

We have found everything articulated here by Mr. Moore to be most helpful. Some of us have been using the coarse peat – perlite – redwood bark mixture for years and have yet to experience a plant failure because of it. In fact we have found that the faster the drainage, the less tendency for such diseases as phytophthora to get started. The organisms which break down the wood in the mixture appear to be predators of the phytophthora organisms and we have nothing against that. In addition the wood chips tend to provide for space which water and oxygen both need in order to get down to the plant roots. At the same time it makes for an excellent organic mulch which decomposes slowly over time and helps to ensure the general stability of the pH.

It is the drainage factor which tends to forestall any phytophthora or other soil diseases from getting started in the garden. Perlite seems to be a major element in assisting with drainage as well as air space down in the root zone which at the same time promotes the increase of the microbial and bacterial populations which are so essential to a healthy soil and therefore to healthy plants. We have found that Ericaceae will take just about all the water they may receive so long as it drains away from the roots just about as rapidly as it comes in. It has been recently noted that phytophthora is now arguably the most destructive plant disease in the world. A fast draining soil discourages phytophthora. Perlite promotes fast drainage and soil stability. That seems like a good combination.

George Klump is a resident of La Crescenta, California, a musician by profession, a concert organist and teacher of orchestral and choral ensembles as well as a church musician. He came to gardening naturally through his paternal grandmother and his father, also a musician and banker, who raised more than 100 roses plus camellias, fuchsias, poinsettias, chrysanthemums and cannas among other plants. He has always had an interest in azaleas and rhododendrons, the parent family. He has been a member of the Southern California Chapter of the ARS [as of the spring of 2007 also a dual chapter, i.e., ARS/ASA] for 30 years and for three years was its president. He currently edits the chapter newsletter and is vice-president for chapter projects and publications. His own collection of plants includes many rhododendrons, lepidote and elepidote, as well as azaleas, including Satsukis, camellias, chrysanthemums, fuchsias, hibiscus and roses.

Alliance formed to preserve old azaleas

The Great Gardens of America Preservation Alliance has formed to identify and preserve ancient camellias and azaleas (those propagated before 1900) and historic ones (plants from 1900 to 1960).

The alliance (greatamericangardensalliance.org) believes there are about 470 ancient and historic camellias but only about 100 azaleas. The group is starting its search in public gardens and wants to save, catalog, propagate and preserve the DNA of vanishing breeds that may have fallen out of favor but represent the history of the plant, which first came from China to Western Europe 300 years ago.

Group studying idea of research foundation

The ASA Board recently established a committee to study the feasibility of creating an azalea research foundation.

Past ASA President **Jim Thornton** is chairing the committee. Members include former ASA Treasurer **Bob Stelloh** and ASA President **John Brown**.

The committee is also charged with investigating and making recommendations as to the form and format of the foundation, if its creation is recommended.

The committee is expected to make its report and recommendation to the Board by the end of the year.

For more information, e-mail jimpatsy@comcast.net.

Call for articles

The Azalean needs more good articles about azaleas, their care, and their use in the landscape. Ideas for topics include:

- Articles describing new public gardens or special azalea collections being created in your area.
- Descriptions and photographs of Society members' gardens.
- Current research on azaleas.
- Information about azalea festivals and sales.
- Historic garden restoration stories.
- Articles about noteworthy azalea hybrid groups or new species or cultivar introductions.

Articles should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents. Illustrations are highly encouraged. Photos should be 4 x 6 inches at 300 dpi resolution.

Submit materials to:

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