

President's Letter

Aaron Cook — Valdese, North Carolina



On Friday, December 9, 1977, at 8 p.m. a meeting was held at Brookside Gardens for the purpose of forming an azalea society. Those in attendance were **George Harding, Mike White, Bob Caviness, Frank White, Emile Deckert, and Alice Holland.** **Emile Deckert** was asked to serve as the acting President and **Alice Holland** was asked to serve temporarily as Secretary/Treasurer.

There was apparently some discussion about whether or not to be part of the American Rhododendron Society. In the end, it was decided that the newly formed Azalea Society of America would be a separate entity, but would cooperate with and remain friendly with the ARS. By 1978, the society was well organized with by-laws, national officers, and a board of governors (now known as the board of directors).

The first public meeting was held in Silver Spring, Maryland, with 43 of 100 society members present. In 1979, the annual meeting was held at the U.S. National Arboretum with 75 of the society's 140 members present. By the following year, there were five ASA chapters. New chapters in Louisiana and the Midwest were established in 1981 and the ASA has continued to grow ever since.

Currently we have more than 800 members and 11 chapters. We have an active on-line azalea discussion group and a Web site. In recent years, the board has worked diligently to provide additional services for our members and the general public. Some of our successes are the Azalea City program, the archives, the seed exchange, and the Azalea Research Foundation. By all accounts we seem to be doing well, and we have good reason to be proud of our Society. We have a broad-based core membership, the Society is financially stable, and we produce a colorful and informative journal.

So how do we build on our strengths and continue to improve? Let's begin by setting some goals for the next year. I strongly believe that if we are to continue to grow it will be at the local level through active chapters. If you are currently serving as an officer in a chapter, make it your goal to have at least six meetings in the coming year. Build your meetings around interesting speakers, seed exchanges, cutting exchanges, garden visits, and flower shows. Be a good azalea friend, sharing advice and plants with your neighbors, family, and friends. Often that gift plant is treasured for many years, a constant living reminder of the giver.

On the national level let's set a new attendance record at the New Orleans Convention in March. When this society started, nearly half of the membership attended the annual meetings. Let's set our goal for the next convention at 25 percent of the membership attending. I expect to see 200 of my azalea friends in New Orleans. Is there any better place to celebrate our successes, share and learn about new ideas and projects, and to enjoy good azalea fellowship than the Big Easy?

With the warmest of regards and looking forward to a bright future, your friend—*Aaron*.



▲ Outgoing ASA President John Brown (left) with incoming President Aaron Cook (right) at the 2009 National Convention in Virginia.

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 2009-2010

President — Aaron Cook
Vice President — John Migas
Secretary — Carol Flowers
Treasurer — Dan Krabill
Immediate Past President — John Brown

Directors

Terms expire 2010	Terms expire 2011
Hale Booth	Dr. Joe Coleman
Ron Hooper	Eugene Stano, Jr.
Maarten van der Giessen	Dave Nanney

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) Phil Lanning, <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.