

# ASA 2000 Convention - Charleston, SC

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[Ed. Note: Quoted material about garden tour destinations is taken from the "Charleston, South Carolina, Area Official Visitors Guide."]

The annual meeting and convention of the Azalea Society of America, to be held in Charleston, South Carolina, on March 22-24, 2000, is going to be an adventurous and exciting series of events. According to the official visitors' guide for the Charleston area, "Charleston is America's most beautifully preserved architectural and historic treasure, with a rich, 300-year heritage. Since its founding in 1670, Charleston has played an important and often pivotal role in the course of America." The people in Charleston have been very helpful and friendly with the planning of this convention, and are elated that the Azalea Society of America has chosen their area for this national convention.

## Speakers

A wonderful array of knowledgeable speakers has been assembled for the evening lectures/slide presentations. These are informative speakers, and the time and energy that they put into each of their presentations will not only be a labor of love, but also a gift of themselves and their expertise about azaleas to the membership. Many thanks to the speakers. They are as follows:

Wednesday night: 1) Kathy Woolsey, Horticulturist at Cypress Gardens, "Azaleas in the Charleston Area." 2) Donald H. Voss, Vienna, Virginia, "How Azaleas Came to Our Gardens." 3) Hank Bruno, Trails Manager at Callaway Gardens, Pine Mountain, Georgia, "Azalea Diver-

sity - Back to the Future."

Thursday night: 1) Jeff Beasley, co-owner of Transplant Nursery, Lavonia, Georgia, "Native Azaleas." 2) Fred and Jean Minch, Puyallup, Washington, "Azalea Hybridizing." 3) Maarten van der Giessen, Van der Giessen Nursery, Semmes, Alabama, "Commercial Criteria for Azalea Evaluation."

Friday night banquet: Barbara Stump, Editor of **THE AZALEAN** and graduate student at Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, Texas, "Building a New Public Garden: the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden from the Ground Up."

## Tours

When planning places to tour in the Charleston area, there were two major obstacles: too many interesting places to tour, and not enough time. With only two days of scheduled tours for the convention, tough choices had to be made. Convention attendees should try to schedule a couple of days before or after the convention so they can visit more of this fascinating area.

On March 23, 2000, bright and early, the buses will leave for the first day of scheduled tours. The first stop will be Magnolia Plantation. Again, from the Visitors' Guide, "This 17<sup>th</sup> century estate, acquired by the Drayton family (whose heirs still own it) features the year-round bloom of America's oldest garden (c. 1680), boasting one of the largest collections of azaleas and camellias in the country. Highlights include the pre-Revolutionary War plantation house with museum-quality early American antiques, biblical gardens, antebellum cabin, nature trail, wildlife observation tower,

gift shop, gallery of a nature and wildlife artist, snack shop, canoe and bike rentals, and more. Bird walks Saturday a.m." According to Fred C. Galle's *Azaleas*, the first southern Indian type azaleas to be grown outdoors in the southern U.S. were planted by Rev. John G. Drayton at Magnolia Gardens.

Next on the tour will be Middleton Place: "A carefully preserved 18<sup>th</sup> century plantation and a national historic landmark, Middleton Place encompasses America's oldest landscaped gardens. Rare camellias, azaleas, magnolias and ancient live oaks accent a landscape design that remains magnificent all year. The plantation stables are complete with animals, and craftspeople demonstrating the tasks vital to plantation life." Lunch will be served at Middleton Place Restaurant.

To conclude Thursday's tour, if time permits, a bus tour of Charleston's Historic District has been scheduled. We will enjoy the splendor of Charleston's stately colonial and antebellum homes that have survived for centuries. Commentary by a licensed guide will include 300 years of tradition and history along with Charleston's role in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Sites on the tour include mansions on the Battery, Rainbow Row, and St. Michael's Church (c. 1761), along with many gardens.

Friday morning, after an evening of informative speakers, socializing, and a good night's rest, we will begin our second day of tours in the Monck's Corner, South Carolina, area. Our first stop will be the azalea and camellia gardens at the Mepkin Abbey. "Mepkin, located on the highest bluff on the Cooper River,

was originally the home of Henry Laurens, the great South Carolina statesman who spent much of his life experimenting with exotic botanical specimens. In the twentieth century, Mepkin was purchased (along with four other plantations) by Henry Luce. He and his wife Clare Booth Luce turned to Loutrel Briggs, Charleston's noted landscape architect, for assistance in developing the gardens we will be seeing. In 1949 Clare Booth Luce gave the property to the Catholic Church, and it has been a monastery ever since." Presently, the garden at Mepkin Abbey, under the direction of Jim Martin, is being developed into a botanical garden.

The next stop will be Carolina Nurseries, Inc., the largest nursery in South Carolina. This nursery is privately owned and operated by a small employee group. The nursery totals 700 acres with approximately 280 acres presently in containerized nursery stock production. During peak seasons, employment usually

exceeds 400 people. Lunch will be served, and J. Guy of Carolina Nurseries will speak on the azalea hybrids grown at the nursery.

After lunch we will be on our way to Cypress Gardens. "Here you can stroll along four miles of walking trails that wind through the area's cypress swamp...Relax in a unique and exciting butterfly house which features a vast array of native butterflies and the plants they thrive upon...Or explore an aquarium that offers an up-close look at the amphibians, reptiles, and fish indigenous to the cypress swamp. For many visitors, Cypress Gardens proves to be their favorite experience, because it allows one to interact with the area's beauty!"

We will end this day of tours with a garden bus tour of Historic Summerville, Charleston's Victorian village. Our guides will board the motor coaches as we arrive in the town, just beyond the Ashley River plantations. In 1935, Summerville be-

gan to be called "Flowertown in the Pines." Winding our way past Victorian houses, we will hear stories of the town and the people who moved to this "summer village" to escape the diseases of the low country. Nature permitting, the azaleas and dogwoods will be in full bloom at this time.

Our convention headquarters is located at the Holiday Inn Convention Center/Airport, 6099 Fain Street - Airport I-26 and West Aviation Avenue, North Charleston, SC. Complimentary 24-hour shuttle to and from the airport is provided. To make room reservations, please call 1-843-744-1621. Room reservations (\$75.00 plus tax) must be made no later than February 22, 2000, to assure room availability. Registration to the convention may be limited; early registration is highly recommended.

For additional information or comments, please contact either Jerry Ladner at 1-228-832-0236 or Robert Lee at [rdlee@1-55.com](mailto:rdlee@1-55.com). Hope to see you in Charleston next spring.

## CONVENTION SCHEDULE

### AZALEA SOCIETY OF AMERICA NATIONAL CONVENTION

#### MARCH 22, 23, 24, 2000

#### CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

#### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

- 2:00-4:00 Board of Directors Meeting
- 2:00-4:30 Registration and Plant Sale
- DINNER ON YOUR OWN
- 5:30-6:30 Social Hour and Plant Sale
- 6:45-7:30 Kathy Woolsey, "Azaleas in the Charleston Area"
- 7:45-8:30 Donald H. Voss, "How Azaleas Came to Our Gardens"
- 8:45-9:30 Hank Bruno, "Azalea Diversity - Back to the Future"

#### THURSDAY, MARCH 23

- BREAKFAST ON YOUR OWN
- 7:30 Board buses for tours: Magnolia Plantation, Middleton Place (including lunch), bus tour of Historic Downtown Charleston, return to hotel.
- DINNER ON YOUR OWN (Plant Sale)
- 5:30-6:30 Social hour, plant sale
- 6:45-7:30 Jeff Beasley, "Native Azaleas"
- 7:45-8:30 Fred and Jean Minch, "Azalea Hybridizing"
- 8:45-9:30 Maarten van der Giessen, "Commercial Criteria for Azalea Evaluation"

#### FRIDAY, MARCH 24

- BREAKFAST ON YOUR OWN
- 7:30 Board buses for tours: Mepkin Abbey, Carolina Nurseries (including lunch), Cypress Gardens, bus tour of Historic Summerville, return to hotel.
- 5:30-6:30 Social hour, plant auction
- 6:30-7:45 Banquet
- 7:45-8:30 Barbara Stump, "Building a New Public Garden"
- 8:30 Business Meeting

#### SATURDAY, MARCH 25

- 8:00-10:00 Board of Directors Meeting
- 8:00-10:00 Plant sale and good-byes

