

# Society News

## In the Beginning

*Jim Thorton, ARF Chairman*

Congratulations to the Azalea Society of America! Why shouldn't we pat ourselves on the back for establishing a research foundation? Be it ever so late?

That's right! It's true! The Board of Directors approved the formation of the Azalea Research Foundation (ARF) during the 2009 annual convention. I was appointed chairman with members **Hale Booth, John Brown, John Migas** and **Bob Stelloh** joining me to get the foundation up and running. Members joining us on our Advisory Board are **Dan Krabill**, finance, and **Carol Flowers**, promotions. We still have some positions open like in a tax consultant and a horticultural expert.

Wait! Maybe you haven't kept up with this endeavor over the years so let me try to bring you up to date. I guess it all started back with the folks who formed the Society back in 1977 when they developed the goals and objectives of the Azalea Society.

Well, some things lie dormant, occasionally rising to the surface, like when the late **Mal Clark** donated \$10,000 for research. Then we had the late **Dr. August Kehr** who made a case for research that wouldn't go away but didn't take wings to fly. It took the perseverance of members like **Bob Stelloh** and others to keep it alive.

At the 2008 convention, President **John Brown** made a plea to the ASA Board of Directors to approve a study group to see what the Society should do about creating a research foundation. Volunteers **Hale Booth, John Migas, Buddy Lee, John Brown, Bob Stelloh**, and I signed up.

On January 1, 2009, the study group presented a proposal for the Board of Directors to consider. It was decision-making time! The proposal was approved via e-mail and later at the annual convention in Herndon, Virginia. On May 1, 2009, we became a standing committee within the Azalea Society of America and history was made!

Well, the drums are silent now and the work is just beginning as we proceed into the complex world of fund raising and applying for grants. Our mission mirrors that of the ASA and our goals reach deep into the areas of concern the original founders laid out for us to follow—classification, hybridization, culture, and education/promotion.

It won't be easy and we'll need your support to succeed. Support by standing behind us, promoting us, and helping fund us with your donations.

You can give a little, or you can give a lot. Just make sure it's something you feel right about doing. You can contribute with a personal check, by part of your RMD (required minimum distribution), stock, or any tangible property. And please consider the Azalea Research Foundation in your will. While all contributions to a registered charity are tax deductible, some can be better than others, so it's best to talk

to your tax advisor first to maximize your tax benefits.

For example, if you contribute shares of stock worth more than you paid for it, you can deduct the full value of the stock and you won't have to pay tax on the appreciation. That's good for us and even better for you!

The attached envelope in this issue of *The Azalean* is provided for your convenience. So, be the first to donate!

Got any comments? You can reach us at: [azalearesearch@yahoogroups.com](mailto:azalearesearch@yahoogroups.com) or call or write me at:

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## Online Discussion Board

Below is a selection of questions and answers from the ASA's online discussion board. Anyone can submit a question by emailing [azaleas@yahoogroups.com](mailto:azaleas@yahoogroups.com). To get replies, be sure to make the first line of your e-mail read: this is from the ASK US page, so please send me a CC.

Subscribing to the azaleas e-mail discussion group lets you join in the fun directly. It's free, and you can unsubscribe whenever you want. To subscribe, send an e-mail to [azaleas-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:azaleas-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) (expect to receive between 1 and 10 e-mails per day). Or, if you prefer, you can subscribe to a daily digest of the day's discussion by e-mailing [azaleas-digest-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:azaleas-digest-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

**Q** I live in zone 7b. Our azaleas are plain old Formosas; very nice and bloomed beautifully this year. But one or two of them are covered with lichen. What does this indicate? They get plenty of water and sun. Not all in same area have the problem. Should we just dig them out? Will the lichen kill the plants?

**Rose Ann Pistole**

*Aiken, South Carolina*

**A** The lichen does no harm to the plant. It takes moisture and nourishment from the air and rain, not the plant. Lichen can grow on rock. You may not like its looks but that is another issue. Because it is so slow growing, it is only found on surfaces that have been stable for a long time, hence older plants.

**Tom Schuetz**

*Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania*

**Q** My grandma has an azalea bush that wasn't trimmed the past two years and should have

been. I recently trimmed it just after the blossoms all died - which I had read was a good time.

But there seems to be a bright greenish mold—kinda emerald colored—on the branches. Part of the tree had died away but I don't know if it was the mold or not.

Please let me know if this moldy green residue should be treated!

#### **Ukky**

*Armstrong County, Pennsylvania*

**A**I would bet that the greenish mold is actually a harmless lichen growth. Lichens will grow anywhere, even on rocks. They don't cause any harm. In New Zealand, they delight in getting lichens to grow on everything.

Trimmed azaleas tend to be dense without much air circulation and more prone to dieback. Also, drought contributes to dieback. When pruning, try to cut out inside branches and branches that cross each other. Try to leave the plant with some openness so that air can circulate.

**Steve**

**Q**The leaves on my azalea are turning yellow what can be done to get them to green up?

#### **Terry**

**A**Your first step should be to determine why your leaves are turning yellow. You didn't indicate whether these azaleas were newly planted or whether they had been in place for many years. Yellowing of the leaves could be caused by several situations. If you have your azalea planted in the wrong location—or you planted it improperly—then the yellow leaves might be symptomatic of a root problem in which case adding a touch of fertilizer isn't going to resolve the problem.

Having said that, I'm going to suggest that you try a dilute solution of a water soluble form of fertilizer like Miracid® or Miracle Gro® for Azaleas, Rhododendron, and Camellias. Of course, any water soluble fertilizer for acid loving plants will do. Mix up a half strength solution and apply it as a drench. Just pour it all over the top of the plant. The leaves will absorb (foliar feeding) some of the fertilizer solution and the balance will be readily available to the roots immediately.

If after about two weeks, the yellow doesn't improve, then the poor color of the leaves was symptomatic of one of the other problems mentioned above.

**William C. Miller III**  
*Bethesda, Maryland*

## *New Members*

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