

Cumberland Spring—25-Year Celebration of the ASA

2003 Chattanooga Convention Preview

Joseph E. Schild, Jr. — Hixson, Tennessee

For the Society's 25th anniversary, we are delighted to welcome you to Chattanooga, Tennessee, May 1-4 for our 2003 Convention and National Meeting. We want you to enjoy your visit and have a refreshing time, meeting old friends and making new ones while experiencing a relaxing group of tours to private and public gardens.

With Cumberland Spring as our 25th anniversary theme, you will have the opportunity to meet speakers with diverse programs about azaleas, wildflowers, and native plants. In the plant sale room, you will also find azaleas, both evergreen and deciduous, as well as wildflowers, ferns, and a few native shrubs. For detailed information on hotel accommodations, schedule, registration form, and speakers' biographies, please turn to the convention insert following p. 84.

GARDEN TOURS

Both private and public gardens are scheduled for our main convention tours. Some have been around for many years, while others are more recent creations of their owners; each has a certain ambiance. Since some of the roads we will travel are rather narrow, our tour busses will be smaller than the typical tour bus, holding 36 passengers. Our travel time to each stop will be less than 45 minutes; most are only 30 minutes or less. Your convention committee wished to give you a good experience without sitting on a bus all day.

We ask that all visitors to the gardens refrain from taking cuttings without asking the owners, although I am sure most would be happy to provide samples if asked. Restrooms will not be available at all the stops; therefore, take advantage of those situations where such facilities are available. Some light refreshments will be available at some stops.



Azaleas in the morning mist at Frances Jones Garden.
(Photo by Joe Schild)

Friday May 2

The Frances Jones Garden captures a commanding view of the Tennessee River Valley from the South Palisades of Signal Mountain. On clear days, you will have a beautiful view of the river, Williams Island, Lookout Mountain, Chattanooga, and—in the distance—the mountains of the Cherokee National Forest. This well-thought-out and immaculate garden presents a collection of numerous species, hybrids, and unusual cultivars of our native plants, wildflowers, ferns, and many exotics. Most of the plants are properly labeled for easy reference.

As added interest, Frances has placed a number of fine works of art in the form of sculptures and a few whimsical forms throughout the garden to tickle the funny bone. Be sure to note 'Skeeter' for a good chuckle.

For a number of years, Frances has purchased adjoining property to expand and protect her gar-

dens; for indeed, there is more than one as you will find while strolling along the winding pathways among the large rhododendrons and azaleas. A pergola to hold her vines provides a cool spot on a hot day. Perhaps you may want to sit down at the gazebo to relax in the cool mountain air.

Frances is a founding member of the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS, serves as its treasurer, and is a member of the ASA.

The Jimmy and Ilona Wooten Garden is located in the township of Walden and covers several acres of woodland and large expanses of open area. The Wootens' wonderful log home is delightfully landscaped and intimately connected to the woodland where many rhododendrons, azaleas, wildflowers, and exotic plants thrive. Perennial beds and a great herb garden punctuate the open grassy area that is bordered by large rhododendrons and a tree line.



Jimmy and Ilona Wooten's garden has a border of azaleas and rhododendrons and a formal herb garden with perennials. (Photo by Joe Schild)

A newly opened area has new plantings of rhododendrons and azaleas, which will further enhance the woodland setting. Jimmy is an avid collector of plants, and he and wife Ilona have a passion for the color purple. Their garden is well planned, with careful attention to design and the color palette. As a Master Gardener, Jimmy used many ideas about contour, shade, and moisture needs to design the gardens. Both Jimmy and Ilona are members of the ASA and the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS, and he currently serves as chapter president.

The **Robert J. Enck Garden** is located across the road from the Wootens'. Bob has lived here since 1954, after moving from up-state New York. For many years he and a partner owned and operated Crestwood Orchids, a thriving orchid propagating business with a number of greenhouses still there. The grounds cover



Robert Enck house and garden.
(Photo by Joe Schild)

several acres of woodland and planned open areas that are truly appealing to the gardener.

Many hybrid rhododendrons of immense size provide drama, as their great floral display is interspersed with a number of Bob's own hybrids with dinner-plate-sized bloom trusses. He too has collected numbers of azaleas, rhododendrons, and fine exotic plants. Sizable Japanese maples, viburnums, and magnolias provide accents along with a few unusual conifers. If asked, Bob will tell you of his connection and personal

experience with the Dexter rhododendrons or lead you into his wildflower cove.

Bob is a founding member of the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS, a hybridizer, and an avid gardener.

Reflection Riding Arboretum and Botanical Garden is an award-winning 300-acre arboretum within a 10-minute drive from downtown Chattanooga, thus classifying it as an urban forest. This private, not-for-profit organization's goals are to provide a learning experience for the public and to protect native landscapes and wildlife. The arboretum is bordered on three sides by the Chattanooga Chickamauga National Battlefield Park, and on the west by Lookout Creek. It has a historical background, with both Civil War and Native American heritage.

We will park at the Humphreys House, a beautiful log home and the location for our lunch. In groups, we will tour the arboretum on the 3.5 miles of roads and make a number of stops for special gardens. The **Philp Memorial Garden** is the site for a young exhibit of our native azaleas and rhododendrons with all of the eastern species represented. Foot trails lead throughout the garden, and there is a garden bench for a short rest. For those inclined, there are 14 miles of trails to explore.

A short walk from the Humphreys House will lead you to the **Wildflower Cove** where thousands of wildflowers thrive and make a wonderful display. Along the high cove sides grow large *Rhododendron maximum*. An authentic

Cherokee cabin sits next to the cove for your inspection. A second short walk will lead to the **Holsomback Garden**, a location of many hybrid rhododendrons and azaleas that Olin Holsomback donated to the arboretum in the early 1990s. There, you will also note some fine examples of cold hardy camellias donated by the Chattanooga Camellia Society.

The planned **Glenn Dale Azalea Resource Collection** will adjoin the Holsomback Garden and will contain around 350 named cultivars when completed. The project has started with initial clearing out of the invasive vines and thinning of small trees. Actual planting of azaleas will begin in the fall of 2003. This is a venture that will add much interest in the arboretum and have direct connections with the US National Arboretum.

Saturday May 3

Saturday's planned tours will be three private gardens in the valley area of Hixson and a public garden on Lookout Mountain. As on Friday, we will break up into groups so as to not overwhelm individual gardens, but will all meet at the Lookout Mountain Commons for lunch and the nature walk.

The **Vernon Carpenter Garden** is located on the eastern slope of Big Ridge about 400 feet above Lake Chickamauga. This garden is a true testament to hard work, for Vernon had difficult, cherty soil to work with. Hundreds of rhododendrons, azaleas, and wildflowers fill the landscaped grounds with wonderful color each



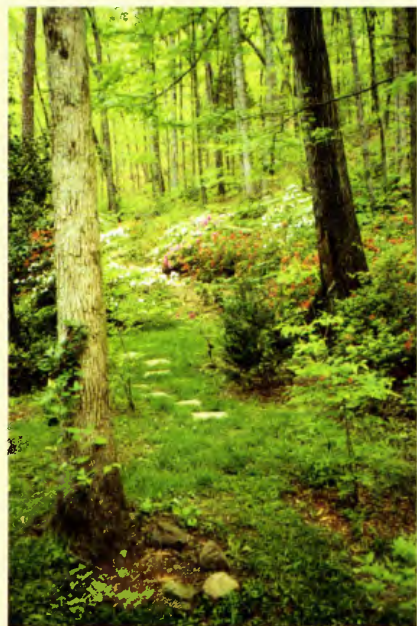
Rhododendrons and gazebo in the Vernon Carpenter Garden.
(Photo by Joe Schild)

spring. If anyone should ever say they could not grow rhodos in the valley, they need to go to this garden to see how it is done well.

His secret comes from the compost yards of the City of Chattanooga, for he hauled many, many loads to his garden and planted the shrubs in the great mixture. Large oaks and hickories provide shade in a woodland setting with a cool gazebo nestled among the trees. A serpentine stone wall provides separation from the grassy lawn.

Vernon is a member of the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS and served as one of its directors.

The **Dr. Rudolph and Alice Hoppe Garden** is located at the base of Walden's Ridge in Falling Water. Covering over 100 acres from the bottom to the top, the magnificent



Woodland trail through the azaleas at the Dr. Hoppe Garden.
(Photo by Joe Schild)

natural woodland landscape truly enhances the beauty of their log home. Many fine examples of our native azaleas and mountain laurel grow wild along the free flowing creek that runs through the property.

The remnants of Robert's Mill, a grist-mill built in the 1840s, still remain. Dr. Hoppe has assembled a very nice collection of hybrid and species rhododendrons, hybrid and species azaleas, and many choice native shrubs, wildflowers, and a few exotics. If one strolls the upward path, the

source of his irrigation system will be found at a free flowing spring. Of course, along the paths we will see many great wildflowers. Stroll across the footbridge to the far side of the creek for additional rhodos. Just sitting on a bench beside the creek refreshes the body and spirit.

Dr. Rudolph and Alice Hoppe are members of the ASA, founding members of the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS, and he has served as president and vice president of the chapter.

The **Joe and LaShon Schild Garden** is located in Middle Valley, a bedroom community of Hixson. We have resided here since 1966, and it is also the location for my niche nursery that started as a hobby. This is perhaps the smallest garden we will see on the tours, but packed within it are exquisite examples of our native azaleas, Asian species, evergreen azaleas, rhododendrons, kalmias, and some of my hybrid azaleas. By my count, there are around 1500 shrubs in this "test garden," as I prefer to call it. Most are labeled for easy reference.



A Schild hybrid azalea (Ilam 'Primrose' x *R. austrium*) crossed in 1992. This was among 255 seedlings, but it ended up in Jimmy Wooten's collection when given away at a chapter meeting.
(Photo by Joe Schild)

The entire property covers less than an acre, with the rear 100 feet reserved for the nursery. One will note the absence of large areas of turf, because in this garden, I consider grass to be a companion plant. Many fine wildflowers and ferns are found in the nooks and corners of the landscape, though I often say I am out of room. A few years ago, I planted several hundreds of azaleas and rhododendrons on our mountain property, but lost them all to plant poachers, thus ending an experiment with expanding to a new location.

The **Lookout Mountain Commons** is located on the top of the mountain and is a public facility of the City of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. The ball fields and tennis courts draw people to this park, but many enjoy the one-mile nature trail, called Bobbie's Walk. We will eat our lunch here at the pavilion and avail ourselves of the wonderful trails to see good examples of native azaleas, rhododendrons, wildflowers, and other plants. Trail maps will be furnished that note plant identification.

The garden landscape of the trail is the concept of **Peter Branton**, Master Gardener and curator of this trail system and garden. He has been a volunteer at the Tennessee Aquarium and is a founding member of the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS.

Reference

Schild, Joe. March 2000. "Azaleas of Reflection Riding Arboretum and Botanical Garden." *The Azalean*. 22(1): 13-14, 20.

Joe Schild has been an avid grower, propagator, and breeder of azaleas for nearly 33 years. He has owned and operated a niche nursery specializing in the species for over 12 years. Joe is the current president of the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS, the current president of the ASA, and a member of the Tennessee Nursery and Landscape Association. He says he is better known as an azalea nut and chases the natives' bloom each year with many fellow enthusiasts.