

President's Letter

John Brown — Cleveland, South Carolina



A recent posting to the American Rhododendron Society's e-mail forum stated: "I don't know what ASA are, but it sounds interesting! Anyone that could provide a web address to ASA?"

I don't believe anyone could have served up a better pitch to hit. First, a little background. The ASA supports an e-mail forum similar to the ARS through which interested people from all around the world share their thoughts on azaleas and rhododendrons, occasionally branching a tad off topic. The general subject thread was on the topic of azalea seed availability, and someone mentioned the ASA seed exchange which prompted the above posting by Mikkel Jorgensen of Hvidovre, Denmark.

Mikkel, I don't know what ASA are either. It is much like the fable of the three blind men who were taken to an elephant. One touched a leg and declared the elephant to be a tree; another touched the ear and declared it to be a large leaf; and the third touched the trunk and declared it to be a large, strong snake. If you can reach out to us, the ASA can be whatever you want it to be. It is our job to make sure that whatever you touch is what you want to feel.

Some see us as the seed exchange. In a few short years, it has grown into a reputable source of wild collected, hand pollinated, and open pollinated seed from all around the world. Aaron Cook's students (read: class credit) process and sort hundreds of packets containing at least 50 seed from dozens of collectors.

Some see us as *The Azalean*, the quarterly journal of the Azalea Society of America. The journal includes information about scientific research accomplishments, activities of the Society, and garden lore. It gives our members a chance to share their knowledge and love of azaleas.

Some see us as a local chapter with a myriad of activities for members and guests, including speakers, plant sales and exchanges, propagation workshops, cutting exchanges, garden maintenance of public and memorial gardens, garden tours, field trips, educational programs for members and the public, and discussion groups on topics of local interest.

Some see us as an e-mail group from the Internet where topics range from all of the above subjects to the parentage of cultivars, the identification of species and hybrids, the history and distribution of azaleas to the latest work on the genetic makeup of species. Last year, the group coordinated their plans to visit the swarms of azaleas in the western Carolina mountains, resulting in small and large groups of azalea enthusiasts at several locations.

Some see us as our annual conventions where we share our knowledge, exchange plants, visit fantastic gardens, and reconnect with near and dear friends.

So, Mikkel, the ASA is an international group of azalea lovers who are many things to many people. We are a loose collection of gardeners, hybridizers, nurserymen (and women), scientists, hikers, and various other social animals. We invite you to join us and share all of our parts and pieces with us.

It has been a great pleasure for me to serve as President of such a group, and I leave office with confidence that the association will continue to grow and maintain its unique status in the plant society world. You have chosen a great group of officers led by Aaron Cook and John Migas to continue the work, and I look forward to seeing them in action.



▲ Kaitlyn Cook processes seeds.

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 2008-2009

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

Directors

Terms expire 2009	Terms expire 2010
Vincent Ciolino	Hale Booth
J Jackson	Maarten van der Giessen
Dave Nanney	Ron Hooper

Chapter presidents
serve as ex-officio directors.

Chapters

Brookside Gardens (chartered Aug. 1979) William C. Miller III, <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) April Sanborn, <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.