see page 272). Besides these there are also, among others, 'Williamsburg', 'Dreamside', 'Sandra's Dwarf White', and the exciting 'Venus Baby'.

Sandra has been president of the Middle Atlantic Chapter, ARS, and edits its newsletter. She has been a technical reviewer for the *Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*, is chairman of the ARS Editorial Committee, and is presently the editor of the *Holly Society Journal*, the publication of the Holly Society of America. Sandra and Ken have a garden named for them at the arboretum of James Madison University in appreciation for their gifts of many plants, most of which are native azaleas. They have also participated in the exploration of

the native azalea populations along the border between Tennessee and North Carolina.

Sandra will lay bare her secrets of hybridizing azaleas, a pleasant occupation for her and one which has yielded great success.

George McLellan is a most successful plantsman. His garden, located on a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay in Gloucester, Virginia, is both beautiful and comprehensive. There are many rhododendrons and azaleas grown to perfection, but there are also holly, hostas, and hellebores. There are ferns and trees, but perhaps his greatest treasure is his collection of native azaleas.

George is a past president of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, and presently conducts its species program to discover the secrets of our native azaleas. He is a member of the Azalea Society of America and the Holly Society of America. He will talk to us about his trips to Gregory Bald, Wayah Bald, and other nearby azalea habitats. One of his first trips is documented in the article "Magic on the Mountain," which appears in the Spring 1996 issue (Vol. 50, Number 2), of the *Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*. He will recount to us the azaleas he has seen, and share his magnificent slides with us. However, as you can imagine, the adventure in hiking to the summit, the trails and things encountered along the way, and the azaleas promises us a vicarious voyage of discovery.

## Saturday Events

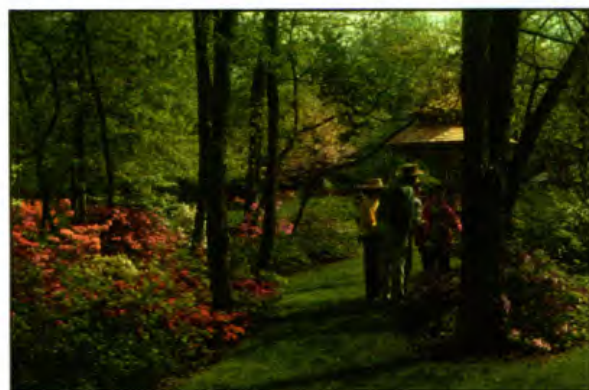
Continuing with our garden

tours on Saturday, we will visit the following:

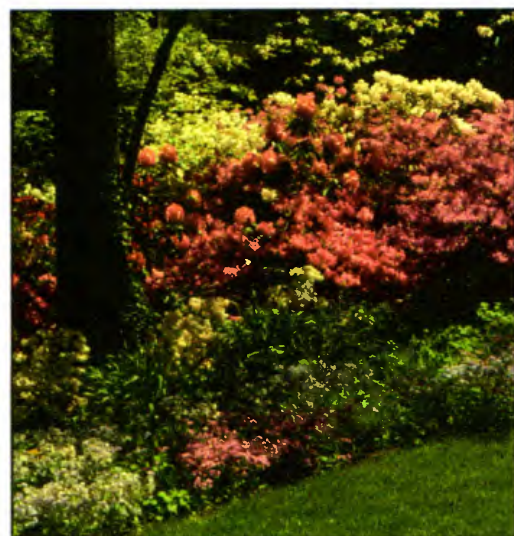
**Klimavicz Garden** - Since the late 1980s, Joe Klimavicz has been hybridizing azaleas in his one-third acre



*Klimavicz Garden*  
(Linda and Sandra Klimavicz)  
Photo by Joe Klimavicz



*Lower Garden*  
Photo by Don Hyatt



*Hyatt Garden*  
Photo by Don Hyatt



Vienna, Virginia backyard. This garden is an example of highly intensive azalea cultivation. Each year, Joe makes five to ten crosses and brings 500-1,000 new seedlings out of his basement and into his cold-frames. Specific hybridization objectives include a plant that is hardy, floriferous, and has a flower that is long lasting and bright in color. Only the best are selected for retention.

**Beck Garden** - Nestled among tall trees in the Herndon area, Carolyn Beck has been collecting many exciting new azalea varieties on her two-acre tract. The peaceful setting and beautifully manicured landscape contains an extensive collection of exciting new hybrids, including nearly all the introductions by Northern Virginia hybridizer Pete Vines.

**Louer Garden** - Frances and Phil Louer have amassed one of the largest collections of azaleas in the region on five beautifully landscaped acres near Haymarket, VA. They have over 2,000 varieties among those planted on the property and those in pots anxious to be put in the ground. Many rhododendrons are intermixed among the azaleas, along with wildflowers, thousands of daffodils, hostas, day-lilies, and many varieties of iris. The maturing plants put on an impressive display each spring, with old favorites, rare varieties, and new introductions growing in island beds along trails in the wooded setting.

**Hyatt Garden** - Located on three quarters of an acre in McLean, Don Hyatt's 45-year-old garden is now a mature landscape of rhododendrons and azaleas underplanted with many wildflowers, including large beds of the blue *Phlox divaricata*. Some remnants of Don's deciduous azalea and rhododendron hybridizing can be found in the back yard.

**Beaudry Garden.** Located on three acres adjacent to parkland in nearby Potomac, Maryland, the Beaudry garden is a beautiful hillside landscape of rare rhododendrons, azaleas, dwarf conifers, wildflowers, and companion plants. Over a period of many years, Norman and Jean Beaudry have renovated and enhanced this established horticultural treasure, the former garden of noted landscape designers Connie and Sandy Sanders.

We will return to the Holiday Inn Tysons in time for a rest, a cash bar social hour, and the plant sales. During the social hour, an auction will be conducted of special plants.

The banquet will begin at 7 30 PM in the hotel. Our keynote speaker will be Mr. Harry Weiskittel. As many of you know, Harry Weiskittel owns and operates the Marshy Point Nursery, a wholesale rhododendron and azalea nursery at the head of Chesapeake Bay, which he established because of

his love for these plants. The nursery has been in operation for more than 20 years, and occupies most of Harry's time. He does, however, indulge himself in his favorite hobby, hybridizing azaleas. His introductions include 'Carol Kittel', 'Mary Ellen Thomsen', 'Lizette Lynn', 'Catherine Buckley', 'Kakie', 'Hugs', and 'Kisses'.

Harry will tell us about his nursery, its operation and plants, and also about the concepts and thinking which led to his use of certain parents and the results he has obtained. This talk promises to be enlightening and enjoyable as we follow Harry through his wins and losses in the game of hybridizing for the future.

A brief membership meeting following the speaker which will include the election of new Society Officers for the upcoming year. This meeting will officially end the 1998 ASA Convention.

## Conclusion

It is planned to have final plant sales from 9:00 to 10:00 AM on Sunday morning. A Board meeting will also take place from 9:00 to 11:00 AM. For those who wish to remain in the area for a while, some of our local gardens will be open for informal tours. Information on these gardens and directions will be available at the registration desk. □

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# HYBRIDIZING FEVER - THE QUEST FOR NEW AZALEAS

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**Don Hyatt**

McLean, VA

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Azalea hybridizing fever seems to be spreading in parts of Northern Virginia. Perhaps we are inspired by the work of former hybridizers from our region such as George Ring or Pete Vines, but quite a few members of the Northern Virginia Chapter, ASA, are now experimenting with this exciting aspect of azalea culture. We have been having fun, and we have had success, too. Some of the newest creations of our new hybridizers will be made available for the first time at the Azalea Society of America National Convention in the spring of 1998.

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## How and Why We Hybridize Azaleas

Making an azalea cross is relatively simple, so those of us who dabble in hybridization cannot imagine why more people are not giving it a try. When azaleas are in bloom, just remove a few stamens from one variety, twirl them around a bit to encourage the pollen to start coming out of the anthers. Then just dab that pollen on the pistil of another flower, and the cross is made. It is wise to tag the twig noting date of cross and parents involved, and then watch closely to see if a seedpod develops. Of course, bees rarely ever mark their crosses, and yet they have been responsible for some excellent hybrids, too.