ASA Convention 2001 Asheville, North Carolina

Celebrating Native Azaleas

Bob Stelloh — Hendersonville, NC

[See detailed convention schedule on page 9; two copies of the registration form were included in the winter issue of **THE AZALEAN**, along with a sheet of instructions for filling one out to send in. Another registration form is included on the front inside cover of this issue's wrapper. Don't miss this wonderful event, Ed.]

Incredible Setting

When William Bartram explored the Blue Ridge Mountains, he wrote in his book *Travels* in 1791 ". . . suddenly opening to view from dark shades, we were alarmed with apprehension of the hill being set on fire. This is certainly the most gay and brilliant flow-

ering shrub yet known." The shrub was Rhododendron calendulaceum. It and the other 15 azalea species native to North America (nine of them growing in the Blue Ridge Mountains), and a few of the other 2,500 plant species native to this area, are the focus of the Azalea Society of America annual convention Asheville, North Carolina, on June 14-17, 2001.

Our convention headquarters is the dining hall of the beautifully wooded and landscaped campus of the University of North Carolina-Asheville, one mile north of down-

town Asheville, North Carolina. We will register in its entrance hall, serve ourselves in its cafeteria, and enjoy the evening meetings and presentations in its eating area.

Asheville is a marvelously interesting city to visit, with winding hilly streets and historic architectural gems, with hundreds of arts and crafts galleries, outdoor recreational opportu-

nities, and a variety of entertainment and nightlife. It was founded in 1792 in the valley formed by the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers between the Great Smoky and Blue Ridge Mountains.

With a population of around 70,000, Asheville is the largest city in western



The golden yellows and oranges of the Flame Azalea, *R. calendulaceum*, are a major attraction along the Appalachian Trail on the way up to Copper Bald. Viewing this floral fire on the mountains are Bob Stelloh and Rob Eisenberg. [*Photo by Ed Collins*.]

North Carolina. Called the "Paris of the South," it has made a number of "top 10" lists: one of the ten healthiest places to live (Kiplinger, 1996); one of the ten best small Southern cities in which to live (*Money* Magazine, 1998); and one of the ten All-America Cities (National Civic League, 1997). At 2,200 feet elevation, Asheville in June may be as cool as 50° F in the evening, and as warm as 90° F during the day.

Plant diversity in the Asheville area is greater than anywhere else other than the tropical rain forests, due to a unique combination of circumstances. Around 10 million years ago, land bridges connected Asia, America, and Europe, and plants migrated freely. As the bridges disappeared and the climate changed, plants migrated to

the eastern coasts of Asia and America for more reliable moisture. About 10,000 years ago, glaciers pushed the northern species south, leaving some of them here as the glaciers retreated. Finally, the mountain tops, slopes, seeps, coves, and valleys provide a wide variety of habitats and microclimates due to the resulting changes in elmoisture, evation, drainage, temperature, and wind and sun exposure, all within very short distances of each other.

The end result is a marvelously varied assemblage of plants, including hundreds of

plant species found nowhere else or normally found only in the north. Many of these treasures are protected by being on public land and are readily accessible on foot by way of the Appalachian Trail and by car on the Blue Ridge Parkway. At Fetterbush Overlook on the Blue Ridge Parkway, for example, you can park your car, walk across the road and touch three of the rarest woody plant species in the world while standing in one place (well, you might have to move your feet a little). Because it is such a good place for plants, it's also a good place for plant lovers. It's why a number of plant scientist retired to the Asheville area, including two of the five directors of the US National Arboretum.

Tours

Tours were chosen to expose you to a wide variety of the plants and sights of Asheville and the Blue Ridge Mountains. Most of the tours include at least one stop to experience native azaleas, rhododendrons, and other native plants in a wild setting. Each of the tours takes the entire day, and is the same each day except for tour P, which does not go to the North Carolina Arboretum on Saturday.

As you can only take two of the five tours, consider coming a day or two earlier, or staying a day or two later, to take the other tours on your own. We have driving directions on our website, including the tours, local nurseries, and other private gardens which will be open to you. These directions will be available at convention check-in, and we will mail a copy on request. You may also book your room on campus for a few days before or after the convention.

Tour B: Biltmore Estate and Gardens, North Carolina Arboretum (short drive, easy walks). We will have enough time to tour both the house and the gardens (we also have a limited number of reduced-cost tickets if you choose to visit the Biltmore Estate on your own). We will then visit the North Carolina Arboretum and its National Native Azalea Repository.

George Vanderbilt III began the Biltmore Estate in 1887 on 125,000 acres of forest and farm land. The house, with a 390-foot facade, 250 rooms and four acres of floor space, is the largest private house in America. After 1,000 men worked on it for six

years, the house was opened on Christmas Eve of 1895. Expect to spend about 90 minutes on a guided tour of the house.

Frederick Law Olmsted, best known for his design of New York's Central Park, created a several-hundred-acre forest as the setting for this outstanding house, along with 10 acres of beautifully crafted formal gardens near the house. One feature of particular interest to us is the informal **Azalea Garden**, a short walk from the house, planted with native azaleas collected from the southeastern states by Chauncey Beadle in the early 1900s.

The North Carolina Arboretum is sited on 426 acres in a beautiful natural setting a few miles south of Asheville. It features a number of theme gardens, miles of trails, an outstanding bonsai collection, and the **National Native Azalea Repository**. The repository, designed to preserve the germplasm of these important plants, is a five-acre naturalized planting, with many hundreds of native azaleas representing 13 species.

Tour C: Copper Bald (14 persons only - long drive, long hard walk, very nice plants). We will go to Copper Bald to see an amazing variety of R. calendulaceum, R. arborescens, R. viscosum, R. cumberlandense, interspecific hybrids, and wildflowers. After a long ride on the freeway, we go 11 miles up a winding road, a few miles past Wayah Bald to FS 711, the only paved Forest Service road in North Carolina. We will make a few stops along its 15-mile length to see wildflowers on seeps and in wet shady coves beside the road, and go a few miles further to Burningtown Gap at 4,236 feet elevation on the Appalachian Trail. From there we hike a fairly strenuous 1.7 miles up the Appalachian Trail to Copper Bald at 5,256 feet (yes, that's 1,020 feet UP). We eat our lunch at the "Mossy Log Cafe", and then go off-trail to experience the azaleas close up. After spending about an hour and a half meandering around, we hike that same 1.7 miles and 1,000

feet back down. As time permits, we will return part of the way on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

You should be in good shape, have some hiking boots, and expect to get tired. With luck, someone will see an interesting plant and call out "oh, look at this" now and then, to let you catch your breath on the way up.

Tour H: Hendersonville Gardens (medium drive, short easy walks, nice gardens). We visit a variety of private gardens, and then see native azaleas and wildflowers in their natural habitat on a short and fairly easy hike. Our first stop is the woodland garden of Denise and Bob Stelloh, with meandering trails through azaleas, rhododendrons, ornamental trees, and wildflowers. We then visit the nearby garden of Mary and Ed Collins, featuring an outstanding waterfall, and probably the largest private collection of Cowles hybrid rhododendrons, along with a large variety of azaleas, wildflowers, and other ornamentals. Our next stop is a roof garden and a spectacular rock garden with miniature mountains and streams, microclimates, and delightful whimsies created by Ev and Bruce Whittemore, which is planted with an amazing collection of alpines and other plants. We then go a few more miles to the Dupont State Forest for a quick foray into the woods to see some native azaleas and other wildflowers in the wild.

Tour P: Blue Ridge Parkway (long drive, short easy walks, nice plants, beautiful vistas). We travel south along the Blue Ridge Parkway, with stops and optional short hikes to see native azaleas and wildflowers in their natural habitat. We keep going up, to the highest point on the parkway at Richland Balsam. On Friday only, we will also visit the North Carolina Arboretum and its National Native Azalea Repository, thus spending less time on the Parkway.

The Blue Ridge Parkway is the "Appalachian Trail for cars." It runs 469 miles along the ridges of the Appala-



If you select Tour W, to Wayah Bald, you can expect to see clouds of white R. arborescens. Here, Theresa Ford is seen admiring a very healthy group. [Photo by Ed Collins, taken from the observation tower at Wayah Bald.]

chian Mountains, from Shenandoah National Park in Virginia to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina. The Parkway has frequent turnouts and scenic overlooks for seemingly endless views of parallel ranges, cross ranges, and scattered hills, protected by an actively enforced prohibition against disturbing wild animals and plants in any way. Begun in 1935 as a Depression-era public works project, it was largely com-

pleted by 1967 Because of the range in elevation from 649 to 6,047 feet, peak bloom for a given plant species varies over a long period of time (about a day later per 100 feet higher in elevation). Thus, *R. calendulaceum* blooms in mid-May at lower elevations through mid-June at the higher elevations west of Asheville.

Tour W: Wayah Bald, Blue Ridge Parkway (long drive, short easy walks, breathtaking plants and vistas).



The rock garden of Bruce and Ev Whittemore is part of the Hendersonville private garden tour (Tour H).

[Photo by Ed Collins, taken from the observation tower at Wayah Bald.]

We will see *R. calendulaceum* on the trip up to Wayah Bald, and a magnificent display of *R. arborescens* at the top, with a short optional hike along the Appalachian Trail.

After a long drive on the freeway, we go about 10 miles along a winding picturesque road to the base of Wayah Bald. We see large populations of *R. calendulaceum* along the even more winding road to the top. When we disembark, we walk a few hundred yards to the observation tower at the top to enjoy the vistas and some spectacular *R. arborescens*, with a short optional hike along the Appalachian Trail for more *R. arborescens* and late-blooming wildflowers. We then return via the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Speakers

Very informative speakers will share their extensive knowledge of native and evergreen azaleas with us each evening. They and others will host a native azalea propagation roundtable discussion Sunday morning.

Thursday Night Speakers

Buddy Lee ("Azalea Hybridizing and Seedling Selection") has been involved with azaleas for almost 30 years, and is best known as the developer of the multi-season-blooming "Encore Azaleas." As the owner of Transcend Nursery, he is currently active in the development and testing of new evergreen azalea varieties. He is a long-time member of the Louisiana Chapter of the ASA and has been their president. He coordinated the 1991 and 2000 annual conventions, and he is currently a director of the ASA.

Ed Collins ("Copper Bald: Azaleas and Allies") became involved with rhododendrons and azaleas and plant societies in the mid 1960s. He was the founder and long-time president of the Pine Barrens ARS chapter, president of the Philadelphia ARS chapter, and chair of the ARS exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show for 13 years, chair of the 1976 ARS conven-

tion in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and the ARS district director for six years. Since moving to Hendersonville in 1991 with over 3,000 rhododendrons, he has been president of the Southeastern ARS chapter for five years, and ARS district director for another four years. He is currently the chair of the Native Azalea Study Group of the Southeastern ARS chapter, co-chair of the 2001 ASA national convention, and is working to start a new local chapter of the ASA. In his spare time, Ed is quite active in the Blue Ridge Horticultural Association, North Carolina Arboretum, and the Master Gardeners of Hendersonville, maintains his five-acre garden, goes hiking in search of native azaleas, and gives numerous lectures and presentations.

Ted Stecki ("Linwood Hardy Azaleas") has been a part-time nurseryman at his Hill House Nursery for over 30 years, propagating and growing rhododendrons and azaleas. He worked closely with Al Reid, evaluating his new crosses and compiling his data, including plants used for breeding, crosses, the naming/numbering methodology, and what Al envisioned for the future. A long-time member of the ASA and ARS, Ted is a past president of the Pine Barrens ARS chapter, and past chair of the ARS exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show for many years. He is now the Budget and Finance Committee chair for the ARS. If you want to know more about the Linwood Hardy azaleas—and you should—this program is for you!

Friday Night Speakers

Joe Schild ("Deciduous Azaleas—East Meets West") has been an avid collector, propagator, grower and breeder of azaleas, and in particular the deciduous forms, for over 30 years. He has owned and operated a niche nursery for many years and continues to search for the best of the best to propagate. He is a past president of the Tennessee Valley Chapter ARS, current vice-president of the ASA, and president-elect of the ASA.



While on Tour H, you will see the Ed and Mary Collins' private garden, complete with a hillside of rock and a wonderful waterfall. [Photo by Ed Collins.]



As part of Tour H,
Denise and Bob
Stelloh have invited
us into their own
garden, "Kairaku",
which means,
translating from
Japanese, "joint
pleasures". [Photo
by Bob Stelloh.]



The natives grow wherever they can get a foot-hold. Bob Stelloh says this is an example of God's idea of rock gardens: *R. vaseyi* on SR215 near the Blue Ridge Parkway (Tour P). [*Photo by Ed Collins.*]

David Sauer ("The New Kurumes") has been an avid collector of azaleas and rhododendrons for 40 years, along with his career as a fine arts teacher of painting and photography at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Steve Brainerd ("Designing with Native Azaleas") was a Navy fighter Top Gun pilot and has been a landscape designer for the past 10 years. He is currently working as Parks Development Superintendent for the city of McKinney, Texas, and is studying for a Master of Landscape Architecture degree from the University of Texas at Arlington. Steve is a past president of the Azalea Society of America.

Saturday Keynote Speaker

Don Hyatt ("The Best of the Best: In Search of Native Azaleas") has been an avid hybridizer of azaleas and rhododendrons for over 30 years, with a particular interest in deciduous azaleas, and has been teaching mathemat-

ics and computer science for 32 years. His exceptional web pages at http://wwww.tjhsst.edu/~dhyatt/gardencenter.html demonstrate his ability to combine his work and avocation. Don is a former district director of the ARS, and is now a director of the ASA and the president of the Potomac Valley ARS chapter.

As our keynote speaker, Don recounts his frequent hikes in the mountains in North Carolina and Tennessee to search for the finest forms of our native azaleas. Enjoy the magnificent views along the Appalachian Trail near Roan Mountain as he documents exceptional forms of *R. calendulaceum*. Stroll through the hybrid swarm of native azaleas on Gregory Bald as he tries to identify the "best of the best" in one of the greatest flower shows on earth. Through slides and commentary, Don will share his appreciation for the rich botanical diversity in these and other treasure spots in the southern Appalachians.

Other Convention Features

Plants, lots of them, will be on sale. We will have sizes ranging from rooted cuttings to specimen plants, and we will have many varieties of deciduous and evergreen azaleas from which to choose. Most will be available at fixed low prices, with others at a live auction and several silent auctions. We even have a number of rooted cuttings and a few specimen plants of the newly discovered *R. eastmanii* for you to buy!

Quilt. We have commissioned a truly magnificent quilted wall hanging, entitled "Delectable Mountain Azaleas." It features *R. vaseyi* and other native azaleas worked into the very old and well known (at least to quilters) Delectable Mountains quilt design. It is being designed and created for us by Teresa Reilly, a renowned quilter, the author of *Five Seasons of Quilts*, and a teacher and lecturer on quilting. When the winning raffle ticket is drawn Saturday evening, one lucky attendee will be going home with an heirloom.

In Memory

Peter Girard, Jr., died March 12, 2001, in Geneva, Ohio, from complications of a cerebral hemorrhage. Learning the nursery business from his father who started Girard Nurseries in 1946, Peter and his wife Caroline, daughter Roberta, son-inlaw Jeff Forinash, and grandsons Peter and Joshua have built a wholesale, retail, and mail order nursery that specializes in both evergreen and deciduous azaleas, rhododendrons, conifers, and other companion and water garden plants. The nursery, with 15 acres of display area that Peter said included "no more than two of any single plant," was featured on HGTV October 24, 1999. More than just selling plants, Girard loved growing new varieties, up to 40,000

plants and grafted trees. In keeping with the motto, "A home is not a home until it's planted," Girard placed picnic tables, a gazebo, and benches throughout the nursery to encourage people to spend time with the plants, enjoy the displays, and take notes on what they might want to try.

Peter Girard, Sr. began breeding work on azalea and rhododendron hybrids in the 1940s. Well known for their hardiness and bright colors, the nursery offers over 40 cultivars. When he died, Peter Girard, Jr. was working on a number of new introductions: pink *Rhododendron* 'Girard Little Michelle'is now available; light salmon R. 'Girard Caitlin' and pinksalmon R. 'Girard Constance' are soon to be released. A deep pink rhododen-

dron, 'Girard Brandon', which has a huge truss and big flowers will be introduced in a few years.

Girard developed a passion for conifers, carrying over 2,500 cultivars at the nursery, and became very active in the American Conifer Society. He introduced a number of new cultivars, including *Juniperus x media* 'Girard Saybrook Gold', a patented juniper that remains bright gold year-round and the very dwarf, very white *Picea glauca* 'Girard Monstrosa' – Girard's Dwarf Monstrosa White Spruce.

The third and fourth generations are continuing the work of the nursery, which is a long-time advertiser in **THE AZALEAN**.

News and Notes from the Net – Lace Bugs and Merit

The azaleas mail list (www.azaleas@azaleas.org) is a great source for rapid interchange of ideas on azaleas and their care and culture. One very fertile subject of discussion recently was on lace bugs and how to control them. The following came from Marion Buehler in Brevard, North Carolina:

I have an easy solution for lace bugs for Patricia Phillips and anyone else who hasn't found it yet - Merit. It's a Bayer product (yes, the aspirin people). It's available to homeowners as "Season Long Grub Control" in granular form. It's a VERY residual systemic insecticide, virtually harmless to anything but insects and aquatic invertebrates. (Keep it out of the creek or you'll kill all the crayfish!) It is currently only "labeled" for grubs but co-incidentally kills all the chewing and sucking insects that plague azaleas including lace bugs and black vine weevils. It works best if applied with fertilizer (preferably liquid) as soon as the plants break dormancy since it takes about six weeks to transmigrate throughout the plant. I know that's not the right time to fertilize azaleas, but for this purpose, it speeds the absorption. Just scatter the stuff on the ground under the plants, water it in with Miracle-Gro, and after about six weeks any bug that bites it bites the dust-for a year or more!

There are over 17 e-mails in the Archives section of the ASA website that deal with comments and questions about this product. Joe Schild contributed the following hyperlink as a wonderful reference for finding out the labeling information and cautions for chemicals, including the MSDS number:

http://www.cdms.net/manuf/manuf.asp

Once you get into the homepage, type in the brand name at the search prompt and click 'Go.'

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ASA Convention 2001 Schedule

There are presentations each evening and tours on Friday and Saturday, along with the social functions and plant sales as shown.

Thursday, June 14, 2001

11:00-5:00 Check-in and Plant Sales-Dining Hall Entrance

11:30-1:00 Lunch

2:00-4:00 Board of Directors Meeting - Rear Dining Hall

5:00-6:00 Social Hour and Plant Sales

6:00-7:00 Dinner

7:00-9:30 Presentations

Azalea Hybridizing and Seedling Selection, Robert (Buddy) Lee

Copper Bald: Azaleas and Allies, Ed Collins Linwood Hardy Azaleas, Ted Stecki

Friday, June 15, 2001

6:30-7:30 Breakfast

7:30-5:00 Tours:

8:00-4:30 (B) Biltmore Estate, NC Arboretum

7:30-5:00 (C) Copper Bald

8:00-4:30 (H) Hendersonville Gardens

8:00-5:00 (P) Blue Ridge Parkway, NC Arboretum

7:30-5:00 (W) Wayah Bald, Blue Ridge Parkway

5:00-6:00 Social Hour and Plant Sales

6:00-7:00 Dinner

7:00-9:30 Presentations

Deciduous Azaleas — East Meets West, Joe Schild
The New Kurumes, David Sauer

Designing with Native Azaleas, Steve Brainerd

Saturday, June 16, 2001

6:30-7:30 Breakfast

7:30-5:00 Tours:

8:00-4:30 (B) Biltmore Estate, NC Arboretum

7:30-5:00 (C) Copper Bald

8:00-4:30 (H) Hendersonville Gardens

8:00-5:00 (P) Blue Ridge Parkway

7:30-5:00 (W) Wayah Bald, Blue Ridge Parkway

5:30-6:30 Social Hour and Plant Sales

6:30-7:30 Banquet

7:30-8:00 Plant Auction

8:00-10:00 Business Meeting, Keynote Presentation *The Best of the Best:*

In Search of Native Azaleas, Don Hyatt

Sunday, June 17, 2001

7:00-8:00 Breakfast

8:00-10:00 Board of Directors Meeting - Rear Dining Hall

8:00-11:00 Native Azalea Propagating Round Table

8:00-12:00 Plant Sales and Good-Byes

11:30-12:30 Lunch

ASA Convention 2001 Asheville, North Carolina

Convention Logistics

Register by filling out the registration form—from this issue, the winter issue of **THE AZALEAN**, or from the website address: www.azaleas.org — together with your check in US funds payable to the ASA Convention. Mail both to:

Denise Stelloh, Convention Registrar 585 Ransier Drive Hendersonville, NC 28739

Meals are served cafeteria-style, with a salad bar, a choice of entrees, and many choices of side dishes, drinks, and desserts. The food is good, plentiful, and inexpensive (we didn't believe it either, until we ate several sample meals). All meals except the Saturday evening banquet are included in one \$60 price, rather than paying for each meal separately. Meals begin with Thursday lunch and continue through Sunday lunch, including box lunches on the tours, with vegetarian box lunches available on request. There is no rebate for meals you miss.

If you do not choose to buy the meals package, box lunches are available for \$10 each for the tours, and a wide variety of restaurants are within several miles.

Housing is in Mills Hall, with overflow housing in Founders Hall. Both buildings are air-conditioned, adjacent to the dining hall, and within easy walking distance of the **University of North Carolina-Asheville Botanical Gardens**, a peaceful 10-acre native plant sanctuary. The rooms are organized as two-room suites with a shared bath, with each room sleeping two people on single beds. Each building has a number of rooms equipped for wheelchair access, with elevator access to all the floors. The housing is about 30 steps lower than the dining hall, with an elevator and a ramp for wheelchair access between the two levels.

Because of the way the rooms will be assigned, you will probably have a private bath (the other room will be empty) if you sign up early. Or, you can guarantee a private bath by signing up for an entire suite at \$40 per person per night, single or double, until we run out of suites. You may register for less than all three nights. You may not change the type of room (single, double or suite) from one night to the next.

Changes to your choice of tours can be made until the buses leave, as long as we have the room. We also reserve the right to change the day you take a tour, and to change the specific tour itineraries, based on attendance and on what is in bloom next June.

Refunds are given in full before May 1, 2001, 50% during May, and not at all after June 1, 2001.

If you are flying: The Asheville Airport, served by Delta Airlines and USAir, is 10 miles south of the University of North Carolina-Asheville campus on I-26. Public transportation

to the campus is available (\$0.85, about 2 hours), you can take a private taxicab (\$20, about 30 minutes), or you can rent a car and drive to the campus.

The Greenville-Spartanburg Airport, served by many major airlines, is 70 miles south of the University of North Carolina-Asheville campus. Because of the distance, it may be least expensive to rent a car and drive to the campus, which will take about an hour and a half. From the airport, take I-85 north to I-26 west to US 240 east, and follow the further directions below.

If you are driving: Asheville is in the western corner of North Carolina, near the intersection of I-26 with I-40 and US 240. From the east or west, take I-40 to US 240. From the north, take I-81 to I-77 to I-40 west, or take I-81 to US 19/23 south. From the south, take I-85 north to I-26 west to US 240 east.

From the intersection of I-26, I-40, and US 240 (a few miles west of Asheville), take US 240 east to Asheville, bear left onto US 19/23 north (a left exit—do not take US 19/23 business or south) and follow signs to University of North Carolina-Asheville.

Registration. Once on campus, bear left to the dining hall on the left. Convention check-in is in the entrance of the dining hall at the University of North Carolina-Asheville.

For additional information,
please contact
Bob Stelloh at 1-828-697-9959, bstelloh@mac.com,
or Ed Collins at 1-828-697-9228, azaleaed@brinet.com.