

# Azaleas in the Landscape — 2005 Convention Overview

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## Introduction

On behalf of the Lake Michigan Chapter of the ASA we welcome one and all to our 2005 National Convention, which will be held in Holland, Michigan, May 19th through May 22nd. The city of Holland, well known for their annual tulip festival, will be visited not only by the ASA Convention, but also by the hundreds of thousands of guests who attend "Tulip Time" each year.

Our theme for this year's convention is "Azaleas in the Landscape." Tours are scheduled for seven private gardens, three nurseries/private gardens, and two public gardens. Most of the gardens are at least 20 years old, with one being over 60 years old. If a mature garden is what you are after, don't miss this convention. Speakers come from Minnesota, Illinois, and Tennessee.

Information on the convention details is updated regularly on the Lake Michigan Chapter's Web site, which includes many more colored photographs of plants and gardens than can be included here. One very special feature this year is that the plant list for the plant sale is on the Web site, too. Visit: [www.azaleas.lake-michigan.org](http://www.azaleas.lake-michigan.org).

## Logistics

Please see the insert enclosed after page 84 for details on the convention schedule, travel directions to Holland, the convention hotel, and information on the speakers. Note that the registration form for the convention is on the inside front cover of the wrapper of this issue of *The Azalean* and on the last page of the insert. Send one copy in with your registration fee to the address shown

on the form before April 19, 2005, for a discounted registration fee.

## Tours

### Friday Garden Tours - May 20, 2005

#### Stop 1: Windmill Island

The tours begin with our first stop at Windmill Island. Visitors come by the thousands during Holland, Michigan's Tulip Time Festival in May. The colorful tulips, working Dutch windmills, klompen dancers, and spectacular multi-media show along with community parades and special events bring tour groups from all over the world. This island of over 20 acres will be most enjoyable.

#### Stop 2: Alexander and Hutchinson Gardens

Next, it is on to Fennville, Michigan, to the Alexander and Hutchinson gardens. These two gar-



dens are located across the street from each other. The Hutchinson property consists of over 30 acres; the garden is 4 acres and includes a stunning pond and gazebo. The Alexander property consists of many azaleas and rhododendrons, along with dogwoods and Japanese

maples, sitting amongst eastern white pines that were planted over 20 years ago.



View of Hutchinson Garden.

(Photo by Tony Greco)

#### Stop 3: The Hartsuiker Garden

A short ride to the east side of town takes us to the garden of Pete and Trevah Hartsuiker. They describe their garden as follows: "The inspiration for our landscaping came from the Flower Show in Chicago 30 years ago. We attended the show with friend, pharmacist, and landscape designer Ross Alexander and his wife Edna in 1975. By the following spring, Ross had prepared a design plan for us. Construction began immediately, with a June deadline for an outdoor graduation party. We, along with Ross and two of his sons, personally did all the excavating, planting, and grooming.

"In addition to several mature oaks, the garden includes numerous azaleas, rhododendrons, ornamental trees, shrubs, and perennials. A special feature of the lawn is a beautiful pond with a fountain edged with railroad ties. There are various cedar fences, brick patios, and other seating areas that provide several places to relax and enjoy the beauty of the

plantings and extensive wildlife in this country setting. It has been a popular spot for several social functions and family portraits.”

#### **Stop 4: The Hop Garden and Wavecrest Nursery**

Our lunch stop will be at the home of Bruce and Carol Hop, which is located on the shore of Lake Michigan. We will enjoy a pig roast with all the trimmings. (A substitute box lunch can also be ordered through the hotel for those who don't like pork.) The Hop garden consists of many magnolias, dogwoods, and redbuds, along with 40-year old azaleas and rhododendrons.



View of Lake Michigan from Wavecrest Nursery.  
(Photo by Carol Hop)

Also part of this stop will be a visit to Wavecrest Nursery, ([www.wavecrestnursery.com](http://www.wavecrestnursery.com)) which is owned by Carol and Bruce. They say of the nursery, “When you visit Wavecrest, the experience will be unlike a visit to any other nursery. We are situated along the shore of Lake Michigan, and our garden center is nestled into a beautiful woodland setting just across the street from Lake Michigan.

“We specialize in rare and unusual plants, presently growing over 1,400 different varieties of hardy trees and shrubs and many of our own hybrid selections. Unlike most nurseries and garden centers, we propagate and grow nearly everything that we sell and try to focus on rare and unusual varieties that will add individuality and uniqueness to your garden. Our displays are arranged much

like a fine garden and will suggest many combinations of plants for your consideration.

“Our garden center also has an extensive collection of hand-carved granite bird baths, with lanterns and benches, fine gardening tools, brass and bronze sundials and water features, cast stone, concrete and aluminum fountains and statuary, as well as Japanese lanterns, bonsai tools and equipment, and bird watching and feeding supplies.”

#### **Stop 5: The Button Art Gallery**

Our next stop will be to the Button Art Gallery, home of Arthur Frederick. The authentic English garden in Douglas, Michigan, has an aura that is reminiscent of the classic children's novel, *The Secret Garden*. It was designed and planted 38 years ago by Saugatuck horticulturist and landscape architect Charles Mann. Commissioned by the Gallery's founder, Russell Button, to create the natural masterpiece, Mann employed accents of rhododendrons, azaleas, flowering trees, and a multitude of plantings.

Mann said Button chose to have an English garden created because it reminded him of his English heritage. Frederick said the climate in Saugatuck resembles that of England, since the lake effect results in less severe winter temperatures and cooler spring weather than is typical of other parts of Michigan.

Japanese holly, heather, mountain laurel, day and garden lilies, maiden hair ferns, birch, dogwood, and numerous flowering trees fill the garden along with an assortment of other flowers and ground cover plants. This English garden also has an Oriental influence in such accents as Japanese oaks, pines, maples, and cherries.

#### **Stop 6: Rosebay Nursery**

Our final stop will be Rosebay Nursery, which was established in

1977 by Linda Charvat and Frank Pluta. After working at various Saugatuck nurseries, they saw a need for field-grown wholesale rhododendrons and azaleas that would be acclimated to the Michigan climate. The location was chosen for its sandy soil and mature pine trees. Areas were cleared to grow the plants between the pines, but soon plants were put in more open areas with good results. The nursery is on 14 acres and has 24 poly-houses, 27 Nearing frames, and test gardens around the house.

Due to Rosebay's varied growing environments, new plants can be tested in a number of conditions to determine their optimum growing requirements. This research is shared with customers to help them in designing and recommending different varieties. Over 60 varieties of rhododendrons, 15 deciduous azalea hybrids, and three *Pieris* are grown at the nursery.

#### **Saturday Garden Tours-May 21, 2005**

Note: Saturday's tours will not have as many stops as Friday's.

#### **Stop 1: Veldheer's Tulip Farm**

Our first stop is at the Veldheer's Tulip Farm. Enjoy the area's most beautiful flower displays amid windmills, drawbridges, and canals at Holland's only tulip farm and perennial gardens.

Veldheer's Tulip Gardens was established in 1945 by Verne Veldheer. It started as a hobby with 400 bulbs planted in single rows. Today they plant over 4 million bulbs each year with 400 kinds of tulips, 120 kinds of daffodils, and 200 kinds of accent bulbs, along with 400 kinds of perennials. These top quality products are distributed to all 50 states.

#### **Stop 2: The Willis Garden**

In 1977, Eric Willis and his wife Deona became owners of a home built in the mid-1940s, and since

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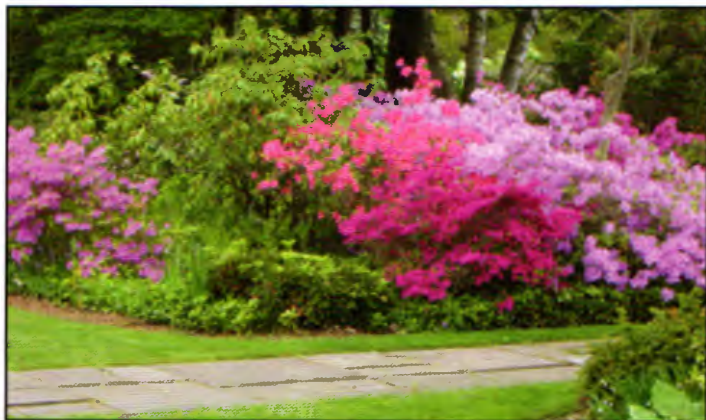


then it has been the homestead for three other families. One of the original owners still lives next door. She, her sister, and mother, with the help of a local landscaper, developed the original landscape. It included boxwoods, yews, junipers, *Viburnum*, dogwoods, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, *Trillium*, snowdrops, hemlocks, spruce, pine, larch, red-buds, ferns, honeysuckle, rhododendrons, and azaleas.

There were additions to the landscape from time to time over the years, including a water feature, but the landscape had gradually deteriorated. So, in 1997, when the property fell into the hands of owners with a vision and a gardening obsession, changes really began to occur. Since then, the garden area has tripled to include almost all of the 5-acre property. Additions include several wandering *allées* with beautiful views. Azaleas, hollies, rhododendrons, magnolias, witch hazels, Japanese maples, *Pieris*, *Euonymus*, *Cornus*, bamboo, *Stewartia*, pines, ornamental grasses, and ground covers including ivy, *Pachysandra*, myrtle, and *Ajuga* have all been added. We welcome you to the west coast of Michigan and are sure you will enjoy our landscape and the many others that our microclimate has made possible for garden enthusiasts in this part of the world.

### Stop 3: The Flower Basket

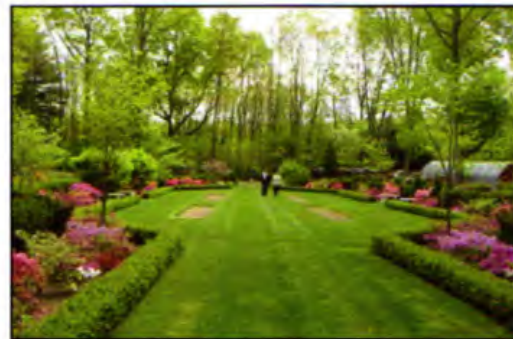
Created by Charles and Lorna Mann, this was their home for over 60 years. The Manns were some of the first gardeners in Saugatuck, Michigan, to successfully grow rhododendrons, azaleas, and hollies, and they are noted for having one of the most beautiful gardens in the Midwest. Their garden was also used as a showcase for prospective customers of The Flower Basket, Mr. Mann's nursery and landscape business. Charles Mann's style was a very formal English one. Many flowering trees, shrubs, perennials, azaleas, rhododendrons, and ground covers were used throughout the property. The property sits on over 6 acres with the formal garden being over 1 acre, located high on a bluff overlooking the Kalamazoo River. There are garden rooms and outdoor living areas and spectacular vistas created through the use of different elevations and by the incorporation of terraces, sunken gardens, and stone walls.



Mann Garden – Azalea Path. (Photo by Tony Greco)

### Stop 4: The Woodlands

This will be our lunch stop where we will have a BBQ with hotdogs and hamburgers. (Once again, a substituted box lunch can be ordered through the hotel.) This is the home of John Migas, and it is also used as a nursery. The property sits on over 15 acres, with his garden occupying 6 acres. Here he has been growing and testing azaleas and rhododendrons throughout the property since 1985. He began his hybridizing experiments after his visit to the 1997 ASA national convention in Atlanta, Georgia.



Formal Setting at Woodlands.  
(Photo by Tony Greco)

Once you have visited it, you'll never forget it. The tall red pines planted in rows over 60 years ago create a natural, cathedral-like effect, sheltering many beautiful azaleas, rhododendrons, dogwoods, crab apples, *Viburnum*, and lilacs from the Lake Michigan winds, which often sing softly in the treetops. The fragrance of these plants is also memorable, as you walk along the winding flowerbeds, following the natural undulation of the landscape, until you come upon the more formal English garden. This is edged with boxwood and yews and an ever-changing set of annuals such as *Impatiens*, petunias, begonias, marigolds, and gladiolas.

### Stop 5: The Alexander Garden

This will be our final stop of the day, the home of the David Alexander and his family. David is the son of Ross and Edna Alexander, whose garden is on the Friday tour.

This beautiful new home on about 2 acres in Saugatuck has a lovely young garden and is an excellent example of the results that can be obtained in only a few short years. Many azaleas, rhododendrons, and companion plants have been arranged in gracefully curving raised beds with soils of varying composition. The garden also sports brick walkways and patios overlooking a peaceful pond. David loves to discuss his experiments with plants, fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides with his fellow gardening enthusiasts.

*John Migas is president of the Lake Michigan Chapter; he has been a member of the Society since 1996, but has been growing azaleas for 10 years and hybridizing them for three. Sandra Wearne is Web Master for the Lake Michigan Chapter.*