

# Using LDS Genealogy Software for Azalea Breeding Records

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One of the great rewards in growing and propagating azaleas is the sought-after beauty of these flowering shrubs. Once I decided to begin breeding azaleas, I looked for ways or means of recording my efforts. My first attempts at recording the hand pollinations were at times clumsy with a number of mistakes, the worst being forgetting to write down what I had done.

I started with standard 4" x 6" file cards that I kept in a cardboard file box purchased at an office supply store. Soon realizing this method was inadequate, I switched to spiral bound notebooks, labeling each as Stud Books with sequential numbers. This method stood the test of time as long as I kept the information up to date. The drawback was the number of pages needed to document a particular cross and all the records of the seedlings. There was also no way I could easily transfer the information onto my computer that I purchased in 1994.

In 1996, I started researching my family history. I looked at what was available in genealogy software and found several that fit the task. At that time I never thought such a program would end up as a record keeping method for my azalea hybrid crosses.

By 1999, I had purchased a newer, faster computer, and had access to the Internet which offered many resources for the amateur genealogist. I discovered the Church of Latter Day Saints Web site and free genealogy software, Personal Ancestral File or PAF 4.0. It has since been upgraded.

In 2003, I was doing entry work on a distant family member when I had a "light bulb" moment. Why not use this program to record my hybrid crosses? I closed the file I was working on and opened a new database. For a few minutes, I studied the format on my monitor. Genealogy software is patriarchal, which I ran afoul of when documenting some of my wife's Cherokee heritage, which is matriarchal.

For several days and nights, I played with the PAF to see if it could actually be used to document hybrid crosses. In the process, I ran into some troublesome automatic roadblocks, such as using a named cultivar as a seed parent in one cross and then as the pollen parent in a separate cross. I solved the problem by assigning the given name as the cultivar name and then the surname as either Pollen-1 (male) or Seed-1 (female), depending upon how the cross was made. Of course, the obvious answer is that each of the crosses would reside in separate data bases, never crossing digital paths.

The real fun came when entering sibling or backcrosses. Oh woe to those who try to make incestuous crosses, because the software will ask you if you are sure. I just clicked OK and went on with the full knowledge that a LDS person

wasn't watching and wondering since this would never see the light of day.

Another situation came up when I started entering multiple children (seedlings) by number. When I reached 20, I started getting pop-ups asking me to confirm the entry. I continued clicking the OK button. After a while, I began to think the software had some sort of intelligence that was watching everything I did and, for no good reason, I started to become a little paranoid.

I leave the sex as unknown until such time as I decide if I will use the particular seedling in a cross. I use the same form to change a name if I decide to put a registered name on a seedling. Otherwise I enter a name in the "also known as" line or the "nickname line."

The form has other options you can access with the Options button. If a plant was given to you and it is used as a parent, then clicking the "sources" button allows you to enter that data or other important information.

After several weeks of playing with the program and having a ball with it, I realized that it would be worth the effort to record all my hybrids. It has photograph entry, various printable reports with indices, and many other options such as notes, allowing me to record the where, when, why, and any other data. This is also a good place to note where the plants reside in my garden or nursery. In some cases, I also included the location of collected pollen from wild plants.

For keeping track of the seedlings, I use a numbering system that is unique to my nursery. For my hybrid crosses, I use a two-letter prefix, four numbers, and a numeral suffix to assign the date of the cross. If a plant does not meet my expectations, the entries I make will show up in the death date. My entries may say "chipper" or "fire" as the cause of death. If I give a plant away, that is the death date and the "how" information is to whom I gave it.

For seedlings, I use the date of germination as the birth date. A pop-up will ask if it is correct or say something to the effect that it has been less than nine months from a previous birth. I just click OK and keep going.

For crosses, I use the marriage bar to show the date and where. It will also show up in the notes. A search tool allows me to rapidly find a particular plant and not have to do a page-by-page scroll-down.

*Joe Schild has been an avid grower, propagator, and breeder of azaleas for 35 years. Joe was the founding president of the Tennessee Valley Chapter-ARS and past president of the ASA. He says he is better known as an azalea nut and chases the natives' bloom each year with many fellow enthusiasts. He is a frequent contributor to **The Azalean**.*