

# Letters to the Editor

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Editor of *The Azalean*. I am a member of the Oconee Chapter near Atlanta, and I collect and grow many hundreds of azaleas here in White Plains.

I am acquainted with James Harris, and he has sold me many azaleas in the past from his home in Lawrenceville. I realize that many cultivars of azaleas, especially with Satsuki blood, give varied bloom presentations from year-to-year. My question regards the azalea picture on the cover of *The Azalean*, Volume 28, Number 3, Fall 2006.

I grow 'Ann Lee McPhail', and it is a pale rose, sort of salmon tipped. It is difficult to describe actually; but the magazine cover picture is almost identical to 'Fascination'. I attached an image from Long Mountain, a couple images from the gallery at the ASA and one from Camp Hill. Assuredly, they do differ somewhat maybe from camera techniques, lighting, culture etc., but they don't resemble the cover. Please advise.

I take my avocation of growing azaleas very seriously and proper identification is key as much as possible. Thank you for your time and interest to my inquiry.

**Richard E. Clifton**

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## Editor's Note:

According to Barbara Stump, former editor of *The Azalean*, the plant appearing on the cover of the Fall 2006 issue had a 'Ann Lee McPhail' nursery tag. The flower description in *IRRC* is light purplish pink (RHS 55C). And while weather, season and even soil can contribute to color variations, we would love to hear more about this topic from our readers. Please e-mail your responses to: [pamfitch@myway.com](mailto:pamfitch@myway.com) or mail to Pam Fitch, 10006 Homestead Ave., Lubbock, TX 79424.

## *R. Semibarbatum*

Continued from page 4.

In contrast to our experience of finding the species easy to grow, the Arnold Arboretum has never been able to permanently establish *R. semibarbatum* in their collection and University of Maine at Orono field studies indicate that the species is killed to the ground at -20°F. As far as we know, no other New England based member of the ARS Massachusetts Chapter living in Zone 6 or colder grows this species; however, since 1998 *R. semibarbatum* has grown at the Polly Hill Arboretum on Martha's Vineyard.

This species has no well-known cultivars and has not been used in hybridization. Although not difficult to propagate by cuttings, *R. semibarbatum* is usually grown from seed and is sometimes available from the Rhododendron Species Foundation. Although more of a curiosity than a horticultural gem, *R. semibarbatum* is hardy enough and easy enough to be tried by the adventurous grower who wants to add a deciduous late bloomer to their "evergreen azalea" collection even before the taxonomists



Shown are various pictures of 'Ann Lee McPhail'.

▲ Above are two photos from the ASA gallery.

▼ Below (left) is a photo from Long Mountain Nursery, and (right) a photo from the Auburn University's Piedmont Substation located at Camp Hill, Alabama.



end their debate over where this species actually belongs in the genus.

Considering that DNA research also indicates the *Pentanthera* section and *R. canadense* may move to subgenus *Hymenanthus* which includes *R. maximum* and *R. catawbiense*, "azalea" growers may well need a few new azaleas to add to their garden. So why not give *R. semibarbatum* a try before your mother's favorite deciduous azalea is reclassified as merely just another large leafed rhododendron?

John and Sally Perkins live on Canobie Lake in Salem, New Hampshire, enthusiastically growing 1,500 rhododendrons and azaleas on their tiny property. They are members of the Vaseyi Chapter of the ASA and the Massachusetts Chapter of the ARS running the chapter Web site [www.rosebay.org](http://www.rosebay.org). They may be contacted by e-mail at: [sjperk@comcast.net](mailto:sjperk@comcast.net).