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The Azalean

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



President's Letter

John Brown — Cleveland, South Carolina



The wrapper of this issue of *The Azalean* contains an important document—the ballot for officer elections and the Best Article award. It presents an opportunity to trot out my soapbox and tell you about the advantages of participating in the activities of **your** Society.

First, I ask you to participate by filling out and returning the ballot. Granted, most recipients of the Best Article award return the money to the Society, but it is an honor to receive the award and far too few members participate in voting.

Second, consider participating more fully in the activities of the Society. I promise you will receive more than you give. Don't limit your thinking to the "baking cookies mentality"; there are many, many ways to participate. Serving in a Chapter office, joining a committee, writing an article for *The Azalean*, posting pictures of your favorite azalea on our web site, hosting a convention, bringing a plant to a meeting as a door prize, and recruiting a neighbor as a member are just a few of the ways you can improve the Society. There are no small jobs, and all contributions are helpful and appreciated. It takes a good many bricks to build a wall, and every brick is important in holding up that wall.

Finally, I challenge you to suggest ideas to improve the way we operate and to make our society more available to a larger audience. ASA membership has increased in the past year, but it has not reached its full potential. Our Society will continue to grow and prosper if we put forth the effort to make it happen. Join us, give a little, and get a lot.

Some of you are not surprised to find another copy of the ASA membership roster included with this issue. A computer error omitted one half of the names that should have been listed in the roster mailed with the Fall issue. Rather than live with the mistake, the Board opted to reprint and redistribute the roster. If you were one of the members who were not included in the original publication, please do not feel slighted. The computer also eliminated half of the names of members who contributed to the Society at elevated levels. Certainly, those members are to be recognized for their contributions as well.

The printed roster represents a considerable recurring cost to the Society, and as such, the validity of continuing to print and distribute it is being debated. Comments on the usefulness of a printed roster, along with the several thousand dollars per year it costs, make it a worthwhile topic. The Board of Directors is discussing the issue and welcomes comments from the membership. Please contact your Chapter President or other Board member to express your opinion.

Vaseyi Chapter members are diligently preparing for the 2008 ASA Convention in Asheville, North Carolina. La Niña is not on board with our planning, but we are working with the tools available to make it a great convention.

Thinking back to the last several conventions, the Vaseyi Chapter has quite a task to match the previous meetings in Nacogdoches, Rockville, Holland, Bowie, Chattanooga, etc. Each of the gatherings made an excellent and unique contribution to the Society and will be remembered fondly.

The western North Carolina locals are planning memorable events for your enlightenment. As a Society member suggested to me years ago, "You should come to an ASA Convention to meet the movers and shakers of the Society." He left out the part about sharing gardens, information, plants, and camaraderie. Or maybe that was understood. It is certainly evident to those who are privileged to attend.

In closing, I want to encourage you sign up early if you plan to join one of the tours to Pilot Mountain or the Southern Highlands Reserve. Tour size is limited and is on a first-come, first-served basis. Early registration also eases the planning burden on the hosts and registrars of the convention.

The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation, and appreciation of azaleas Subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

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The Southern Highlands Reserve in North Carolina is a 130-acre reserve with elevations up to 4,700 feet. The reserve is dedicated to the cultivation, preservation, and display of plants native to the Southern Appalachian Highlands.



Photo John Turner

Honor the Greats in Two Thousand Eight

ASA National Convention May 1-4, 2008, Asheville, NC

Henry Skinner, Augie Kehr, and Chauncey Beadle chose to live and work in the Asheville/Hendersonville, North Carolina, area because of its many natural attributes. We invite you to visit and enjoy those same attributes as we host the Azalea Society of America National Convention on May 1-4, 2008.

We have chosen to highlight these three great plantsmen by visiting their gardens and having speakers discuss their achievements. The convention site is nestled on the edge of downtown Asheville near the intersection of I-26 and I-40, which is within easy reach of all of the tours.

The headquarter hotel is the **Holiday Inn**, which is a few minutes from the center of downtown Asheville, making shopping and dining quick and enjoyable. The hotel offers complimentary guest parking and reasonable rates, and it is a short distance from the Asheville (AVL) airport.

Tours are organized with short bus trips in mind. We are spending Friday in the Asheville area and Saturday in the Hendersonville area.

The alternate **Vaseyi Tour** and the post-convention **Southern Highlands Reserve Tour** are significant in several respects. Both tours are limited in size due to the impact of walking through the natural areas. Additional travel time is also required.

Friday Tours—Asheville

Biltmore Estate Gardens (written by Aaron Cook)

The year was 1969, and I was 9 years old. It was my first visit to the Biltmore Estate, and it began a fascination that continues to this day. After touring the rooms that were open on the first floor, I quickly sped out into the garden. When my mother and the staff members from the estate found me, I was lying on the bank above the Bass Pond oblivious to the fact that I was supposedly lost on the grounds.

My next memory of Biltmore is of my grandmother and me filling bags with recently dug tulip bulbs from huge piles in the Walled Garden. The staff members digging the bulbs politely turned their heads and whispered: "We're just going to throw them away. We don't see anything." The bank outside my grandmother's backdoor was really impressive that spring.

In the years since, I have used every opportunity to return to the estate and wander through the grounds. I have volunteered to chaperone countless school trips, and for several years I held a season pass. Since becoming an instructor in the Landscape Gardening program at Caldwell Community College, I have encouraged our most promising students to become summer interns in the horticulture department at Biltmore.

In my 40 year relationship with Biltmore, I have discovered its long and distinguished horticulture heritage.

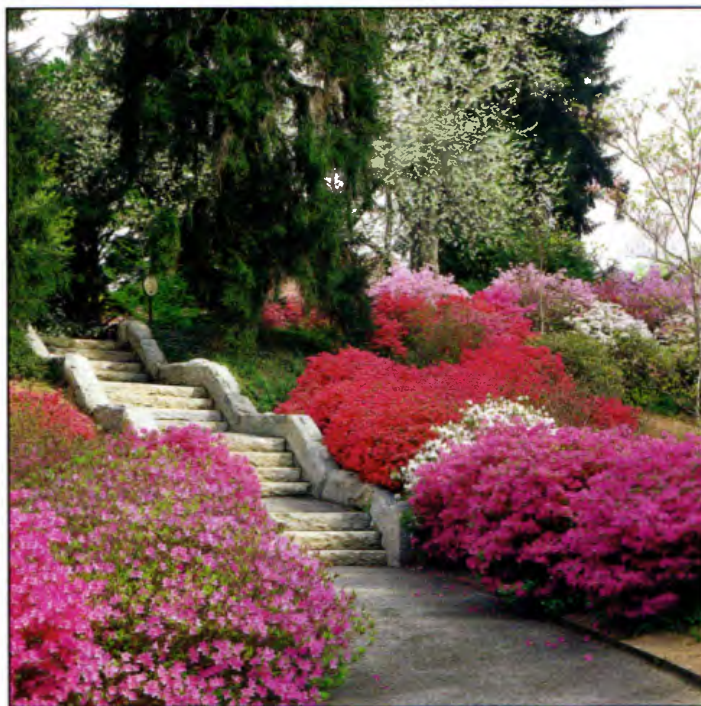


Photo Biltmore Estate

▲ The Azalea Garden at Biltmore Estate contains one of the country's largest collections of native azaleas. Covering 15 acres, it is the largest of Biltmore'sTM gardens.

It is a heritage that began before the construction of the impressive chateau. It started with elaborate plans developed by Fredrick Law Olmsted and brought to fruition by Chauncey Beadle, Charles McNamee, Robert Bottomley, James Gall, the Boynton brothers, and many others.

In its heyday the Biltmore nursery, developed to provide millions of plants needed for the estate, became one of the largest commercial nurseries in existence. It covered almost 300 acres and had 75,000 square feet of greenhouse and coldframe space. At one time the Biltmore nursery catalog was so extensive and the plant descriptions so complete that it was used as a textbook for Plant Material classes in some universities.

One can only imagine what the planned arboretum would have been like if Olmsted's ambitious plan had been implemented. The idea for an arboretum was eventually abandoned, and many of the unusual specimens collected for it found a home in the Glen. Years later Beadle's collection of native azaleas was also added to the Glen, and the name was changed to the Azalea Garden.

Our tour will begin with a bus ride along the Approach Road. We will try to imagine the area as it looked immediately after James Galls' crew finished grading the road and redirecting Ram Branch. At that time, it was a blank slate waiting to be planted in Olmsted's naturalistic

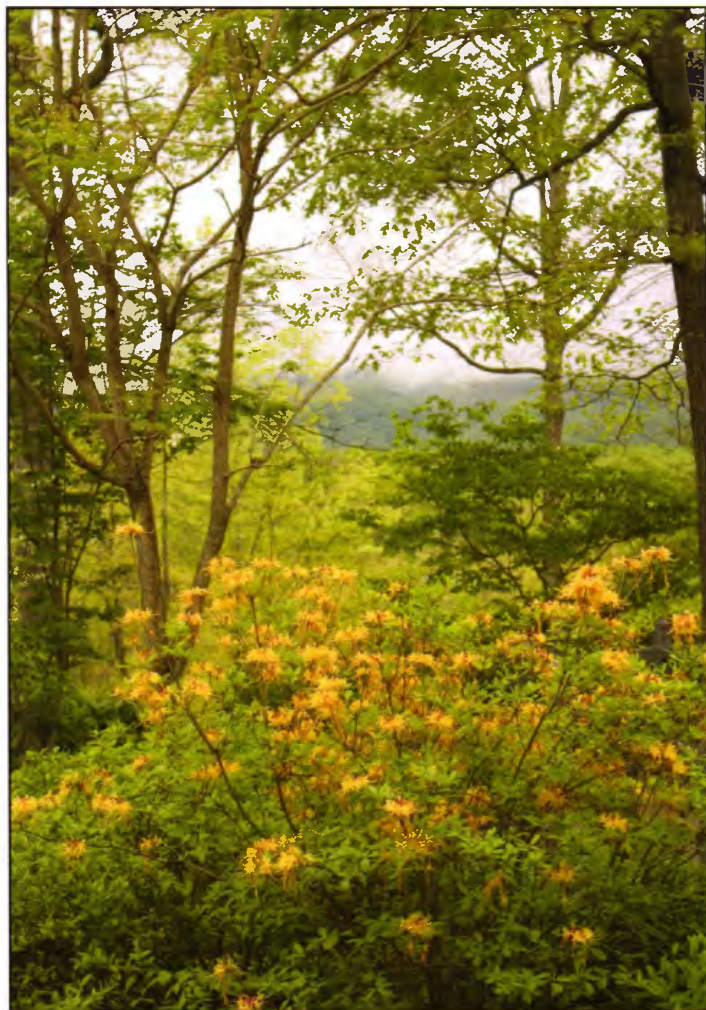


Photo: Michael Oppenheim/The North Carolina Arboretum

▲ The National Native Azalea Repository at the North Carolina Arboretum features more than 100 accessions of 13 different native azalea species, cultivars, and hybrids.

style incorporating both native and subtropical plants to achieve his desired effect.

As we traverse the Approach Road, unique features of the landscape design and plantings will be pointed out by Biltmore staff. Everyone will then be dropped off at the entrance to the Shrub Garden to ramble. From here, we will take a self-guided tour through the Shrub Garden, Spring Garden, Walled Garden, and Conservatory before ultimately arriving at the Azalea Garden. The rest of our time will be spent in the Azalea Garden admiring the extensive collection of azaleas and other unique plants. The lower part of the garden contains magnificent examples of dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), China fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*), *katsura* (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*), and bigleaf magnolia (*Magnolia macrophylla*).

Planted under the trees is an equally interesting shrub layer. Look for the rare *Disanthus cercidifolius* peeking out from under the hydrangeas and tree-like *Cephalotaxus*. Other plants of interest include the large stinking cedars (*Torreya taxifolia*), a large Persian ironwood (*Parrotia persica*), and cut leaf European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Asplenifolia').

The estate tour will be completed with a leisurely bus ride along the French Broad River. Bus captains will provide a brief history of the estate's agriculture and horticulture legacy.

For those who would like to spend more time on the estate to visit the Chateau and Winery, discount tickets will be available for purchase at the plant sale.

It is worth noting that Dr. Michael Dirr made an annual pilgrimage with students to the estate while teaching at the University of Georgia at Athens. Of the more than 325 genera listed in his *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, I have been able to find almost 200 represented at the estate.

Charles Dexter Owen Garden

This fabulous garden belonging to Charles and Cary Owen is located in Biltmore Forest adjacent to the Biltmore Estate. A confusion of names might occur until you realize that Charles Dexter Owen is a cousin of Charles Owen Dexter, the hybridizer of the famous Dexter hybrid rhododendrons at Heritage Plantation on Cape Cod.

The house, constructed in 1936, sits in the middle of the largest collection of Dexter hybrid rhododendrons in the South, exceeded only by the original Dexter garden, which provided the plants "by fully loaded boxcars."

North Carolina Arboretum

The North Carolina Arboretum, established in 1986 by the North Carolina General Assembly, is an affiliate campus of the University of North Carolina. The Arboretum's mission, "to cultivate connections between people and plants," is accomplished through education, economic development, research, conservation, and garden demonstration.

Located within the Bent Creek Experimental Forest of the Pisgah National Forest, the 434-acre Arboretum property encompasses 65 acres of cultivated gardens and ten miles of forested hiking and biking trails.

Gardens are thematically designed to reflect the cultural and natural heritage of the Southern Appalachians, demonstrating the formal and informal, the man-made and the natural aspects prevalent on this property, and providing classroom space to help people understand the role of plants in their lives. Emphasis is given to the ecological, horticultural and educational value of plants native to the Southern Appalachian region, their relatives from other geographic regions, and other non-native plants, cultivars, and selections suitable for landscape use.

You will see several gardens during your visit, including the Quilt Garden, which features colorful raised beds designed after traditional quilt patterns; the Heritage Garden, which features plants used in traditional folk medicine and crafts of the Appalachians; and the Bonsai Exhibition Garden, which showcases one of the best collections of bonsai in the Southeastern United States with special emphasis on native plants, and perhaps most importantly the National Native Azalea Repository.

The National Native Azalea Repository, approximately eight acres in size, borders Bent Creek and has an overhead

canopy of pines and hardwood trees and an understory of native rhododendron, dogwood, New York fern, doghobble, and a multitude of seasonal wildflowers. Two level loop trails with secondary trails wind through the garden, allowing access to the various parts of the area.

The garden was established to maintain a germplasm collection of azalea species native to the U.S. and to interpret the diversity and value of native azaleas and companion plants. The collection currently holds more than 100 accessions of 13 different native azaleas species, cultivars and hybrids. *Rhododendron canadense*, *R. occidentale*, and *R. eastmanii* are not in collection holdings at this time.

The Baker Exhibit Center welcomes visitors and features special exhibits in science, art, and culture. On May 2, an exhibit titled “Dr. Entomo’s Palace of Exotic Wonders” will be in its third month. Reminiscent of a traditional circus sideshow, the exhibit features more than two dozen living and mounted bugs ranging from glow-in-the-dark scorpions to bird-eating tarantulas.

Other Arboretum facilities include: the Education Center; a state-of-the-art production greenhouse; and the Operations Center with “green roof” technology. While visiting the Arboretum, we will enjoy lunch at the Savory Thyme Cafe, with its nearby gift shops, The Garden Trellis and Connections Gallery.

Haywood Community College

Haywood Community College is a two-year college offering technical, occupational, and liberal arts associate degrees, including course work in horticulture supported by its overall landscape plan and arboretum designed by Doan Ogden. A 1960s inventory of trees on the 80-acre campus documented more than 22 native species with a majority averaging 100 years old. Since then, 100 new species of trees, shrubs, and groundcovers have been added.

Ogden’s accomplishment includes a fine series of flower gardens (such as a dahlia garden, an Oriental garden, and a rose garden), a preserved native forest, a wonderful variety of trees (including a willow walk), and the Rhododendron Garden, one of the better rhododendron collections in this western region of North Carolina.

Designed to extend the blooming season as long as possible, the Rhododendron Garden follows a delicate rhythm in harmony with nature. Careful landscaping gives the effect of a long, leisurely walk deeper and deeper into the forest, even though the walk only measures one-third of a mile. The woodland canopy of tall oak, poplar, and hickory filters sunlight onto the rhododendrons which filter it yet again onto the herbaceous layer below, dense with ferns and wildflowers such as bleeding heart (*Dicentra eximia*), foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*), and bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*).

Vaseyi Tour: Pilot Mountain/ Pisgah Inn

The group will travel to Pilot Mountain near Brevard North Carolina in 15-passenger vans ending up at the north end of Pilot Mountain within a few feet of the Art Loeb trail.



Photo Ed Collins

▲ Designed to extend the blooming season as long as possible, the Rhododendron Garden at Haywood Community College follows a delicate rhythm in harmony with nature.

▼ The Doley and Melody Bell Garden includes 3,000 rhododendrons and azaleas.

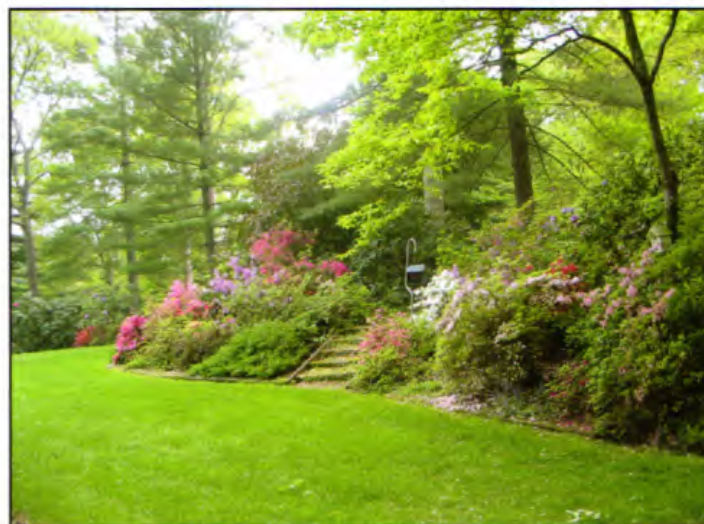


Photo Doley Bell

We usually see a few early *R. flammeum* along the road and some *R. vaseyi* as we get near the parking lot. A moderate hike (i.e., not easy, not strenuous, but it is best to wear hiking shoes) along the switchbacks of the Art Loeb Trail through the masses of *vaseyi* will take a little longer than one hour each way. You will find strategically located surprises along the trail to spend a moment catching your breath and taking pictures of the Jack-in-the-Pulpits, Trillium, and ferns.

The view from the top of the mountain is a 360-degree wonder encompassing the Blue Ridge Parkway, Johns Rock, and surrounding territory. After returning to the vans, the party will make its way to the famed Pisgah Inn for lunch. The afternoon tour will include the Blue Ridge Parkway to Highway 215 and the Devils Courthouse. The Friday Vaseyi Tour can choose to include the North Carolina Arboretum on the way back to the hotel.

Saturday Tours—Hendersonville

The Doley & Melody Bell Garden

The garden began in the 1970s as a retirement venture for former educators David and Naoma Dean. Following David's death, Naoma married Dr. Allen Clague, and they continued improving and maintaining the garden until Doley and Melody Bell became stewards of the garden in June 2000.

The remarkable garden has 3,000 rhododendrons and azaleas, including Dexter, Haag, Leach, Kehr, Gilkey, Delp, Van Veen, Richardson, and Lee hybrid rhododendrons, and Glenn Dale, Back Acres, Exbury, and Girard hybrid azaleas. There are deciduous azaleas from North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. Special plants include flowering peach, crab apples, hybrid dogwoods, hybrid laurels, *Franklinea*, camellias, Metasequoia, Enkianthus, *Pieris japonica*, Japanese maples, and more.

The Stelloh Garden

Denise and Bob Stelloh moved to Hendersonville 12 years ago, along with 600 plants from their previous garden in the Washington, D.C., area. Their woodland garden covers a little more than two acres, divided by a half-mile of winding trails.

The hilly site had many native wildflowers, *Kalmia* and *R. maximum*, along with a few native *R. calendulaceum*, *R. arborescens*, and *R. viscosum*, under an overstory of mature oaks, tulip poplars, pines, sourwoods, and dogwoods. Twelve years later, about half of it is now interplanted with groundcovers, a variety of evergreen and deciduous azaleas, rhododendrons, and Japanese maples and other ornamental trees—and, thanks to some hurricanes, quite a few less overstory trees.

The Collins Garden

The 2001 Convention tours included a visit to the garden of Ed and Mary Collins, and we will visit them again, but this time at a different garden. Two years ago Mary and Ed Collins purchased the Larus property, sold their existing garden, and made a rapid move to a beautifully established garden located on seven-plus acres with two streams. The garden included a large collection of dwarf indumented rhododendrons, evergreen azaleas, deciduous azaleas, perennials, wildflowers, unusual trees, and shrubs.

The Collins are in the process of incorporating the thousand-plus plants brought from their previous garden into the landscape by opening up an additional two acres to display Cowles hybrids and many deciduous azaleas.

The James and Mary Ann Stewart (Kehr) Garden

Four years ago the Stewarts obtained the fabulous garden developed by Dr. Augie Kehr during the course of 24 years. The property encompasses some 10-plus acres with two streams. It is the garden that Augie used for his later magnolia hybridization work and has what may be the largest collection of magnolias in the U.S.

The garden has a large collection of azalea and

rhododendron hybrids, many developed by Augie. One of his goals was the development of a good yellow evergreen azalea using various propagation methods. Approximately a dozen plants in the garden are the result of this effort.

Augie's last plant registration was 'Memory of Fred Galle', a deciduous native azalea developed from seed given to Augie by Fred Galle. This plant will be available in the plant sale.

The Dot Turlington (Henry Skinner) Garden

Dot Turlington has owned the Skinner house for a number of years, maintaining the Skinner garden and nursery stock. The Skinner plants remaining represent his choices from 25,000 miles of travel across the Southeast in search of distinctive native azaleas.

Vaseyi Tour: Pilot Mountain/ Pisgah Inn

The Saturday Vaseyi tour will be similar to the Friday tour except more time will be spent on the Parkway and Highway 215, and the group will not visit the North Carolina Arboretum.

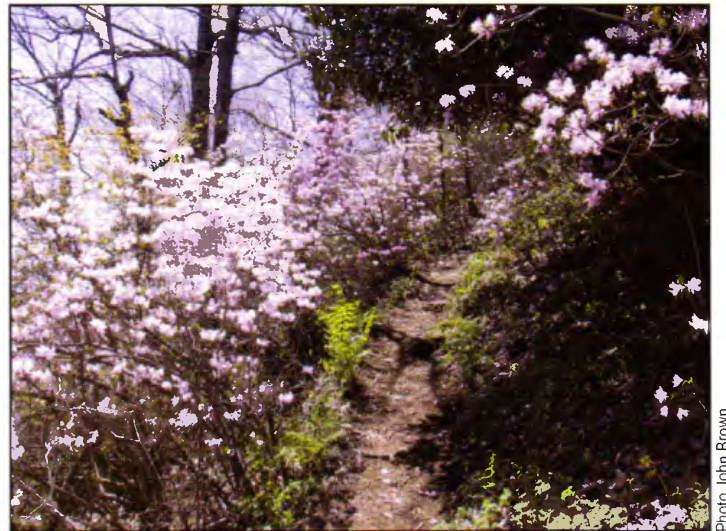


Photo John Brown

▲ The Art Loeb Trail at Pilot Mountain features masses of *R. vaseyi*.

▼ Entrance to Denise and Bob Stelloh's home.

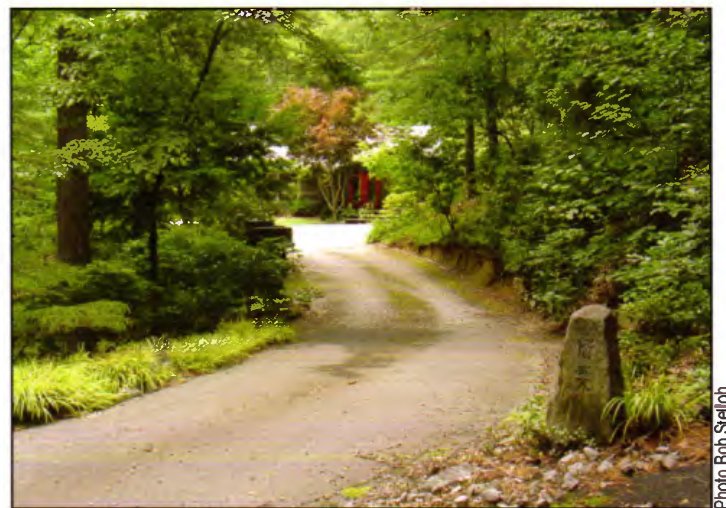


Photo Bob Stelloh

top of Toxaway Mountain to visit the Southern Highlands Reserve. SHR is a privately funded nonprofit organization which manages a 130-acre reserve at elevations up to 4,700 feet.

SHR is dedicated to the cultivation, preservation, and display of plants native to the Southern Appalachian Highlands.

The garden is divided into two distinct areas. In the Core Park, where plants are displayed according to their visual appeal, native plants and their cultivars are mixed. In the natural areas, where plants are placed in their natural communities, only native plants are used. The garden design is a combination of professional input combined with liberal use of native stone and local talent to achieve a must-see, once in a lifetime event.

There is more to see and enjoy than time and energy will allow in a one-day visit. Features of the Reserve include: the **Woodland Glade** featuring native groundcovers; the **Wildflower Labyrinth**, a centuries old seven-ring design featuring *Coreopsis* and butterfly weed in early May and a late summer display of native meadow wildflowers; the **Azalea Walk** featuring Gregory Bald seedlings; the **Vaseyi Trail** featuring *Galax* beds under a canopy of *R. vaseyi*; the **Vaseyi Pond**; the **Viewsites and Firepit** featuring a view limited only by weather and imagination; and many more walking possibilities.

A short hike toward the mountaintop leads to what may be the largest colony of *R. vaseyi* in existence. The trail is in a very preliminary form, and care should be taken to avoid damage to the area.

Lunch will be provided in the garden, and the group will return to the hotel on Sunday afternoon.

If you plan to sign up for this trip, please do so early. The Reserve Management has limited our group size due to the special and fragile nature of the area. Sign-ups will be on a first-come, first-served basis with a maximum of 28 people.

Thursday Speakers

Bill Alexander will speak about "Chauncey D. Beadle: Botanist, Nurseryman, and Azalea Hunter." Alexander is a native of Asheville and has worked at Biltmore Estate since 1978 in varying positions, including: Horticulturist, Greenhouse and Gardens Supervisor, Landscape Manager, Landscape Curator, and now as Landscape and Forest Historian.

He studied forestry and horticulture at Haywood Technical College and earned the North American Certificate in Horticulture through the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta in 1982. Research, study tours, and professional meetings have led him throughout much of the U.S., Canada, Great Britain, and Switzerland.

Alexander currently serves on the board of directors for the Cradle of Forestry Interpretive Association and the Southern Forestry Foundation, an advisory panel for Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest and the U.S.F.S. Southern Region Recreation Resource Committee. He is a member of

the Forest Guild, the Forest History Society, the Southern Garden History Society, and the National Association for Olmsted Parks. He frequently lectures on Biltmore Estate's landscape, forestry and agricultural history to diverse audiences regionally and nationally.

Botanist Chauncey D. Beadle came to Biltmore Estate at the beginning of its construction in 1890 to take charge of the new Biltmore Nursery. The Nursery was the vision of Frederick Law Olmsted and was established to produce millions of trees, shrubs, and other ornamental plants for reforestation and landscaping the extensive acreage of George Washington Vanderbilt's estate. The nursery, under Beadle's guidance, became a commercial enterprise in 1898 and produced one of the largest offerings of ornamental plants in the world until a devastating flood closed it in 1916.

During Beadle's 60 years at Biltmore, he not only supervised the nursery operations, but carried out Olmsted's extensive landscaping plans, assembled the most comprehensive herbarium of southern *flora* in existence at the time, and became an internationally known botanist. He is best known, perhaps, for his contributions to the discovery and knowledge of native azaleas and many other plants including the complex genus of *Crataegus* (hawthorns).

Barbara Bullock will speak about Henry Skinner. Bullock is the curator of Azaleas and Rhododendrons for the U.S. National Arboretum and oversees a 40-acre garden featuring more than 15,000 azaleas.

Since joining the U.S. National Arboretum in 1990, Bullock has overseen the restoration of more than 10,000 50-year-old azaleas. Under her leadership, pedestrian pathways were rebuilt and almost 3,000 new plants were added to the collection.

Bullock has worked in the field of horticulture since 1980, starting as a cashier at a local garden center while completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts.

She later earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture and Landscape Design from the University of Maryland, where she worked as a research assistant in the Entomology Department and illustrated the university's woody plants manual.

Dr. Dan Veazey will speak about "August Kehr: The Gentleman Behind the Plants." Veazey's gardening background originated with genes from both sides of his family. His paternal grandfather worked for the Soil and Water Conservation Service and was a formidable propagator of camellias. His maternal grandmother was born with two green thumbs.

When he moved to Hendersonville in 1984, his gardening interest flourished. "I was introduced to Dr. Kehr by his neighbor and shortly thereafter, Dr. Kehr introduced me to the ARS. Thomas Jefferson, indirectly, encourages me in gardening. As a history major at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I began to admire Jefferson and his interests. His knowledge of gardening was certainly an inspiration for my gardening journey."

Dr. Thomas Ranney and/or Jeff Jones will present “New Insights into Chromosomes, Breeding, and the Evolution of *Rhododendron* spp.” Dr. Thomas Ranney is professor in the Department of Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University. He has directed and performed plant research at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center in Fletcher, North Carolina, since 1989.

He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Ohio State University in 1981, a Master of Science degree from Cornell University in 1986, and a doctoral degree from Cornell in 1989, specializing in Landscape Horticulture, Plant Production, and Plant Physiology. His focus is on evaluation and improvement of nursery crops, including ornamentals.

With more than 800 species, the genus *Rhododendron* is complex and diverse. In many respects our knowledge of the genus is still rudimentary and information on basic genetics is amazingly sparse. It is well known that polyploidy (more than two completed sets of chromosomes) occurs naturally in some rhododendron species, particularly within the *Pentanthera* and *Rhododendron* subgenera, with ploidy levels ranging from three to twelve.

However, this information is based on limited sampling, and data on specific populations and cultivars is generally lacking. Polyploidy has been an important pathway in the evolution of plants and can contribute to reproductive isolation, increased heterozygosity, novel gene combinations, modified gene expression, enzymatic multiplicity, and ultimately divergence and speciation. For plant breeders, ploidy level is an important consideration because it can influence fertility, crossability, plant vigor, and gene expression. Ongoing research is investigating polyploidy in this genus with surprising findings and implications.

Friday Speakers

Jay Jackson will present “From Seed to Seed - Searching for the Best Production Methods.” Jackson and his wife, Lindy, have grown deciduous azaleas for years. For the last 10 years, all their plants have been grown from seed. The process has led to a production method that brings most seedlings to flower in two to three years. They have recently founded Appalachian Native Plants Inc. and built their first commercial greenhouse with a capacity of producing 50 to 70 thousand native azalea liners from seed annually.

Jackson still makes a living going to sea as a Captain in the U.S. Merchant Marine. Lindy is retired and is going to school as well as keeping things growing while J. is at sea. He hopes to retire soon from the sea and spend more time growing, selecting, and hybridizing native azaleas.

Joe Klimavicz will speak about “Developing New Evergreen Azalea Hybrids.” Klimavicz will discuss the wide variety of azaleas used in his hybridization program, his idea of a perfect plant, his small garden, hybridization processes, and his new azalea hybrids. He will also talk about the future of azalea hybridization.

Klimavicz is the Chief Information Officer and Director of High Performance Computing and Communications for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). He is responsible for the acquisition, management, and use of NOAA’s information and information technology resources.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1983, and a Master of Engineering degree from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1988. Major areas of study included geodesy, photogrammetry and imaging systems.

Klimavicz is also an avid hybridizer of fine evergreen azaleas—a passion of his since the late 1980s. He grows between 500 and 1,000 new azalea hybrids each year, but discards almost all of them after they flower, retaining only the best. The Klimavicz hybridization program is aimed at developing a plant that is vigorous, and disease and insect resistant, with a flower that is unusual and long-lasting.

He lives in Vienna, Virginia, with his wife, Brenda, and their three daughters who began their own hybridizing in elementary school.

Dan Krabill will present “The Glenn Dale Azaleas - Digital Photos, Growing Experiences, and Recommendations.” Krabill has been growing azaleas for the last 25 years and taking digital photos of them since 2002. He has been a member of the Northern Virginia Chapter of ASA since 1987, where he served as vice president for four years and president for four years. He served on the Finance Committee of the ASA Board in 2005 and 2006, and currently serves as ASA Treasurer.

Krabill grows approximately 1,000 varieties of azaleas at his home in McLean, Virginia, including a great majority of the Glenn Dales. He has published an article “Photographing the Glenn Dale Azaleas” in *The Azalean*, has a number of photos on the ASA’s web site, and has distributed a CD consisting of digital photos of most of the Glenn Dale azaleas.

Saturday Keynote Speaker

Dr. Joe Coleman will present the keynote address, “Evergreen Azaleas: The Beginning and the End.” An ardent gardener and collector of azaleas, rhododendrons, Japanese maples, and native plant material, Dr. Coleman and his wife, Donna, have a four-acre garden featuring thousands of varieties of beautiful plants.

Starting with their original home, Joe discovered the wonder of azaleas in the garden, particularly the fact they didn’t have to be mowed weekly. This fact led to growing pinestraw islands that had to be filled with a greater variety of flowers.

After meeting George Harding in the late 1970s, Dr. Coleman joined the ASA. The results of all their acquisitions can be seen today in the garden they created starting in 1980 in Lithonia, Georgia.

Over the years, Joe has served as a director of both the ARS and the ASA, and acted as chairman of the 1984

national ARS convention. He has served in numerous local offices, presented numerous talks, opened his garden to annual cutting parties, dabbled in hybridizing, and served as chairman of flower shows. Today, he continues hitting on friends for new and interesting cutting material and hounds nurserymen to provide more and better azaleas!

The Plant Sale

The members of the Vaseyi Chapter have been busy propagating many of the convention plants. We are anxious to showcase seedlings and registered plants from Augie Kehr, Chauncy Beadle, and Henry Skinner. We will also feature rare azaleas and rhododendrons from many other plant collectors and hybridizers.

Some of the plants that will be offered include 'Snowbird', the polyploid version of 'Snowbird', 'Fragrant Star', 'Memory of Fred Galle', 'Dawn at the River', and selected seedlings from Henry Skinner and Zophar Warner plants.

We will also include wildflowers and an extensive collection of companion plants including hollies, conifers, Japanese maples, witch hazels, and redbuds.

Hotel Reservations

Please make reservations directly with the hotel and request the ASA convention rate.

Holiday Inn Asheville - Biltmore West
435 Smokey Park Highway
Asheville, NC 28806

Phone: (828) 665-2161
or 1-800-315-2621

Fax: (828) 667-9744
Room Rate: \$79 double occupancy

Convention Website

<http://www.azaleas.org>
and click on "Conventions"

Registration Deadline

Early Registration
Closes March 1

Registration
Closes April 1

Registration after April 1
is subject to space availability
and will have a \$25 surcharge added.

Schedule of Events

Thursday, May 1, 2008

Registration Open	11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
ASA Board Meeting	1 to 4:30 p.m.
Plant Sale	4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and 10 to 11 p.m.
Dinner on Your Own	
Opening Program: Welcome	6:30 p.m.
Speakers: Dr. Tom Ranney/Jeff Jones	6:45 p.m.
Dr. Dan Veazey	7:15 p.m.
Bill Alexander	8:10 p.m.
Barbara Bullock	8:55 p.m.

Friday May 2, 2008

Load Buses	7:45 a.m.
All Tours Depart	8 a.m.
Return to Hotel	5 p.m.
Plant Sale	5 to 6 p.m. and 10 to 11 p.m.
Dinner on Your Own	
Speakers: J. Jackson	7 p.m.
Joe Klimavicz	7:45 p.m.
Dan Krabill	8:40 p.m.

Saturday May 3, 2008

Load Buses	7:45 a.m.
All Tours Depart	8 a.m.
Return to Hotel	5 p.m.
Plant Sale	5 to 6 p.m. and 10 to 11 p.m.
Buffet Dinner	6:30 p.m.
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Joe Coleman	7:15 p.m.
ASA National Annual Meeting	8:15 p.m.
Plant Auction	9 p.m.

Sunday May 4, 2008

ASA Board Meeting (breakfast provided)	7 30 to 9 a.m.
Hybridizers Roundtable	9 a.m. until ??
Post Convention Tour Load and Leave	9:30 a.m.
Return to Hotel	4:30 p.m.
Plant Sale	7 to 10 a.m.

Convention Information

Registrar: Bob Stelloh
65 Sierra Drive, Hendersonville, NC 28739-7963
Phone: (828) 697-9959
E-mail: bstelloh@mac.com

Convention Chair: Ed Collins
250 Tranquility Place, Hendersonville, NC 28739
Phone: (864) 697-9228
E-mail: azaleaed@bigfoot.com

Additional Contact: John Brown
1000 Moody Bridge Road, Cleveland, SC 29635
Phone: (864) 836-6898
E-mail: jbrown51@bellsouth.net

Society News

Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee presents the following candidates as directors for 2008-10. To vote please use the official ballot found on the wrapper of this issue. Ballots must be received by March 15, 2008.

Hale Booth of Signal Mountain, Tennessee, has an abiding fascination for azaleas and ericaceous plants. "Gardening has been a passion for me since I grew my first four-o'clock in a coffee can at about age five on a Mississippi front porch," said Booth.

Booth holds a Master of Arts degree in Science of Planning. He served as Executive Director of a regional planning agency in Tennessee for 30 years before recently retiring. During his career, he helped build and manage a large economic development agency with diverse funding sources.

He is a founding member and the immediate past president of the Tennessee River Gorge Trust which to date, has protected 16,000+ acres of the scenic and biological treasures of the Cumberland Plateau. He has considerable experience in helping groups prioritize needs and implement goals as well as develop financial strategies to reach those goals.

For the past few years, Booth has been president of his local Rhododendron Chapter and has a good understanding of the types of issues and opportunities chapters face.

Presently Booth is deputy director of a non-profit business lending and economic development organization in Chattanooga. He and his wife, Susan, raise and occasionally kill all manner of diverse plants in their woodland garden on Signal Mountain. In addition to azaleas and rhododendrons, they grow bamboo, magnolias, Asian woody shrubs, and about anything with chlorophyll. They have two daughters in college.

Ron Hooper of Aiken, South Carolina is a member of the Vaseyi Chapter. He started collecting rhododendrons while living in east Tennessee. After moving to South Carolina, Hooper changed his focus to native plants, particularly native azaleas.

He joined the ASA Vaseyi Chapter when it was formed, and enjoys attending regional and national meetings of both the ASA and American Rhododendron Society.

Maarten van der Giessen majored in Chemistry at the University of South Alabama. He was the assistant manager at Cottage Hill Nursery in Irvington, Alabama, from 1987 to 1990 and has been manager and Vice-President of van der Giessen Nursery in Semmes, Alabama, since 1990.

He is a past president of the South Alabama Nurserymen's Association, a past board member of the Azalea Society of America, and current president of the Mobile Botanical Gardens.

The Nominating Committee recommends **Carol Flowers**

as the candidate for secretary. Flowers interest in azaleas began 30 years ago when all the large trees surrounding her house died. When building the house, contractors had filled in around the trees, suffocating the roots.

After having all the dead trees removed, she and her husband decided to create their own mini-arboretum. She called the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., for information. Staff at the National Arboretum referred them to the American Rhododendron Society through which they learned about propagating and caring for rhododendrons.

Eventually, she and her husband joined the ASA and have been active in the Ben Morrison Chapter for many years. Carol has served as both chapter treasurer and secretary at various times.

ASA Financial Position at December 31, 2006

INCOME STATEMENT

Income	
Azalean Income	3,248.95
Dues Income	19,094.00
Gift Income	8,491.00
Interest Income	1,959.87
Other Income	2,054.47
Total Income	34,848.29

Expenses	
Awards & Memoria	100.00
Azalean Expense	20,240.47
Dues Expense	2,802.70
Member Roster	0.00
Other Expense	6,113.62
Other Postage	662.04
Website Expense	239.81
Total Expenses	30,158.64
Income-Expenses	4,689.65

BALANCE SHEET

Assets	
Checking	6,475.19
Investments	70,328.82
Harding Garden	5,483.91
Total Assets	82,287.92

Liabilities, Reserves, Operating Funds	
Liabilities	0.00
General Reserve	48,669.08
Research Reserve	13,235.00
Harding Reserve	5,483.91
Operating Funds	14,899.93
Total	82,287.92

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Stelloh, Treasurer 2/28/07

ASA Seed Exchange

By Aaron Cook

As most of you know, we have a new seed exchange program in the ASA. In order for it to grow and become successful, we need your seed contributions. So please make crosses and collect seed from desirable plants in order to contribute to the seed exchange.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the following contributors: **Bob Stelloh, Joe and Donna Coleman, John and Sally Perkins, Ray Head, Frank Pelurie, Larry Mucci, Jim Thornton, Ed Collins** and other members of the Vaseyi Chapter. Last year we had 94 different seed lots and generated more than \$200 toward the ASA's general operating fund.

The future success of the program is dependent on you. Please consider making a seed contribution for this year's seed exchange. Seed will be accepted from ASA members and other sources throughout the year until December 15.

The seed packets from each plant should include at least 50 seeds and be described by the following:

- (1) Contributor's name;
- (2) Seed parent name;
- (3) Pollen parent name;
- (4) Pollination type (c.w., o.p., h.p.);
- (5) Where collected (geographic feature or town); and
- (6) Notes.

There is a seed data form on the ASA website that can be downloaded and printed.

If you have digital pictures of the parents, please e-mail them to Bob Stelloh with the name, date and location taken, for posting on the web linked to your seed.

Seed should be current years production and cleaned. Put the cleaned seed from one plant into one paper envelope with one completed form, and mail any number of these envelopes to:

ASA Seed Exchange
804 Piedmont Ave.
Valdese, NC 28690-3161

When the seed is received, each packet is assigned a number and stored until January 1. On January 1, the seed list will be posted on the internet and mailed to anyone requesting a print copy.

We will begin filling seed orders on January 1. Orders for seed will be filled only for contributors or Azalea Society members until the end of February. Starting March 1, orders will be filled for anyone.

As an added incentive to contribute seed, all contributors will be sent a list of bonus seed that is in quantities too small to be offered on the regular seed exchange. They may order seed from this list free of charge, only paying the shipping cost.

All seed not distributed before the annual convention will be brought to the convention and offered for sale there. Once the sale at the convention is complete the seed exchange will be closed until the following year.

Chapter News

Ben Morrison Chapter

Harold Belcher, President

The Ben Morrison Chapter visited Hillwood Estate Museum and Gardens in Washington, D.C., on October 13. Hillwood exhibits the legacy of its founder Marjorie Merriweather Post and her world class collections of imperial Russian and western European fine and decorative arts.

Chapter members were treated to an interesting and fun filled day at Hillwood. Members who arrived prior to the garden tour had an opportunity to look at the gardens and socialize. Members took a docent-guided morning garden tour from 10:30 until 11:30 a.m. Hillwood gardens represent a lush and varied landscape. The estate was designed to be a site where the owner and visitors could enjoy sophisticated urban pleasures within a peaceful and inviting setting.

The garden tour began in the back of the mansion, where we were given a history of the house and the placement of sculpture and plantings. We continued around the mansion to see the rose and cutting gardens, the front of the house where Mrs. Post entertained her guests in good weather, the Japanese garden with an interesting waterfall, a lunar lawn, the putting green, four seasons sculptures, friendship gardens, and French parterre garden. The various gardens represented both very formal and informal designs and could accommodate a variety of entertaining opportunities. We noticed some of the azaleas in the garden were blooming due to the unseasonably warm weather. Members had an early lunch in the café. A short business meeting was held at the conclusion of lunch.

We had another docent-guided afternoon tour of the mansion and museum from 1:30 until 3 p.m. Our tour of the mansion and museum was a delight. On display were decorative art objects including: Fabergé eggs; sculpture; icons; paintings; and rare printed works on paper acquired by Hillwood during the past three decades. The exhibitions marked Hillwood's 30th anniversary as a public museum.

The Hillwood docent provided a very detailed and entertaining description of Mrs. Post's lifestyle and artwork. The docent's ability to place the artwork within the context of Russian or French history was informative and enjoyable. She also provided several entertaining anecdotes concerning Mrs. Post's collections.

At the conclusion of our tour, members were free to revisit the gardens, greenhouse (which was filled with orchids and other interesting and unusual plants), visit the gift shop, or continue through the mansion and museum.

Louisiana Chapter

Allen Owings, President

Fifteen members of the Louisiana Chapter met at the LSU AgCenter's Hammond Research Station in Hammond on October 18. The speaker for the evening was Robert

Turley, horticulturist for the LSU AgCenter from Lake Charles.

Turley discussed growing conditions for azaleas, emphasizing soil types, in different areas of Louisiana. He also provided an overview of azalea varieties that have performed well during the last few years in his home landscape.

Business items discussed included efforts to solicit dues from non-renewing members, the Encore® Azalea hurricane restoration projects being solicited by PDSI, the group's previous effort with azalea planting in downtown Hammond, and a need to develop an Azalea City in Louisiana.

Native plants and additional azalea varieties have been planted at the Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden located at the Hammond Research Station. Plans were made for the Chapter's Christmas gathering to be held at Margie Jenkins' home in Amite on Sunday, December 9.

Northern Virginia Chapter

Jane Newman, Secretary

The Chapter's first annual public auction was held at Merrifield Garden Center in Fairfax, Virginia on August 26. Members donated more than 100 azaleas for the auction. Long-time Chapter member **Carolyn Beck** donated a large number of landscape azaleas from her home due to a renovation project. We all benefitted greatly from her generosity.

Don Hyatt supplied wonderful digital pictures of nearly all of the plants, and Aaron Copeland provided music. Members supplied vast amounts of food and drink for the public who were happy to pay good prices for good plants.

The auction was a huge success, netting the Chapter nearly \$2,000 which will be used toward the 2009 annual convention in Herndon, Virginia.

At the Chapter's September 30 meeting, Vice President **Barry Sperling** discussed his experience in testing **Mike Creel's** method of cutting propagation as recently described in *The Azalean*.

Oconee Chapter

Ruth Mellon, Secretary

Approximately 16 people participated in a cutting party at **Joe and Donna Coleman's** home in September. Those present had an unexpected honor when ASA President **John Brown** joined the group. He collected cuttings of Glenn Dale hybrids. A nice aspect of the cutting activity (in addition to being able to select from the largest collection of azaleas in the southeast) was the noon lunch break when participants had the opportunity to discuss azaleas and other pleasantries.

Vaseyi Chapter

John Brown, Newsletter Editor

The Chapter's September meeting was a double-barreled barrel of fun and enlightenment. **Dick Figlar** brought his wealth of information on the general subject of evergreen magnolias, presenting pictures and descriptions of species

seldom seen on this continent. **Boris Bauer** rounded out the program with digital images of deciduous varieties.

Their presentation style of banter as they presented some excellent photographic skills overcame the normal reticence of the 20 members and guests.

Bauer concluded the evening with a presentation on his favorite garden tool, a heavy-duty tree puller that weighs a ton, costs a fortune, and is very effective at pulling trees without overly disturbing the soil. Chapter members left the meeting with visions of beautiful magnolias in gardens which are free of weed trees eliminated by the Extractigator. This tool can be found at www.extractor.com. There are several varieties on the market so look around to find the one that best suits you.

New Members

At Large

Michael W. O'Hara
2111 Sunrise Way
Jamison, PA 18929
mh21wy@comcast.net

Northern Virginia

Linda Ownby
7812 Valleyfield Dr
Springfield, VA 22153
ownbyfam@hotmail.com

Oconee

James O. Harris
538 Swanson Dr
Lawrenceville, GA 30043

TriState

Chris Blom
PO Box 1013
Tahoe City, CA 96145
christianblom@sbcglobal.net

Pat Swan

520 Sandalwood Dr.
Evansville, IN 47715
twoswans@sigecom.net

Vaseyi

Jordana Chalneck
Biltmore Company, Gardens
1 N. Pack Square
Asheville, NC 28801
jcoleman@biltmore.com

Marilyn Grist DVM

Greer Animal Hospital Inc.
2512 Wade Hampton Blvd
Greenville, SC 29615
specialorder@petcaremobile.com

Erica Piela

Biltmore Company, Gardens
1 N. Pack Square
Asheville, NC 28801
jcoleman@biltmore.com

It's Time to Renew Your ASA Membership...

Watch your mailbox for your annual
membership renewal notice.

Or renew early, by visiting the society's website at
<http://azaleas.org/joinus.html>

The Azalea Society of America is a tax exempt
501(C)(3) organization, and any amount above \$25
for an annual membership is a charitable
contribution under section 170 of the
U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

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The Search for the Real George Lindley Taber and the Orchid Azalea

William C. Miller III—Bethesda, Maryland

I have always admired the evergreen azalea, 'George Lindley Taber'. A large-flowering Southern Indian hybrid, it grows well here in Maryland but occasionally loses some of its buds to late spring freezes. One measure of its popularity is that it is a frequent entry in the Brookside Gardens Chapter flower show. Blooming late April to early May, there are usually enough entries to warrant the creation of its own subclass.

For such a popular cultivar, however, precious little is known about its provenance. My theory, supported by the available literature, holds that it is a sport of 'Omunasaki' and is somehow associated with Dr. H. Harold Hume. [1] Alternatively, it has been suggested by others that it is a derivative of 'Formosum'. The final point that I would make in this introduction is that the cultivar name is often misspelled far more frequently than could be attributed to chance. 'George Lindley Taber', the azalea, is named for George Lindley Taber, Sr. That's T-A-B-E-R!

Some plant lovers find that the human contacts and stories encountered in the search for superior plants provide as much interest and pleasure as do the plants themselves. The search for the real George Lindley Taber offers such a

In the early 1880s, Florida was a backward agricultural state with poor transportation services to and from the Midwest and North. It is worth noting for historical perspective that Florida became a state in 1845; the third and final Seminole War concluded in 1858; and the state was better known for malaria and yellow fever than for orange juice, sunny winter vacations, and spring break.

In the absence of today's federal interstate highway system, one suspects that the Jacksonville/St. Augustine area may well have been the end of the line for civilization. Coupled with the fact that Henry Ford did not sell his first Model A until 1903, (the year that Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved the wonder of controlled, powered flight at Kitty Hawk—all twelve seconds and 120 feet) getting from here to there was no simple task. It took the development of railroad service by the Florida railroad barons (Chapley, Plant, and Flagler) to promote tourism, to foster the influx of new people like Taber, and to facilitate the development of new agricultural and livestock interests throughout the state.

An agricultural commodity is neither profitable nor feasible if it has difficulty getting to market. It should be noted that not everyone was in favor of the railroads, and the shipping interests did what they could to frustrate railroad progress.[3,4]

story: a man forced to change his career for reasons of health and who pioneered an important segment of the nursery industry in Florida of the 1880s, overcoming catastrophes and adapting to changing demand over half a century. Taber's accomplishments are memorialized in a living plant of extraordinary beauty, and (to borrow a phrase) here's the rest of the story!

George Lindley Taber, Sr. was born in Vassalboro, Maine, on October 18, 1854, to George and Esther Bartlett (Pope) Taber. It was the same year that Commodore Perry and nine U.S. warships opened up Japan, and the Light Brigade made its ill-fated charge during the battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War. Franklin Pierce was in the White House, the total U.S. population was well past the 23 million mark of the 1850 Census, and the American Civil War was just over the horizon.

Taber was educated at Oak Grove Seminary in Vassalboro, and the Moses Brown Friends School in Providence, Rhode Island.[2] He got a job with the Chicago Board of Trade, the financial venue where a market is made in "forward contracts" or "futures" for commodities. At the age of 27, his successful career was cut short when his health failed, and he was given an ultimatum by his doctor to seek a milder climate if he wanted to live. He must have listened to his doctor; because, in 1881 he left Chicago and headed south.

A Modest New Beginning in Florida

When Taber arrived in the Jacksonville/Fernandina/St. Augustine area of Florida, he talked to the locals, surveyed the existing farms, and settled on a twenty-acre tract of abandoned cotton fields near the St. Mary's River, thirty miles west of Jacksonville.[5] In 1882, he entered into a short-lived partnership with Thomas P. Beath and established the Glen Saint Mary Nurseries. The late George Lindley Taber, Jr. (1906-1998) described the beginning this way: "When Dad first took up residence on his newly bought land here at Glen Saint Mary, he had sort of a working partnership with a man by the name of Beeth [sic]. They put up a log cabin to live in and before long discovered that they could exist by utilizing the meat and milk of a few cows somehow acquired, together with rather extensive crops of sweet potatoes from their garden. Thus it came to be that the two struggling 'Furriners' were soon known and referred to by nearby farmers as 'Beef and Tater'." [6]

Taber (Sr.) described his newly acquired land as "slightly rolling, enough so to provide good drainage, but not hilly enough to cause the land to wash. The soil is a sandy loam underlaid, at about two feet, with a stratum of

clay, fifteen to twenty feet in depth. This is an ideal soil for nursery purposes. In it seeds and cuttings grow rapidly and produce a root system unsurpassed by any character of land in existence.” [7] With land available for 50 cents per acre, Taber acquired more property to facilitate expansion. [8,9,10] The dollar back in 1881 would be worth \$19.71, today so that was still quite a bargain. [11] Where can you buy land (dry land) today for \$10 per acre?

In 1883, Taber returned north to marry Gertrude St. John of Kent, Connecticut. She is described by a local Baker County, Florida, historian as “a person of taste and culture, as evidenced by her possessions and genealogy.” The record indicates that Mrs. Taber died on July 22, 1903, at the age of 60, was taken home to Kent and buried in the St. Andrews Cemetery. According to the aforementioned local historian, she is viewed as something of a romantic mystery by the Taber family. [12] Two years later, in November of 1905, Taber wed Mildred (“Maude”) Willey in Boston. Discontinuing her medical studies, she returned with her new husband to Glen Saint Mary and “Linwood,” the Taber home. With the arrival of “Miss Millie,” Linwood soon became the center of Baker County society. On December 27, 1906, she gave birth to George Lindley Taber, Jr.

Taber was a charter member of the Florida State Horticultural Society and served in increasingly responsible positions beginning with secretary (1888-1891), vice president (1892-1896), and finally president (1897-1904). He was awarded Honorary Membership in 1914. Taber was also active with the American Pomological Society (fruit trees). Through these professional associations, he became a principal factor in the development of the citrus industry throughout the southeast, which is how he met H. Harold Hume, whom he later convinced to join him in his nursery business. In 1906, H.H. Hume joined the nursery staff as secretary and manager.

In 1907, Taber incorporated the nursery, which by that time had grown to 800 acres, under the name Glen Saint Mary Nurseries Company. He had developed an infrastructure and attracted a talented staff. Branch offices were later established at Winter Haven in the south and at Chipley in the west, and a version of the catalog was published in Spanish, which reflected the significant international market.

Taber’s success in part was due to his philosophy. He stressed that a quality product was paramount and that pleasing customers with both stock and service was the surest way to gain new customers and to keep them. The mailing list was many thousands of names long; sales in all parts of the South had steadily grown and included a significant foreign component: Cuba, Mexico, Central and South America, China, India, Iran, and Spain. Many State Experiment Stations and the U.S. Department of Agriculture were repeat customers. For many years, the nursery had annual federal contracts for growing, testing, and distributing citrus hybrids. Taber served as president and treasurer of the corporation from 1907 to 1920. In 1920, he stepped down,



▲ George Lindley Taber, Sr., circa 1883

Photo obtained from Mag. Taber (Mrs. George Lindley Taber III), Glen Saint Mary Nurseries Company

and H. H. Hume assumed the position of president. With the acquisition of the Buckeye Nursery in 1924, the nursery’s leadership position as the largest producer of citrus nursery stock was further solidified. In the acquisition, the rights to the very popular ‘Temple’ orange were acquired. In 1927, Taber resumed active management of the corporation as president until his death on May 10, 1929, at the age of 75.

Trials and Tribulations of a North Florida Nurseryman

The first Glen Saint Mary Nursery catalog was issued in 1883. The nursery prospered and grew rapidly despite a number of catastrophic events of near biblical proportions that befell the region: the freezes of 1894 and 1895, and two plagues — yellow fever in 1888 and the citrus canker in 1913. Then, of course, the story would be incomplete without mention of the hurricanes and tropical storms for which Florida is well known.

The freezes were devastating, and the damage was reminiscent of the great freeze in 1835. A temperature of 26 degrees F for three hours is sufficient to make an orange unmarketable, and this was in the days before processing into frozen orange juice concentrate was an option. On December 29, 1894, temperatures fell to 14 degrees F in Jacksonville. On February 7, 1895, again Jacksonville experienced a drop to 14 degrees F. While the fresh fruit crop was destroyed in December, most of the trees that survived were killed in February. Many farmers and nurserymen were ruined and gave up, banks went under, the citrus industry in northern and central Florida was significantly set back, and Florida in general became a very different place overnight. [13]

From Jacksonville newspaper accounts, the 1888 yellow fever epidemic which began on July 28th and concluded on November 25th was not a pretty picture. During the four month period, 5,000 people contracted yellow fever, and more than 400 people died. The epidemic ended precipitously when the temperature fell to 32 degrees, thus killing the mosquitoes that carried the disease. It would be another 12 years before Major Walter Reed, a U.S. Army physician, would confirm that yellow fever was transmitted by mosquitoes. [14]

Citrus canker, which is still a serious problem today, is caused by *Xanthomonas axonopodis*, a rod-shaped, gram negative bacterium with polar flagella. There is no cure. It causes lesions on the leaves, stems, and fruit; defoliation; reduced vigor; and dieback. Originally misidentified as a form of citrus scab in the fall of 1912, subsequent laboratory investigations of specimens collected in the spring of 1913 from near Miami determined this disease to be something new. Posing no threat to humans or other animals, it was found to be highly contagious to most citrus crops and could be spread easily by insects, birds, human contact, air currents, overhead irrigation, rainy weather, and the transport of infected materials. The first steps to deal with the problem were to prohibit importation of infected citrus stock into Florida and to quarantine the affected areas to limit the transmission to other areas. Upon further study, it was concluded that the usual strategies (e.g., fungicides, phytosanitary practices) would not be sufficient and that eradication was the appropriate response for the short and long term.

▼ 'George Lindley Taber', a Southern Indian hybrid and a sport derived from 'Omurasaki', from the author's garden. Described in Fred Galle's *Azaleas* as a white flushed light to strong purplish pink, blotch darker; mid-season; medium height.



Photo William C. Miller III

In those days, an eradication program meant close inspections of all citrus groves and nurseries by trained crews wearing white coveralls followed by a tanker truck designed to deliver a flaming mixture of kerosene and crude oil under pressure. Picture something on the order of a very large military flamethrower. There is no indication that Taber's nursery was ever put to the torch despite its proximity to Monticello, one of the original citrus canker sites in northern Florida. [15, 16, 17, 18]

While the nursery always welcomed visitors, they were not careless—as demonstrated when Frank N. Meyer, the famous plant explorer, visited on November 25, 1915. He was given a tour of the nursery by Hume but not permitted to approach the citrus groves since he had just come from Alvin, Texas, and Avery Island, Louisiana, which were two citrus canker problem areas. [19]

As sure as California has earthquakes and Kansas has tornadoes, Florida is known for tropical storms and hurricanes, and the water spouts or tornadoes that may accompany them. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) "direct hit" data for the period 1851 to 2004 show that the northeast Florida region experienced 13 category 1 hurricanes, eight category 2 hurricanes, and one category 3 hurricane. [20]

A 125-Year-Old Nursery

How many 100-year-old nurseries can one name? The Glen Saint Mary Nurseries Company is 125 years old. That means that they have been doing what they do for a long time, and apparently doing it very well. The nursery's success is attributable to the business philosophy of their founder which has been faithfully carried forward. But there is more. In a 2004 interview, Lin Taber (George Lindley Taber III) attributed their success to being sensitive to trends in the industry and "learning to change direction every 20 to 30 years." [21]

A visit to the Henry G. Gilbert Nursery and Seed Trade Catalog Collection at the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland, afforded the author an opportunity to review many old Glen Saint Mary Nursery catalogs to gauge the growth and development of the nursery over time. The oldest catalog examined was from 1895. A tree and plant nursery, offerings included peaches, plums, prunes, apples, pears, *khaki* (Japanese persimmons), apricots, figs, quinces, pomegranates, mulberries, loquats, olives, grapes, pecans, chestnuts, almonds, walnuts, many kinds of oranges, pomelos, lemons, and *kinkan* (kumquat), and a lengthy list of ornamentals, which included an extensive selection of roses but no azaleas. It is likely that the citrus canker situation was influential in hastening the transition of the nursery from a major citrus stock producer to one with a greater emphasis on producing ornamentals—a diversification which was well underway by 1930. In addition to the 2,400 acres at Glen Saint Mary, branch nurseries (1,000 acres) and offices were established at Winter Haven and Dundee, Florida, and (500 acres) at Chipley, Florida; and display and sales facilities



AZALEA . GEORGE LINDLEY TABER

This glorious Azalea, a Glen Saint Mary introduction and named for our founder, is the loveliest of all the variegated sorts. The plant is well shaped and a strong grower. It stands the cold unusually well and is equally happy in either sun or shade. Often called the "Orchid Azalea," the fragrant flowers are among the largest of the Indicas, and are particularly beautiful when combined with the darker lavenders.

▲ Image of 'George Lindley Taber' and related caption taken from the inside front cover of the 1946 Glen Saint Mary Nurseries Company catalog.

were established at Riverside Gardens in Jacksonville, Florida. The reality has not always been expansion. Mindful of the trends in the early 1960s, the pressure of competition, and the high transportation cost of balled and burlapped and larger container-grown material, many larger items were simply discontinued, as a practical matter, in favor of bare-root items that could be shipped more economically.

Azaleas did not appear in the nursery catalog until 1917 when they offered *Azalea lutea* (now known as *Rhododendron calendulaceum*), *A. nudiflora* (now *R. periclymenoides*), and *A. indica* (different color forms of unnamed Indian azaleas). In 1920, *A. austrina* (now *R. austrinum*) replaced *nudiflora*. Azaleas were not a major item (on the order of citrus or roses) until much later. The catalog in 1928 listed "Kurume Azaleas" in many delicate colors in shades of pink, salmon, red, and lavender but with no suggestion of cultivar names. By 1939, the offering of azaleas was organized by color

and cultivar name and included nearly 50 Southern Indian hybrids and 23 Kurume hybrids.

Today fewer than a dozen azaleas appear in the nursery's Availability list [22]—functionally a simple, one page price list (front and back), which has replaced the 60 to 70 page color catalog that went into considerable detail about each product that was offered. "Management" recognized that change was neither good nor bad, but necessary. Gone is the original focus on citrus, fruit trees, and pecans in favor of rarer and more profitable ornamentals. Timely specialization on crops that are not readily available elsewhere has served the nursery well.

A Record of Accomplishments

Any list of accomplishments would have to include the establishment of a highly successful business which continues today. Taber was a leading citizen and a major employer in the local community. He was recognized and respected by the agricultural community and played an active role in the American Pomological Society and the Florida State Horticultural Society. He collaborated with professionals like H. H. Hume and the research scientists at the University of Florida in the development of cold hardy varieties so that the Florida citrus industry would be less vulnerable to freezes. His pioneering research was recognized in H. H. Hume's 1904 definitive work entitled "Citrus Fruits and Their Culture." In fact, the book was dedicated to Taber. [23]

The Glen Saint Mary Nursery is famous for its introductions and for having brought other varieties to prominence including peaches ('Gibbons', 'October', 'Imperial', 'Jewel', 'Powers', 'September', 'Taber', and 'Triana'), plums ('Excelsior' and 'Terrell'), oranges ('Lue Gim Gong' and 'Owari Satsuma'), grapefruit ('Duncan'), persimmons ('Gailey'), kumquats, calamondin, and limequats. Finally, there is the matter of the azalea cultivar that bears his name, a posthumous honor.

The Orchid Azalea

The primary motivation for this article was the personal belief that every azalea has an interesting person or an interesting but untold story behind it. So it is with 'George Lindley Taber', often referred to as the Orchid Azalea. Fortunately, the story of the azalea was recorded by Gene Barber in a *Baker County Press* column published on April 8, 1976. [12,24]

According to Barber, Ernest Harris, a production assistant at the nursery, noticed a single branch sport in a vast sea of 'Oumurasaki' azaleas. He reported the finding to John Otis Barton, his immediate supervisor (and father-in-law). Barton, in turn, reported the curiosity to Hume who directed that they prune away the normal tissue and set the plant aside. Recognizing the value of what they had, Hume instructed Barton to put it, now identified as number 21, into propagation.

Several years passed, and in 1929 it was time to do something with the new azalea. The consensus decision

was made to include it in the nursery catalog and to name it 'George Lindley Taber' in honor of the boss who had passed away earlier in the year. For many years, a beautiful rendition of 'George Lindley Taber' could be found in a place of honor on the inside front cover of the nursery catalog.

At least two "sports" are common on 'George Lindley Taber', a purple self which should probably be viewed as a reversion to 'Omurasaki', and a white self, 'Mrs. G. G. Gerbing', which was selected in 1935 by Gus Gerbing, named for his wife, and introduced in 1947. Gustav George Gerbing and his wife, Azilda, operated the Gerbing Camellia Nursery in Fernandina, northeast of Jacksonville, Florida. He was better known for his work with camellias. [25]

Conclusion

'George Lindley Taber' is a beautiful azalea. The search for the real George Lindley Taber was worthwhile, and the author hopes that, as he did, the reader will come away with a greater appreciation for the nursery industry.

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William C. Miller III is a recipient of the Society's Distinguished Service Award and the Brookside Gardens Chapter's Frederic P. Lee Commendation. He is a past president of the Brookside Gardens Chapter, a former vice president of the Society, a past member of the ASA board of directors, past co-chairman of the ASA's membership committee, past chairman of the public information committee, a long-time ASA member, and a frequent contributor to The Azalean.

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Dallas Arboretum Introduces Collection of Encore® Azaleas

Garden-lovers can now view the entire Encore® Azalea collection at the Dallas Arboretum.

The Dallas Arboretum is known as one of the top five display gardens in the United States, and two decades ago, when the garden was created, its first plant residents were azaleas. The first major planting consisted of 2,500 traditional azaleas as part of the Margaret Elisabeth Jonsson Color Garden. This collection also included the first public planting of the Huang collection of azaleas outside of China, and a planting of the National Arboretum introductions.

The results were breathtaking and drew notice; more than 385,000 visitors see the gardens each year, and azaleas and tulips are the big spring stars.

Not everything was rosy, though. Last year, Turner Worthy, director of Horticulture Operations, inventoried the entire azalea collection and found the azaleas were showing signs of age and wear.

"Our alkaline soils, heavy black clay, and severe heat make us a premiere testing site for plant toughness," Worthy says. "I believe azaleas outside of their perfect environment have a life expectancy, and ours have passed it!"

To remedy the problem and to ensure the future glory of the azalea collection, the Dallas Arboretum Horticulture Department committed to a five-year improvement program.

In the fall of 2006, Worthy wrote and received a \$20,000 grant from the Stanley Smith Horticulture Trust to "jump start" the rejuvenation project. This money was in addition to the \$32,000 set aside by the Dallas Arboretum. These funds were used to purchase soil amendments and new plants, and to refurbish the irrigation system. As part of the remedy, the Arboretum began replacing fading azaleas with Encore® Azaleas.

"We have tested the Encore® Azaleas, and I love them!" Worthy says. "They have proven to be heat and cold tolerant, exceptional (multi-season) bloomers, and less likely to have nutritional problems. I would like to have the Encore® (Azaleas), the newest and best azalea, as the backbone of our upgraded display."

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