

# Colorful Evaluation—With a Little Help From Our Friends

Barbara Stump—Nacogdoches, Texas

In a few short weeks, the national Azalea Society of America convention for 2007 is coming to East Texas. This is a great opportunity for us at the SFA Mast Arboretum Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden to show the Society the fruits of the labor of a number of their member-nurserymen.

As I mentioned in the convention article in the Fall 2006 issue of *The Azalean*, we have been fortunate to get to know masters in the breeding, growing, and selling of azaleas. Not only have they shared their knowledge, but many have also donated plants to add to our eight-acre garden.

Twenty-five percent of the garden plantings came from ASA members. We have a special section of the garden called the Cultivar Evaluation Area in which we display and evaluate the performance of 216 cultivars. Some are numbered clones that breeders never got around to naming, some are from China, some are from climatic zones that we would not have expected to succeed in our Zone 8b weather, where our winter lows are rarely below 20°F. The following three examples show some of the more unusual cultivars bred in climates extremely different from ours.



▲ 'Raspberry Parfait'

'Raspberry Parfait' was developed by ASA member Bob Carlson in New York in Zone 6a (winter lows to -10°F). It is very healthy here, and is covered in blooms that have many color variations, causing visitors to rave about the plants. This lovely selection from *R. mucronatum* came to us from Plant Development Services in Loxley, Alabama; I spotted it while on tour during the Mobile ASA convention of 1999.

The bloom of 'Yodogawa' azalea (a selection of *R. yedoense*) looks more like a chrysanthemum, but the shrub

is definitely a woody ever-green azalea. These gems also cause quite a "stir" during tours of the garden. The plants came from Ms. Margie Jenkins of Amite, Louisiana (Zone 8b, winter lows 20°F).

The garden has a number of Girard hybrids, including 'Girard Dwarf Lavender', 'Girard's Hot Shot', and 'Don's Variegated', with its white-variegated dark green foliage. Although developed in Geneva, Ohio (Zone 5, winter lows to -15°F), they have done very well for us.

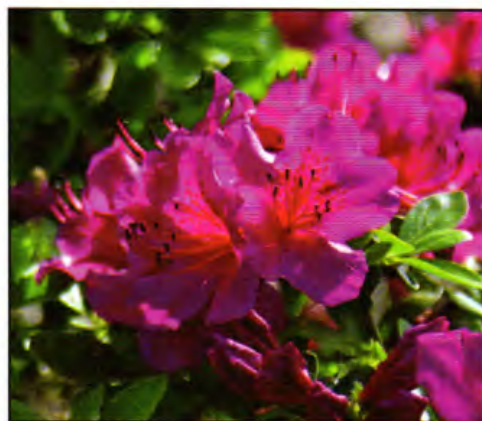
'Girard Dwarf Lavender' has even taken advantage of our long growing season with mild-to-warm fall weather and has bloomed lightly in the fall.

These are only three of the more than 520 colorful azalea cultivars you can see when you come to the convention. We invite you to send in your registration forms soon. Remember, the early-bird discount registration deadline is February 22, 2007. For more information, visit [www.nacogdochesazaleas.com](http://www.nacogdochesazaleas.com) or call Melissa Sanford, the registrar, at 1-888-OLDEST-TOWN (1-888-653-3788).



▲ 'Yodogawa'

▼ 'Girard Dwarf Lavender'



*Barbara Stump was editor of The Azalean from 1999 through the Fall 2006 issue. She is co-chairing the 2007 ASA convention and her day job is Research Associate for Development, SFA Mast Arboretum gardens.*