

President's Letter

John Brown — Cleveland, South Carolina



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 which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

Officers for 2007-2008

President — John Brown
Vice President — Aaron Cook
Secretary — Carol Flowers
Treasurer — Dan Krabill
Immediate Past President — Robert "Buddy" Lee

Directors

Terms expire 2008	Terms expire 2009
Maarten van der Giessen	Vincent Ciolino
Ron Hooper	J Jackson
Tom Milner	Dave Nanney

Chapter presidents
serve as ex-officio directors.

Chapters

Brookside Gardens (chartered Aug. 1979) Dr. Charles Evans, <i>Pres.</i>	Ben Morrison (chartered May 1980) Harold Belcher, <i>Pres.</i>
Northern Virginia (chartered May 1980) Eve Harrison, <i>Pres.</i>	Louisiana (chartered June 1981) Dr. Allen Owings, <i>Pres.</i>
Tri-State (chartered Oct. 1981) Larry Miller, <i>Pres.</i>	Texas (chartered May 1989) Bart Brechter, <i>Pres.</i>
Oconee (chartered Nov. 1991) Ed Mellon, <i>Pres.</i>	Vaseyi (chartered June 2001) Doley Bell, <i>Pres.</i>
Lake Michigan (chartered May 2003) John Migas, <i>Pres.</i>	Alabamense (chartered May 2005)
Southern California (chartered March 2007) Jim Jaeger, <i>Pres.</i>	

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual amount of \$25; life-membership for one or two persons at the same address is \$500. Members receive *The Azalean* and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society including those of the chapter with which the member affiliates. For information and a membership application, write to Carol Flowers, Secretary, 700 New Hampshire NW, Apt. 1011, Washington, DC 20037 or visit www.azaleas.org.

I want to tell you a story about one of the gardens featured during the 2008 National Convention in Asheville, North Carolina. The garden is the result of 12 years of dedicated effort by Bob and Denise Stelloh, who brought 600 plants from their previous garden in Maryland and have since added thousands more. It was one of the first gardens selected for a tour, because it is a carefully planned and executed presentation, truly representing the name selected for their home—*Kairaku*, which translates as "joint pleasure."

During the last year, their health has not been good and maintenance work in the garden came to a screeching halt. We were all concerned about them, and Bob was concerned about their garden and how it would show to the visiting Society members. He seriously considered taking it off the tour.

At our last planning meeting, four people independently came up with the idea of having a garden day at Bob and Deni's home. Aaron Cook announced he would bring a class of Landscape Gardening Program students (15 in all), and they would get the job done. The students received class credit and a few ground-cover plants each for their work. Bob and Deni got their garden shined up. We all got treated to a beautiful garden tour. It is a prime example of the camaraderie, true concern for fellow members, and basic sense of doing the right thing that I feel represents the backbone of our Society. Hats off to the 15 young people who gave a day to create so much good. The garden looked great.

A consortium of 11 public gardens in the Southeast started a program to preserve the old forms of azalea and camellia cultivars. The Great Gardens of America Preservation Alliance asked the Azalea Society to join them as a consulting body. Our task is to identify those azalea cultivars available and in the landscape before 1900 (or some other date to be chosen). Maarten van der Giessen and Bart Brechter agreed to serve as our contacts for the effort. Maarten estimates we will find more than 100 known azaleas and 450 camellias prior to 1900. For the fanatical collectors among us, it will be a dream come true to be able to search for all of the "ancients."

The Society's Board of Directors made the first step in creating an ASA Research Foundation. Jim Thornton, past president and long time supporter, agreed to chair a study group to investigate the feasibility of the project and to propose a format for the foundation. We are truly fortunate in having a template written for us by Augie Kehr shortly before his death. Augie worked with Bob Stelloh, former ASA treasurer, to earmark funds for the foundation-to-be. When formed, the foundation will be a non-profit organization dedicated to research and improvement of our favorite plants—azaleas. As such, the foundation, which has yet to be named, will be a great place to make charitable donations.



▲ Denise and Bob Stelloh with the registration papers for 'Deni's Delight'.

Photo: John Brown