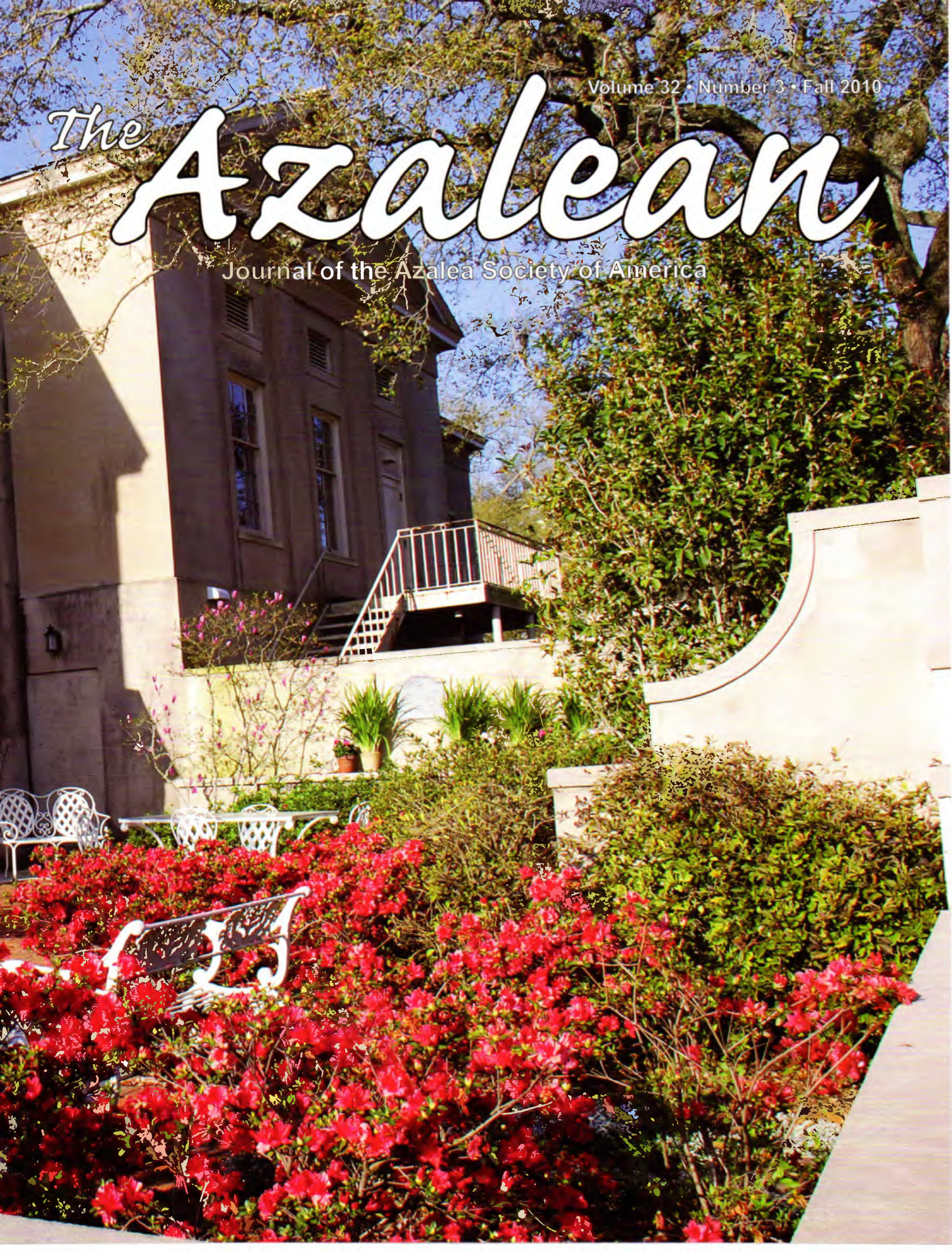


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The Azalean

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



President's Letter

Aaron Cook — Valdese, North Carolina



It has been a busy summer for me, and I am sure many of you have experienced the same. I would love to hear about everyone's garden, as well as their successes and failures. But let me tell you about my garden. First and foremost, it is not my garden. It is a collaborative effort involving many people. The garden is spread over a vast geographic region covering many hardiness zones and microclimates.

Currently the garden contains 11 different azalea beds with more than 650 unique varieties. But as any good gardener knows, there is always room for another bed.

One of the beds is located in the extreme southern portion of the garden and is filled with an amazing collection of varieties. These varieties flourish in spite of hurricanes, occasional cold winters, and oil spills. A couple of award winners in this bed are the cultivars **Buddy Lee**, **Margie Jenkins**, and **John Thornton**.

In another more northern area of the garden is a bed composed of red Georgia clay. In spite of the tough growing conditions and climate, this bed contains many award winning cultivars as well. Two specimens stand out, **Dr. Joe Coleman** and **Donna Coleman**.

As we continue to move farther north the terrain of our garden takes on a decidedly cooler aspect. Here we have some of the wilder specimens and a more naturalistic style. This is one of my favorite areas of the garden, and I tend to spend more time hanging out here. There are a couple of award winners in this bed as well, **Bob Stelloh** and **Ed Collins**.

Moving even farther north we come to an area where we have several well established beds. In fact these are some of the first beds established in this garden. Although these beds share a common soil type and climate, they are quite distinct. In these beds we find many award winners: **Don Voss**, **Bob Hobbs**, **Bee Hobbs**, **Bill Miller**, **Donald Hyatt**, **Phil Louer**, **Frances Louer**, **Jane Newman**, and **Bob Stewart** just to name a few.

So "how does your garden grow?" Are our beds well tended? Are we providing good growing conditions as a Society to ensure that our garden continues to grow and thrive? Are we cultivating the next crop of award winners? For as surely as a garden requires tending, so does a gardening society.

We are fortunate that our Azalea Society garden is filled with members that are analogous to iron-clad good doers when we compare them to plants in our home garden. They tend to shed adversity and thrive in spite of harsh conditions. We just don't have a lot of tender, finicky members in our Azalea Society garden. They are a diverse group, well suited to the constantly changing Society membership environment. I am always surprised by their amazing strength and productivity.

Have you ever noticed how adding new plants affects the whole garden? The same is true for the Azalea Society. Every new member we add changes the complexion of our Society garden. Good gardening to all!

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*).

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On the Cover

The eight acres of beauty that comprise Longue Vue House and Gardens are an idyllic and tranquil oasis in the lively pulse that is urban New Orleans. Created in 1934 by Ellen Biddle Shipman, known as "the dean of American women landscape architects," Longue Vue has an important place in the history of garden design in this country. Please see related article on page 56.



Photo Pam Fitch

Modernizing a Garden Classic

Stephen Krebs, Ph.D.—Kirtland, Ohio

Editor's Note: Dr. Krebs presented this article at the 2010 ASA National Convention in New Orleans. It was originally published in The Holden Arboretum's quarterly journal Leaves (Spring 2010) and is published here in a revised form with permission from the editor of Leaves.

Cultivated evergreen rhododendrons are in need of a makeover. Since the mid-20th century they have been broadly popular in the United States and a mainstay of garden landscapes, but this exalted position is eroding. Rhododendrons have lost some of their luster in the marketplace. Recently, I listened to a trade conference talk on recommended woody plants given by a nursery owner in Lake County, Ohio (my locale), and rhododendrons were not mentioned.

What's going on? The main problem is a static inventory. The same cultivars that helped popularize rhododendrons decades ago—the so-called 'ironclads' with white, rose, or purple flowers—continue to make up the bulk of commerce today. Newer introductions with better flower colors and foliage, such as the cold-hardy varieties developed by David Leach and breeders in Finland and Germany, are sold to a much smaller specialty market comprised of knowledgeable and discerning gardeners with the skills to grow them. Rhododendrons are finicky plants to grow under less-than-ideal (most) conditions and this is where the "old-timer" hybrids developed over a century ago outperform the newer breeds. Their vigor and adaptability to a wide range of conditions results in more success for homeowners and fewer replacements by landscapers.

These are the main considerations guiding my breeding work at the David G. Leach Research Station. My goal is to increase the popular appeal of new introductions by adding disease resistance and heat tolerance to them, traits that can improve their performance under challenging conditions and broaden their marketability to include the deep South (USDA hardiness zone 8), regions where rhododendrons currently have a limited presence. These traits are not independent. My working hypothesis is that evergreen rhododendrons do not grow well in warmer regions because they are more susceptible to a soil disease under those conditions, not because of direct temperature stress on plants. If I am correct, breeding for disease resistance should confer greater adaptability to southern climates.

A Pervasive and Persistent Pathogen

The disease problem I'm working on is called rhododendron root rot, caused primarily by the soil fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi* (Figure 1), an invasive pathogen that affects more than 1,000 plant species globally. Root rot is the most common cause of rhododendron mortality in commercial nurseries and home landscapes. The pathogen enters the root system of susceptible host plants and destroys cells during its acquisition of carbohydrate nutrients, including the root vascular (water-conducting) structures. By the time above-ground wilting symptoms are observed, the plant is nearly dead.

A majority of evergreen rhododendrons are susceptible to the disease, but can be grown in infested soils if they are well-drained. This is a disease avoidance strategy, because free groundwater facilitates infection by 'swimming' fungal spores. Adding composted pine bark to the soil mix improves performance by increasing porosity and actively suppressing the disease. These cultural techniques are used, for example, in Holden's Helen S. Layer Rhododendron Garden for growing plants on heavy soils with a high water table. Soil drenches with fungicides can also provide a prophylactic protection against the disease, and are used in container production nurseries, but this approach is neither effective nor advisable in home gardens.

None of these strategies is fail-safe, and rhododendrons would benefit greatly from an additional layer of defense. This could be achieved by adding genetically-conferred resistance to *P. cinnamomi* to cultivated rhododendrons. Should the cultural methods of disease control fail, the host plant would then have genes and physiological mechanisms

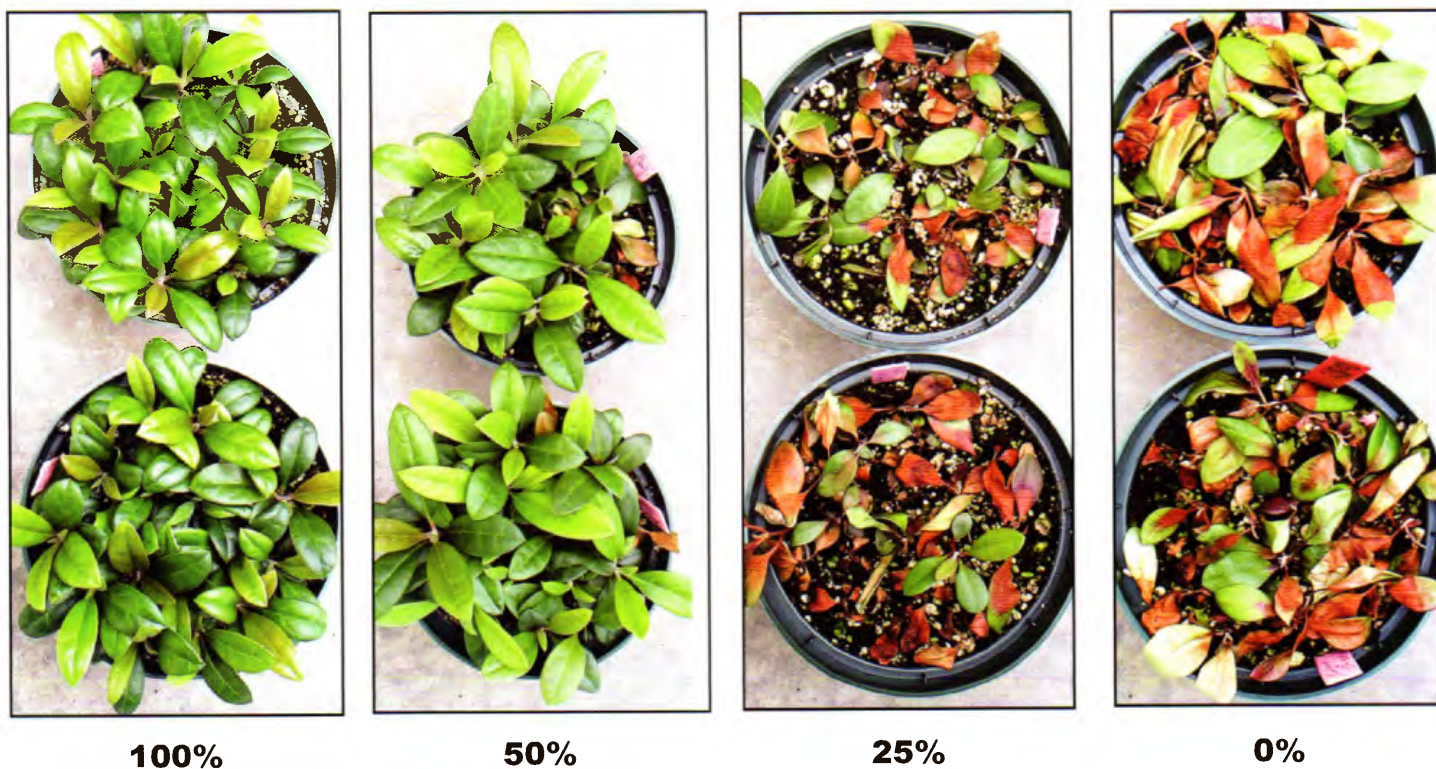
▼ Figure 1—Typical field wilting symptoms due to root rot disease (right). A chlamydospore of *P. cinnamomi* that is capable of long-term survival in soils (left). It germinates and eventually releases zoospores that "swim" toward and infect roots.



Photo Dr. Stephen Krebs



Photo Dr. Stephen Krebs



▲ Figure 2—Vegetative and flowering forms of *R. hyperythrum* (top). Seedlings with different levels (%) of *R. hyperythrum* in their genetic constitution vary in root rot resistance (bottom). At the 50% level (a resistant x susceptible F_1 cross) the progeny are nearly as resistant as 100% *R. hyperythrum* seedlings two months after inoculation. In this example, *R. hyperythrum* was crossed with the susceptible cultivar *R. 'Calsap'*.

for minimizing fungal damage to its root system. Transfer of host resistance genes can be achieved by finding a good source of resistance (rhododendron species or cultivar) and breeding it by cross-pollination to non-resistant plants that are ornamentally superior. Success in this venture requires a controlled and reliable method of screening plants for resistance, a bit of luck in finding rare, high-level resistance, and time to grow out generations of rhododendrons from seed to flower.

A Species for the Future

In the search for resistance, a genetically diverse group of about 350 evergreen rhododendron cultivars and species have been screened by hand-inoculating greenhouse-grown plants with *P. cinnamomi*. Much of this groundwork was done in the 1970s by researchers at Ohio State University, and we completed a screen of more contemporary cultivars at Holden in 2002. Fewer than five percent of these plants proved to be resistant, and an even smaller number were both resistant and cold-hardy, another key requirement for our breeding program.

These disease screens provided important information about the nature of resistance. The responses of different cultivars and species to inoculation were not discrete, either resistant or susceptible, but continuous, ranging in increasing severity from genotypes with healthy roots, fine root damage, necrosis of coarse roots, crown rot, or complete plant death. These varying levels of resistance among test plants are an indication that the resistance genes do not confer complete immunity to the disease, and that resistance is controlled by multiple rather than single genes. Also called ‘partial’ resistance, it is often adequate for field-level plant protection, and has an advantage over single-gene ‘complete’ resistance in being more durable, harder to overcome by any genetic changes in pathogen virulence.

Our initial decision was to use resistant cultivars rather than species for breeding, since they had already been selected for ornamental value and had more color than the available resistant species—all white-flowered. However, this approach turned out to be mostly a dead end, since many of the hybrid cultivars were either sterile or had poor breeding value—although they were themselves resistant, they were not able to transmit this trait effectively to their progeny.

In 2004, our attention shifted to a somewhat obscure species from Taiwan, *R. hyperythrum* (Figure 2). Because it grows at a high elevation, it is also reasonably cold hardy (flower bud hardy to USDA zone 6). This species is resistant to root rot and was being used by hobby nurseryman John Thornton, D.V.M., to hybridize rhododendrons for his zone 8 location in southern Louisiana. It was during a visit to his nursery, after seeing vigorous *R. hyperythrum* hybrids growing in red clay soil under a hot sun, that the connection between root rot resistance and high temperature tolerance became evident to me. John gave me some of his hybrids. I acquired *R. hyperythrum* accessions from the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, and began making crosses with them on a large scale.



Photo Dr. Stephen Krebs



Photo Dr. Stephen Krebs

▲ ► Figure 3—Examples of selections from F₁ hybrids between cold-hardy rhododendron cultivars and *R. hyperythrum*.

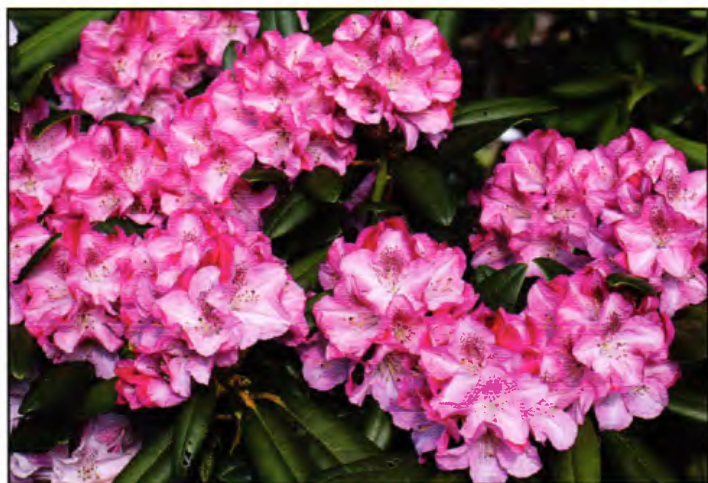


Photo Dr. Stephen Krebs

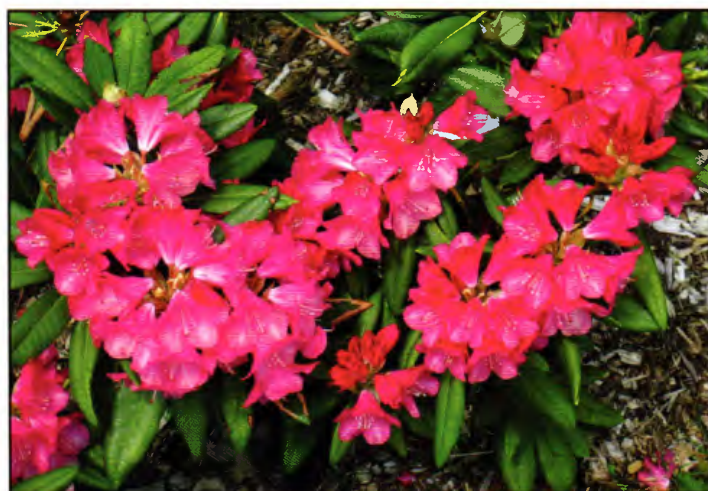


Photo Dr. Stephen Krebs



Photo Dr. Stephen Krebs

Promising Results

Breeding involves reshuffling parental traits via genetic recombination, with the goal of creating a hybrid which combines the best features of both parents and none of their shortcomings. In addition to root rot resistance, *R. hyperythrum* has many ornamental attributes—excellent foliage, a dense, mounded habit, and a very floriferous nature. It transmits these traits readily to progeny, and tests of its breeding value for resistance in greenhouse experiments suggest that first generation (F_1) hybrids between *R. hyperythrum* and non-resistant cultivars will have high level, if not full, resistance (Figure 2).

What *R. hyperythrum* lacks for commercial purposes—and is provided by careful selection of the other parent in a cross—is flower color, USDA zone 5 cold hardiness (our northern Ohio winter climate), and a compact ‘truss’ or inflorescence that is the preferred commercial standard. There are plenty of rhododendrons that meet these criteria at the Leach Research Station and in the Helen S. Layer Rhododendron Garden at Holden, and we have crossed them with *R. hyperythrum* in flower color groups of pink, red, yellow, purple and white.

In spring 2009 and 2010, 40 of these F_1 crosses totaling 2,500 progeny bloomed in the field at Madison, Ohio. While 2010 was a mild winter, plants in winter 2009 were subjected to deep frosts of -10° to -13°F (-23° to -25°C). Selections were made for individuals combining cold hardiness with ornamental value. On hand to assist with evaluation were representatives of two commercial enterprises interested in our plants—Briggs Nursery Inc. in Washington State, and Plant Development Services Inc. (PDSI) in Loxley, Alabama. More than two dozen high quality plants were identified (Figure 3), and the top six of these were chosen for tissue culture propagation at Briggs and subsequent evaluation at multiple sites ranging from hardiness zones 5 to 8. PDSI will trial the propagated plants under their production and field conditions, and good performers will be entered into their Southern Living Plant Collection™.

Within four years, the first wave of these “modernized” rhododendrons may be available to the nursery trade. During the interim, more selections will be made from the F_1 plants and second-generation F_2 populations will be created to identify plants that have higher resistance and more flower color saturation than the F_1 s. I think of this as an R&D pipeline for “Leach Plus” plants, because we’re adding landscape value to the fine cultivars Leach created. This doesn’t mean we’ve abandoned the “Leach Classics”—we will continue to select, evaluate, and introduce fancy, new plants for the specialty market. The real prize, however, will be improved rhododendrons that are easier to grow; have a broader, including Southern, market; and are better positioned for a future of climate change due to a disease resistance that confers increased adaptation to warmer growing conditions.

Stephen Krebs received a doctorate degree in plant breeding and genetics from Michigan State University. He has worked on trait improvements in various crop plants such as celery (disease resistance), blueberry (fruit size and quality), and meadowfoam, a wildflower valued for its seed oil. The switch to ornamental plants started in 1992, when he joined The Holden Arboretum to work with Dr. David G. Leach on rhododendron and azalea breeding. In addition to the core emphasis on cold-hardiness, the selection criteria have been expanded to include disease resistance (to root rot in rhododendron and powdery mildew in azaleas), vigor under open-field (high light) conditions, and heat tolerance, all combined in plants with attractive foliage and flowers. That means throwing out most of what he grows. His e-mail address is skrebs@holdenarb.org.

Learning—A Look Back at Louisiana Lagniappe

Carol Flowers—Washington, D.C.

Before leaving the ASA convention in New Orleans, **Pam Fitch** asked me to write a wrap-up article on our 2010 gathering. As in the past, I was happy to do this. Recently she sent an e-mail stating that the deadline for the article was coming up soon. I began to think about what I wanted to say. Each convention I have attended has been special. Every host organization has put in a lot of time, thought, and effort into making the convention in their part of the world special and memorable. As hosts the Louisiana Chapter of the Society continued this tradition. The New Orleans venue provided a new and different spot to showcase gardens containing azaleas, eat lots of wonderful Gulf Coast seafood, and learn more about plants from knowledgeable plantsmen.

From the Louisiana ASA Chapter we learned a new word. They hoped while attending the convention we would experience “lagniappe,” an old Louisiana French custom of giving customers a little extra. I think all of us who attended the convention would agree we received that “extra.”

If you remember last winter, many parts of the U.S., including Washington, D.C. where I live, had more record snow falls and broken snow shovels than we have experienced in previous winters. Thus last March we looked forward to spending some time in a warm place away from icy roads and snow drifts.

What I wanted was to find the New Orleans outdoor café I remembered being at when I was a small child. We arrived the Saturday before the convention and on Sunday took an early morning walk around the French Quarter. A place called Jackson Square came into view.

“That’s it,” I said to my husband. “There is the doughnut place I remember. We ate some kind of doughnuts with lots of powdered sugar and drank a very strong coffee that had lots of hot milk in it.” I knew before leaving New Orleans

▼ Convention attendees gathered for a group photo after touring at Buddy Lee’s nursery.



▲ ASA members line up to receive an Encore® Azalea during the tour of Buddy Lee’s Transcend Nursery.

▼ Convention attendees enjoyed a tour of Longue Vue Gardens. The estate was designed in 1939-1942 for philanthropists Edgar Bloom Stern, a New Orleans cotton broker, and his wife Edith Rosenwald Stern, an heiress to the Sears-Roebuck fortune.



this time I would again have to eat another of these doughnuts without the holes. During the week I learned that this famous place is called “Café Du Monde” and has been famous for its special doughnuts, known as beignets, for more than 100 years. No wonder my New Orleans relatives had made a point of taking us to this special place so many years ago.

During the Monday convention tour we drove north out of New Orleans. Having lived most of my life in the northeast, it is always a treat for me to see plant life different from what grows in Washington, D.C. **Buddy Lee**, **Regina Bracy**, and **Margie Jenkins** all own plant nurseries in this area. All three nursery owners gave us tours of their places.

Encore® Azaleas are very popular in the Washington, D.C. area. Lowe’s and other local nurseries sell them. Last November I saw some blooming in a small garden near my Maryland home. As I strolled through Buddy Lee’s Transcend Nursery listening to Buddy talk, I took lots of pictures. I knew I was going to enjoy sharing what I had seen and heard when I got back home. Buddy was generous in giving each of us one of his latest Encore® introductions to take home.

The next stop on our tour was Bracy Nursery. The nursery originally had been the Bracy family dairy farm. Gradually the 160 acre farm evolved into row upon row of containerized plants. The designs made by the many varieties of plants growing in the nursery made for great pictures.

Outside the Bracy’s home was a feature not practical in the northeast, but one I always thought would be nice to have—an outdoor kitchen. Using these facilities a lunch of freshly fried fish had been prepared. We had already been treated to special Louisiana foods at **Buddy Lee’s** nursery. I enjoyed it all wishing for a bigger stomach.

After lunch we drove to **Margie Jenkins’** nursery. Only a few azaleas were in bloom throughout our stay in Louisiana due to the cold winter this area had experienced. The plus side of these circumstances was that other blooming plants got their chance to show off. The Jenkins farm had both camellias and lots of native Louisiana plants that Ms. Margie enjoyed talking about and showing off. She had been growing lots of her latest azalea selection named ‘Freddy’ and offered each of us one of the plants. Dessert was served at this stop. Obviously people from Louisiana don’t want anyone to go away hungry.

Our final destination of the day before heading back to the French Quarter was the Louisiana State University Ag Center’s Hammond Research Station. This facility was first developed in January 1922 to provide help to strawberry and truck-crop farmers. Now **Regina Bracy**, resident coordinator of the station, works to create new programs to serve the emerging green industry. These programs include those involved in landscape horticulture research and extension services.

The Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden, first started in 1996 to recognize the contributions Ms. Margie has made to the horticulture industry, shone as a prominent part of the research station. Many of us who read about the garden in



Photo Pam Fitch

▲ Convention Chairperson Regina Bracy welcomes ASA members to New Orleans.

▼ Louisiana Chapter President Allen Owens discussed the challenges of gardening in the deep South.



Photo Pam Fitch

previous editions of *The Azalean* enjoyed seeing the extensive collection of azalea varieties planted at this location..

Our Louisiana hosts felt we would be hungry after touring the gardens. More Louisiana cuisine greeted us at dinner. As we ate, several speakers discussed the many contributions individuals from Louisiana have made in improving azaleas. We also learned how the people in Louisiana had shown great resilience in rebuilding their state after the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina. **Buddy Lee** presented the Society’s distinguished service awards to **Maarten van der Giessen** and **John Thornton**.

After dinner, the tour buses drove us back to the French Quarter. There was not a lot of talking on the trip back. We had seen a lot, eaten a lot, and had continued to learn about some of our favorite plants. It had been a happy day.

I had a some difficulty trying to describe our Tuesday tour day. **Regina Bracy’s** article published in a prior edition of *The Azalean* had described the experiences that we would have on the convention tours. What she accurately described was what we experienced. In her article she included the websites for the city institutions we would see on our second day of touring the New Orleans area. Rather than



▲ Past ASA President Robert "Buddy" Lee addressed members.

▼ Margie Jenkins led a tour at her nursery located in Amite, Louisiana.



repeat what Regina wrote I thought I would share some of the information supplied by those Internet pages.

The New Orleans Botanical Garden is a part of New Orleans' 1,300 acre City Park. This park is the sixth largest and seventh most visited park in the U.S. According to Wikipedia, it was originally established in the 17th century. Its size significantly increased during the early 20th century when additional land was purchased for the park. A master plan to guide the park development was created. During the 1930s, numerous federal relief agencies such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) implemented those plans.

The forerunner of what we know today as the New Orleans Botanical Gardens was opened in 1936, and it was called the Rose Garden. In the 1980s this garden was in poor condition. Many organizations, volunteers, and donors came together to revitalize and improve the garden. The garden was renamed the New Orleans Botanical Gardens and much work was done to create large collections of plants from around the world. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage to the area destroying the plant collections. Six months after the catastrophe the garden reopened. Donors and volunteers had come together to start the process of creating a new and better garden.

On one side of the botanical gardens is a section called the Zemurray Azalea and Camellia Garden. Camellias, azaleas, and magnolias provide the background environment for the sculptures created by the 1930's artist Enrique Alferez.

Besides just being a pretty place to visit, the New Orleans Botanical Garden provides extensive educational programs for both adults and children. These include both tours for school groups and classes in such subjects as writing, drawing, plants and environmental issues. Garden shows and concerts take place on the site. Private and public groups use the setting for weddings and other celebrations.

I have just touched on the web information you can find on these gardens. The official Web site www.garden.neworleanscitypark.com can provide more information. Wikipedia also provides a good description of the garden.

The Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden is an open-air five-acre part of the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA). In the early 1970s, Sydney and Walda Besthoff bought their first sculpture for the office building used by their family-owned drugstore chain. Over a period of years, they bought many more modern sculptures and placed them in sites in and around their office building. In 1978, the couple established the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Foundation, dedicating it to the cultivation of public interest in art, particularly sculpture. Much of their personal sculpture collection became part of the foundation. It was displayed mainly in and around the office building they owned.

With their mission in mind, the Besthoff Foundation needed a more public space for the growing sculpture collection. A successful \$10 million fund raising campaign and the designation of a five-acre site became the beginnings of the sculpture garden. Ground breaking for the garden took place in 2001, and the garden opened in November of 2003. Twenty-seven 200-year-old live oak trees, 344 azaleas in three varieties, and pine and magnolia trees provided the background setting for the 54 pieces of sculpture in the garden. Groups of volunteer gardeners lovingly help maintain both the plant life and the sculptures that exist in the garden. Weddings and private and public celebrations are held in the garden during evening hours, while the public has free access during scheduled daily daytime hours.

NOMA's education department works hard to create many educational opportunities for the surrounding communities and visitors. School groups tour the garden and learn to appreciate the many facets of sculpture. Classes in yoga and pilates take place on the site. Listed on NOMA's website, www.noma.org, are the many educational opportunities open to the public. Included on the website is information that can be used for educational purposes by individuals and educators worldwide. Many useful educators-manuals created by NOMA's education department are found on this website. One manual is on the Sculpture Garden and includes a field guide written specifically for helping students identify and learn more about the garden's plants and sculptures.

The Internet may have come into public awareness only 20 years ago, but it has provided learning opportunities that many older people could not have envisioned. The Web has given us easy access to learning opportunities and made learning more fun.

Longue Vue "country estate" was built during the years 1939-1942 for Edgar and Edith Stern. It was established on 12 acres located within a 20-minute drive of the New Orleans business district. During the years that the Sterns lived in the house, famous people such as Eleanor Roosevelt, John and Robert Kennedy, and Jack Benny were entertained.

The gardens originally designed by famous landscape architect Ellen Shipman consist of 12 garden rooms. The organizational website, www.longue.com, shows pictures of and describes these rooms. After Shipman's death in 1950, the architects of the house, William and Geoffrey Platt, continued implementing Shipman's designs. In the early 1960s the Platt brothers and Mrs. Stern took a trip to Spain and Portugal. The architects used what they learned to continue the evolution of the garden. During the 60s, the decision was made by the Stern family to open the estate to the public. Garden changes with this goal in mind were implemented.

The garden room I enjoyed most was a one-half-acre space created in 1998 called "The Lucy C. Roussel Discovery Garden." In that garden, children and adults alike have an opportunity to learn about the plants that give us food, clothing, and shelter. The opportunity to touch and smell flowers and herbs adds to the delight in visiting the garden.

Longue Vue provides many opportunities for both children and adults to take classes and hear lectures on many subjects including information on the environment, gardening, and the decorative arts. Its well designed website provides further opportunity to learn about plants, the environment, and the people that live in our world.

The time we spent at Longue Vue was all too short. In writing this article, I wished my home in D.C. was closer to this beautiful garden spot. However, I did enjoy reliving the experience by rereading its website.

In Summary

All of the yearly azalea conventions I have attended have seemed to end too soon. This one in New Orleans was no exception. During the days of the convention we did come to experience and understand the new word we learned, lagniappe. Although I won't implement many of the new gardening ideas I heard about, I now know these ideas exist. With each convention I learn more about the American Continent. Easier methods of travel make these learning opportunities possible. Development of the Internet has made finding worldwide information so much easier. I hope all of us will continue to take advantage of learning opportunities now afforded to us by easier ways of travel and the Internet.

Hopefully we will continue to remain curious plant lovers, occasionally meeting face to face and in so doing learning from each other. Hopefully we will continue to use



Photo Pam Fitch

▲ Convention attendees toured the propagation greenhouses at Bracy's Nursery.

▼ The LSU Ag Center Hammond Research Station covers 150 acres. Research is focused on landscape horticulture, including plant selection, fertility, weed control, and plant growth regulators.



Photo Pam Fitch

forms of technology such as the Internet to enrich our lives. With these opportunities we will continue to integrate what we learn about plants with other facets of life. We will enjoy the arts more and more deliberately work to preserve and protect our natural environment.

Before retiring, Carol Flowers managed a computer help desk for the U.S. Census Bureau. Her interest in azaleas came from her many childhood visits to the Planting Fields Arboretum in Oyster Bay, New York. She has been a member of the Azalea Society of America for more than 25 years.

Call for Articles

The Azalean needs articles about azaleas, their care, and their use in the landscape. Articles should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents. Illustrations are highly encouraged.

Submit articles to: Pam Fitch; Editor, *The Azalean*; P.O. Box 632537; Nacogdoches, TX 75963 or e-mail: theazalean@gmail.com.

Never Enough—Post Convention Tours 2010

Robert “Buddy” Lee—Independence, Louisiana

Three days of ASA convention tours are usually enough for most “normal people.” However there is always that “fringe element” group that just never gets enough of azalea and garden tours. Then the most frightening of all is the “off the medication” person that always volunteers to coordinate and lead (using those words very loosely) this adventurous group to places where tour buses would never tread. Down dark alleys, winding back roads and alligator infested swamps that lead to secret garden and nursery sanctuaries that probably have never even been mapped by Lewis and Clark, or even GPS. These secret places, sometimes hidden in plain sight, are true treasures that are owned and maintained by the most pleasant and big-hearted people in the world.

Our travels began on the edge of the French Quarter in New Orleans. The weather was just right for garden tours here in Louisiana—clear blue skies and cool temps with a slight northwest breeze. Once out of the tangle of city streets and interstate overpasses, we motored north across the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway (a 24-mile bridge that was once considered the longest bridge in the world) to the piney woods and rolling hills of St. Tammany Parish. Riverside Nursery, the business and home place of **Jim Campbell**, would be our first place to visit. Riverside Nursery is located on the snowy white sandbanks of the beautiful Bogue Falaya River and, at one time, had many high pine and hardwood trees for overstory. However, Hurricane Katrina was not kind to this area, and numerous trees were lost, creating more sunny areas in the garden.

Jim has been collecting many different types of plants in his garden for many years, but his favorite garden plant, after azaleas of course, are camellias. Hundreds of camellias are planted along the winding woodland garden paths, and many of them were in full bloom during our visit. The greenhouses at the nursery were filled with many rare and unusual camel-

lias with spectacular blooms. On the edges of a large grassy area, large stands of bamboo of many different varieties created a distinct Asian atmosphere. Everyone wandered freely throughout the nursery and garden, finding many neat and unusual vines, ferns, groundcovers, shrubs, and trees. Jim was always handy to answer our many questions. He even gave an impromptu “hands-on” camellia grafting demonstration, which was a big hit. We could have stayed much longer; however, we needed to get on the road again to catch up with our schedule.

With hand-drawn maps in hand and their fearless leader at the head of the caravan, this little band of plant gypsies meandered northward toward the sleepy little town of Pine, Louisiana to the rhododendron garden of **Dr. John Thornton**. The first order of business, and to also keep up my fighting weight, was lunch at the locally famous Chinese Buffet in Franklinton. Here you can enjoy the exotic taste of the far East alongside Cajun southern deep-fried items. After a



Photo Robert “Buddy” Lee

▲ Jim Campbell, Steve Krebs, Mike Sykes walk through bamboo planted at Campbell’s garden in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana.

▼ Jim Campbell demonstrates his camellia grafting technique.



Photo Robert “Buddy” Lee

▼ ASA members touring Jim Campbell’s camellia greenhouses.



Photo Robert “Buddy” Lee

hardy meal and good conversation, we were off to tour the southernmost rhododendron garden in the United States.

Dr. John Thornton, a retired veterinarian and owner of the garden, met us not far from the entrance. This garden was extremely close to the eye of Hurricane Katrina and suffered extensive damage. John, who tends the garden mostly by himself, had cleaned up much of the storm damage; however, a few downed large trees were still visible in the garden. The downed old trees added a unique artistic interest level to the 10-acre garden. Nestled in the garden along the pathways were large collections of native azaleas, rhododendrons, evergreen azaleas, and many different native shrubs and trees. John has done extensive breeding work with all the North American native azalea species. However he is most widely known for his breeding work crossing *Rhododendron hyperythrum* and traditional rhodies to create a group of heat- and disease-tolerant rhodies for the South.

John walked with the group answering questions and making comments about certain plants and pointing out many of his hybrids. Everyone was welcomed to take some of the plants that were in the small nursery area. This created great excitement among the group as people tried to decide which plants they wanted. With good-byes and thank yous

to John, we filed our cars out of the garden exit with some of the attendees heading back to New Orleans to catch flights back home and the rest of the group continuing on toward Semmes, Alabama, for another day of post tours.

The two-hour drive to Semmes, Alabama, took our group through the pine tree lined roads of South Mississippi. In some areas along the way, large areas of upland bogs with thousands of blooming pitcher plants added to the scenic drive. After checking into the hotel in Semmes and freshening up a bit, the group had a conversation-filled meal at one of the local diners.

Bright and early the next morning, and after a hearty breakfast, the remaining tour group members drove to van der Giessen Nursery. **Billy Lucas** greeted us at the nursery and basically set us free to roam the many greenhouses and plant-filled yards, which is a very special privilege at a wholesale nursery at the peak of shipping season. Like kids in a candy store, everyone went their own direction. This wholesale nursery grows an unbelievably wide selection of many different plant genera. Evergreen azaleas are their specialty and they grow many hard-to-get azalea varieties. They are the initial collectors and growers of the Aromi hybrids (Dr. Aromi was a very close friend).



Photo Robert "Buddy" Lee

▲ Dr. John Thornton (right) welcomes guests to his garden and nursery in Pine, Louisiana.



Photo Robert "Buddy" Lee

▲ Dr. John Thornton graciously gave plants to post-convention tour attendees.

▼ ASA members admiring Dr. John Thornton's plants.



Photo Robert "Buddy" Lee



Photo Robert "Buddy" Lee

▼ ASA members touring van der Giessen Nursery.

Society News

Membership Renewals Due

Dan Krabill, ASA Treasurer

It is almost time for most of us to renew our memberships in the Azalea Society of America. Your membership expiration year appears on the top line of the address label for this issue of *The Azalean*. If the year 2010 appears on that line, your membership expires at the end of this year.

Dues notices are mailed in early November. If we get your check before November 1, you may take a \$1 "early bird" discount off the amount of the check. That's our thanks for not having to spend the time and money to mail you a dues notice. Or, if you know you are not going to renew, please let us know by letter or e-mail (dkrabill@gmail.com), so we will not have to mail you a dues notice.

First, review the information on your address label and make any needed corrections. Also, if your telephone number or e-mail address has changed, please provide us with the correct information.

Then, circle an amount in the table below to show the number of years and the type of membership you would like. The table includes a \$1 discount for each year paid in advance, up to \$5 per year. Those years are paid in full, even if the dues are increased later. For example, to renew for four years as a Regular Member, circle \$94 in the table.

Years	Regular	Contributing	Supporting	Endowment
1	\$25	\$50	\$100	\$200
2	\$49	\$99	\$199	\$399
3	\$72	\$147	\$297	\$597
4	\$94	\$194	\$394	\$794
5	\$115	\$240	\$490	\$990
6	\$135	\$285	\$585	\$1185

Subtracting \$1 for your "early bird" discount? [] Yes [] No

Or, consider joining for life, for the one-time payment of \$500 or five consecutive annual payments of \$100 each. Sorry, this is not available for organizations or overseas members.

Finally, write your check or money order in US dollars for the total amount, payable to the "Azalea Society of America." Mail it along with a copy of this page to:

Dan Krabill, ASA Treasurer
6009 Copely Lane
McLean, VA 22101-2507

Alternatively, you may pay your dues with a credit card online through Paypal (<http://www.paypal.com>). Send your dues payment to: PayTheASA@aol.com. You can open a PayPal account in minutes (and if it asks, please mention PayTheASA@aol.com as the person who referred you). Then describe your changes, your membership type, and the number of years you are renewing for in the comments section.



▲ Maarten van der Giessen (center) answering plant questions from Bob Stelloh and John Brown.

▼ Ronald Hooper loads up a bunch of plant goodies after the post-convention tours.



Maarten van der Giessen arrived and greeted the group with friendly handshakes and hugs. Maarten and Billy answered many plant questions that day from this band of inquisitive plant enthusiasts. We probably stayed too long, but it's hard to leave a place that has so many different unique plants to see. Maarten and Billy were very generous with gift plants to the group, for which everyone truly appreciated. What a great tour!

Next on the tour was Mobile Botanical Gardens with its huge azalea collection and well designed beds and walkways. It was relaxing just to stroll along the walkways and trade plant stories among the group, occasionally checking labels on those azaleas we could not identify or just forgot the names. It was a busy two days of post tours; however, all good things must come to an end. But it's never too early to start thinking about next year's ASA convention and post-convention tours.

Thanks to everyone who attended the ASA 2010 convention in New Orleans. The Louisiana chapter of the ASA hopes everyone had a great time and that you will be back to visit with us soon.

Robert "Buddy" Lee is a past president of both the ASA and Louisiana Chapter. He is the developer of the multi-season-blooming *Encore® Azaleas*.

Society Honors Distinguished Members

The Azalea Society of America has an awards program, and during the years has presented awards to our outstanding members who have made major contributions of time and energy to improve the Society. During the Society's national meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, Awards Committee Chairman **Robert "Buddy" Lee** presented some well-deserved awards for service to Society members.

▼ Dr. John T. Thornton accepting the ASA Distinguished Service Award during the 2010 national convention in New Orleans, Louisiana.



The Azalea Society of America
takes great pleasure and pride in presenting
the Distinguished Service Award
to

Dr. John T. Thornton
in recognition of your many contributions
to the Azalea Society of America.

The passion and intellect that you
employed in plant research,
hybridization, and evaluation
will truly impact generations of gardeners.
Pushpetappa Gardens, your private garden,
has been a botanical inspiration
to the many who have visited there.
Your love for azaleas and sharing of
your knowledge has truly advanced our
society and has furthered the
appreciation of azaleas to many people.

Dr. John T. Thornton, we greatly appreciate
you and we thank you.

Awarded this 16th day of March 2010.
Aaron Cook, President

▼ Maarten van der Giessen accepting the ASA Distinguished Service Award during the 2010 national convention in New Orleans, Louisiana.



The Azalea Society of America
takes great pleasure and pride in presenting
the Distinguished Service Award
to

Mr. Maarten van der Giessen
in recognition of your many contributions
to the Azalea Society of America.

For many years you have given your
time and energy by serving at the national level
of our society, donating your time and
beautiful azaleas to our conventions,
preservation of azalea cultivars, dedication
to the horticultural industry and opening
your nursery and azalea garden to all.
Your love for azaleas and sharing of your
knowledge has truly advanced our society
and has furthered the appreciation of azaleas
to many people.

Mr. Maarten van der Giessen, we greatly appreciate
you and we thank you.

Awarded this 16th day of March 2010
Aaron Cook, President

New Members

At Large

Nicholas Day
18 - 46 21st Drive
Astoria, NY 11105-3936

Laura Grant
27 Taylor Drive
Toronto, ON M4C 3B4
Canada

Steve and Pam White
1935 W. Big Bend Rd.
Nixa, MO 65714

Alabamense

Jesse Chappell
701 Oak Knoll Cr
Auburn, AL 36830

Jeremy Pickens
1617 Lee Rd 12 Lot 13
Auburn, AL 36832

Brookside Gardens

Judith Falloon
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Bethesda, MD 20817

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Oconee

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Mary Beth Hagood
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Mary Margaret Kern
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Nacogdoches, TX 75965-2400

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319 Brookshire Drive
Nacogdoches, TX 75965

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Nacogdoches, TX 75965

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Pearland, TX 77581

Sherry Ward
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Gene Bush & Joan Riley
Munchkin Nursery & Gardens
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DePauw, IN 47115-9039

Stephanie Gaskins-McGuire
213 S. 6th St.
Petersburg, IN 47567

Steve McNamara
332 S Second St
Rockport, IN 47635-1528

Vaseyi

John and Kathy Browne
309 Ann Dr.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Randy Davis
1209 Kanuga Ridge Rd.
Hendersonville, NC 28739

Energy Xchange
66 Energy Xchange Drive
Burnsville, NC 28714

Rick Gothard
5 Erwin Dr.
Asheville, NC 28806

Katie and Harry Hankla
503 Wild Oak Lane
Hendersonville, NC 28791

Larason Lambert
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Hendersonville, NC 28792

Kathleen Parente
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Cynthia Riley
306 Shannons Walk
Lake Lure, NC 28746



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Carol Flowers, ASA Secretary
700 New Hampshire NW, Apt. 1011
Washington, D.C. 20037

Chapter News

Brookside Gardens

William C. Miller III, President

The speaker at the April 11 chapter meeting was **Court Lee**. His presentation was *Classic Glenn Dales and Other Good Growers for the Washington Area*. Court lives at Boxlee, an historic property in Glenn Dale, Maryland. The house is an example of the colonial revival style and Court operates a nursery specializing in azaleas, boxwoods, cold hardy camellias, and native plants. Given his location near the famous Glenn Dale Plant Introduction Station, it is no wonder that he has a strong interest in the Glenn Dale hybrid azaleas and is a recognized source for the hard-to-find Glenn Dale hybrids. (See the Boxlee ad elsewhere in *The Azalean*.)

The chapter's 31st annual flower show was held April 30 to May 2 at Brookside Gardens. After the drubbing that our landscapes took from the record-breaking heavy snow this past winter, there was considerable concern about how the show might be impacted. There were many reports of significant damage. To make matters worse, the rough winter was followed by a very early warm spell which accelerated the blooms. We estimated, at one point, that we were about three weeks ahead of our normal bloom progression. Fortunately, the uncharacteristic warm spell was followed by a more seasonal period which helped the accelerated blooms remain fresh. This mix of circumstances made for a very interesting show in that it had a mixture of early and late blooming specimens.

For me personally, it was a very successful show. The Best-in-Show award went to my specimen of the Glenn Dale 'Treasure'. I also amassed the greatest number of points and received the Sweepstakes Award—thus a clean sweep.

Our annual flower show is one of the chief educational and public outreach activities sponsored by the chapter. Brookside Gardens is a marvelous location for the show and the show is always well attended by the public; in fact, we see many of the same faces year after year. For a glance back at the previous Best-in-Show winners since 1980, see the Brookside Gardens Chapter Awards page at: <http://www.azaleas.org/bgawards.html>.

The chapter's annual azalea sales at the Tilden School parking lot on May 8 and at Brookside Gardens on May 15 were blessed with good weather. They were well attended by the public, and a lot of really nice plants found new homes. It may be my imagination, but the selection of plant material seems to improve with every year. A special thanks to **Deb White**, **Judy Karpen**, and the individual members for making the sales possible. Other Society members who wish to sell at any of the chapter sales should contact **Deb White** (301-831-9164) for additional information. A note about next year's Brookside Sale—it will move to the same weekend as the annual flower show.

The annual chapter picnic was held on June 6 at the home of **Bobbi and Jim McCeney** in Laurel, Maryland. The hos-



▲ Bill Miller standing behind his Best-in-Show specimen of 'Treasure' at the 2010 Brookside Gardens Chapter's 31st annual flower show at Brookside Gardens on May 1, 2010.

pitality, the food, and the fellowship were delightful.

As of this writing, the next chapter event will be the chapter auction at Brookside Gardens on Sunday, September 19. Viewing begins at 10:30 am and the auction begins at 11 a.m. Always a popular event because of the wide variety of plants that are available, it's a lot of fun and the opportunity to acquire specimen azaleas and other special plants is unmatched anywhere.

The next chapter meeting will be Sunday, October 10 at Brookside Gardens. The speaker will be **Jim Dronenburg**. His presentation is entitled *Growing Things That Aren't Supposed to Grow Here*. Jim was originally scheduled to speak at the February chapter meeting which was snowed out. We are fortunate that he was able to reschedule.

The December 5 chapter meeting will be the annual meeting and the last meeting for 2010. The details regarding the speaker are not yet available. Besides the speaker, we will elect officers for 2011 and present the F. P. Lee Commendation for 2010. For a review of the previous recipients of the F. P. Lee Commendation which was established in 1982, see the Brookside Gardens Chapter Awards page at: <http://www.azaleas.org/bgawards.html>.

Northern Virginia

Leslie Nanney, Secretary

At the April chapter meeting, Don Hyatt gave a stunning presentation on Native Azaleas in his masterful use of Viewpoint. As you know, Don is a founding member of our chapter and spends lots of time seeking out the natives every year.

Rick Bauer gave a report on the recent National ASA Convention in New Orleans. The Virginia delegation had 19 representatives at the convention.

After this, an important business session followed to discuss and pass on the revised by-laws for the chapter. The current by-laws, as we know them, are the originals for the chapter and had been revised, but the revisions were not to be found. A new set had been prepared and approved by the executive committee. This new set had been distributed by e-mail prior to the meeting and copies were also available for anyone who did not have same. The revised bylaws were approved by the members present.

There was also a plant exchange for everyone to enjoy.

Oconee

Jim Thornton, President

The Oconee Chapter, along with the local chapter of the ARS, held its annual cutting/swap meeting at the garden of **Joe and Donna Coleman** on June 26. Eighteen members attended with three new Oconee members coming to take part—**Mike Pope**, Covington, Georgia; **John Harrison**, Auburn, Georgia; and the **Watkins** from Copperhill, Tennessee. Out-of-town members of the ARS were the Johnsons and Bechers from South Carolina. **Don Johnson** brought a tray of rooted rhodos for gifts.

Although we suffered 90+ temps, it was offset by a great presentation on bonsai by **Clif Pottberg** of Dade City, Florida. Clif is a noted expert on bonsai, an artist no less. He showed us the ins and outs of bonsai and shared some of his secrets to help us create a successful planting.

Clif owns and operates a nursery which provides bonsai plant material, supplies, and teaches the art. You can learn more about Clif and his work by visiting him on Facebook or searching on www.pasiminan.com.

On a sad note, June 13, our chapter, the ASA, ARS, and the world of all azalea lovers, lost a prominent hybridizer and friend with the passing of **James O. Harris**. James will be remembered not only in our hearts but by his wonderful creations for generations to come.

Texas Chapter

Barbara Stump, Chapter Member

Since cutting picnics seem to be popular throughout the Society chapters on the East Coast, our Texas Chapter decided to try one. So, June 19, the Texas Chapter hosted its first annual cutting picnic at the home of **Michael and Barbara Stump**. Approximately 30 people attended the event with each person taking home at least five evergreen azalea cuttings and a one-gallon native azalea.

Bart Brechter from Bayou Bend in Houston provided information on how to stick the cuttings and care for them at home. Also on hand to provide horticultural support were **Greg Grant** from the SFA Gardens, local garden writer **Jeff Abt**, and a number of SFA Gardens volunteers. We ate barbecue, discussed making a fall trip, and will do this again in 2011, but maybe not on such a hot day.

The event generated 13 new chapter memberships that day and a few others later. It appears that distributing a flyer with a photo of a deciduous azalea on it and getting local



▲ The Texas Chapter hosted its first cutting picnic in June at Mike and Barbara Stump's home in Nacogdoches. Approximately 30 people attended the event with each person taking home at least five evergreen azalea cuttings and a one-gallon native azalea. Pictured are Chapter Members **Harold Hall** and **Barbara Stump**.

media to cover the event makes a big difference in attendance.

The chapter also recently held its annual business meeting and elected new officers: **Michael Stump**, president; **JoAnn Smith**, vice president; **Don Parsons**, treasurer; and **Pam Fitch**, secretary.

Vaseyi

Suzanne W. Medd

ASA President **Aaron Cook** was the guest speaker at the February chapter meeting. Aaron is a biology and horticulture instructor at Caldwell Community College. He earned a bachelor of science degree in biology and master of arts degree in Biology Education at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. His graduate research explored the genetics of a rare Linville Gorge plant *Hudsonia montana*. In addition to his volunteer duties with the ASA, he is an active member in the North Carolina Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, American Rhododendron Society, and International Plant Propagators Society. He is an experienced trip leader for the Nature Conservancy, annually leading trips to Bluff Mountain, Yellow Mountain, Panthertown Valley, and Bat Cave. He has led trips to the Florida panhandle, Big Bend National Park, and more than one dozen birding and ecology trips to the Outer Banks.

His presentation was entitled *Understanding Rhododendron Genetics and the Implications for Breeding New Cultivars*. He presented a Power Point presentation and a most amazing brain exercise for us. We were immersed in tetraploids, haploids, and other chromosome study as applied to azaleas. Because of North Carolina's varied climate we have a natural diversity of azaleas occurring: *atlanticum*, *aborescent*, *vaseyi*. The latest research is being done in Fletcher, particularly with deciduous azaleas. When breeding azaleas we want recessive genes expressed in order to see possibili-

ties. This could be one out of 236 plants!

Aaron had a very important side note. The renowned Augie Kehr explained to Aaron why this is important. Augie believed genetic variability is vital for use in an established breeding program. If there is not enough genetic variability, there will be a bottleneck of plant development. Overzealous digging from the wild is not helpful, because we need to maximize the range and find new genetic traits that can be used to improve the breeding program. The primary sources of germplasm are really good cultivars/breeding lines, and secondary sources are from the wild. The genetic variability decreases the odds of predicting the outcome of crosses in a breeding program. Augie said this makes it hard to stay on the original goal. He also encouraged Aaron to convert diploid into tetraploid research. Tetraploids are probably the future with larger leaves, flowers, and seeds, though there is somewhat slower growth.

Aaron started hybridizing daylilies about 20 years ago. At that time it took two years to see the bloom; now it only takes nine months. At the conclusion of the program Aaron gave us a "Wow" moment. He showed us daylilies 20 years ago: the usual gold, yellow, and burgundy colors. Then we saw the current crop: double petaled, technicolor, bi- and tri-colored with ruffled edges! We were awestruck!

Aaron said today's azalea breeding is where daylilies were 20 years ago. We will see spectacular cultivars with new traits and good performance. It was a magic carpet ride to future possibilities.

John Turner was the guest speaker at the March chapter meeting. John is founding director of the Southern Highlands Reserve, a private non-profit institution, having been involved with its concept, design, and implementation. The Southern Highland Reserve is a 120-acre reserve located at an elevation of 4,500 feet at the summit of Toxaway Mountain. A 20-acre Core Park display garden features the Azalea Walk (Gregory Bald azaleas), the Vaseyi Trail and Pond, the Wildflower Labyrinth (late summer meadow species), and the Woodland Glade. It is home to the world's largest natural stand of *R. vaseyi*.

John's presentation, *One Man's Vision: Our Gardens' Future*, concentrated on the two main areas of focus at the Reserve for the coming year— ecological restoration and phenology monitoring. The restoration of azaleas for Hooper's Bald and red spruce for the Northern Squirrel is fantastic. The 600-foot azalea garden trail designed through the woodland in huge color groups that merge from hot colors to light pinks then go back to hot orange is stunning and inspiring. What a treasure!

Phenology is the study of nature's calendar. The Reserve will host a series of presentations this year, focusing on how horticulture meets ecology.

In May, the chapter hosted three fantastic field trips. The Vaseyi Chapter received a gracious invitation from Parker Andes, director of horticulture at the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina. This is the 70th Anniversary year of Edith Vanderbilt Gerry honoring Chauncy D. Beadle by accepting his native and hybrid collection and renaming the

20-acre garden the Azalea Garden. Staff members were present to lead a walk and discuss the garden.

Bob Stelloh and **John Brown** organized a beautiful Azalea Garden Tour on May 8 featuring four gardens. The **Doley** and **Melody Bell** garden was started in the 1970s by David and Naoma Dean, who deserve credit for much of the garden design. This remarkable garden has an estimated 3,000 rhododendrons and azaleas! It is also a certified wildlife habitat.

Bob Stelloh and his late wife, Denise, moved to Hendersonville 14 years ago, and brought along about 600 mature plants from their 15-year-old garden near Washington, D.C. Named "Kairaku" (Japanese for "joint pleasure"), this informal woodland shade garden covers about one acre of a two-acre lot, divided into planting beds by a half-mile of winding trails.

Six years ago, **James** and **Mary Ann Stewart** acquired the Stewart Garden, an extensive garden developed over a 24-year period by the late Dr. August Kehr, one of the world's more pre-eminent plant scientists. The Stewarts have become superb stewards of this fabulous garden.

The final garden on the tour was that of **Mary** and **Ed Collins**. Four years ago they purchased the property which was previously owned by the late Charlie Larus. Ed is currently incorporating the thousand-plus plants they brought from their previous garden.

Five hundred tickets were printed for the garden tour. The cost of each ticket was \$15 which could be upgraded to include ASA membership for an additional \$10. For more information about the garden tour, visit www.azaleas.org/eco.html.

The chapter's final field trip was to The Azalea Candy Store and East Fork Nursery. **Vivian Abney** owns the East Fork Nursery on Jones Coves Road in Sevierville, TN, on the farm where she was born. She started the nursery in 1987. The nursery specializes in native azaleas, but also grows a wide variety of plants including hardy camellias, dwarf conifers, hollies, crape myrtles and more. She has built a small lab and is producing selected native azaleas from tissue culture.

Vivian's azaleas from Gregory Bald were used by the Southern Highland Reserve in their 600 foot long azalea garden trail, in dozens of beautiful colors.

Letters to the Editor

Louisiana Lagniappe—A Superb Convention

I just want to say thanks to the Louisiana Chapter for putting on such a wonderful show. Spring may have been late down south due to the record cold winter—our hosts were apologetic since not many of the azaleas had opened yet. However, there was no snow in New Orleans and we did see flowers—some early azaleas as well as camellias, magnolias, snapdragons, Icelandic poppies, delphinium, cool weather annuals, and more. After this winter, I would have

been happy to see a dandelion. I was not disappointed in any way. What was most gratifying for me was to see that such a beautiful and historic region of our nation seems to have recovered completely from the wrath of Hurricane Katrina. We toured places that had been under many feet of water for weeks on end but there was no evidence of that to me. Everything was clean, freshly painted, and beautiful.

Regina Bracy told us “lagniappe” meant “a little something extra” but from my point of view, this convention was a lot of something extra—extra nice people, delicious food, great accommodations, wonderful southern hospitality, delicious food, entertaining speakers, delicious food, delightful weather, excellent tours, delicious food, lovely gardens, and more. Oh, did I mention the food? One of the guidebooks for New Orleans said, “If you can manage the typical 5 to 6 meals a day, here are some other restaurants to try.” I think we had a minimum of five meals every day and for those of us who arrived early or left late, we had a chance to savor the treats at a few of the world class restaurants in town.

It seems as though we ate all day long and everything was delicious. For instance, we started with an ample breakfast at the hotel and a few hours later were treated to homemade gumbo and pecan pralines at **Buddy Lee’s** home. Who will ever forget that amazing shrimp and catfish fry at **Regina Bracy’s** pristine garden followed by ice cream at **Margie Jenkins’** place? We were all stuffed but still managed to put away the buffet dinner later that evening at the Hammond Research Center. When we got back to the hotel, around 9:30 p.m., some headed out to Bourbon Street for a Hurricane or a Mint Julep nightcap to celebrate St. Patrick’s Day. The fish dinner at the banquet was one of the finest meals any of us can recall at a convention. I think I could become addicted to that bread pudding with whisky sauce.

Thanks to all who were involved in putting on such a first class convention. This may have been my first trip to New Orleans but it will not be my last.

Don Hyatt
McLean, Virginia

Growing *R. prunifolium* ‘S.D. Coleman’

I loved the article *S. D. Coleman—An Azalea Pioneer* by Tadeusz Dauksza in the Spring 2010 issue of *The Azalean*. I have always wondered who exactly S. D. Coleman was, since I have two large specimens of *R. prunifolium* ‘S.D. Coleman’. While the original tag indicated ‘S. D. Coleman’, we conclude that it was a reference to the source and not to the vivid reddish orange cultivar of the same name that was introduced and registered by David Leach.

A little background—In May 1987, the ARS and ASA held a combined convention in Eugene, Oregon. Since neither my husband nor I had ever been to Eugene, and since we loved azaleas and rhodos, we signed up. I had been a member of the Brookside Gardens Chapter since the early ‘80s. I love lectures on azaleas and buying unusual plants. My husband likes visiting beautiful gardens. It was a terrific convention. The weather was good; the lectures, plants,

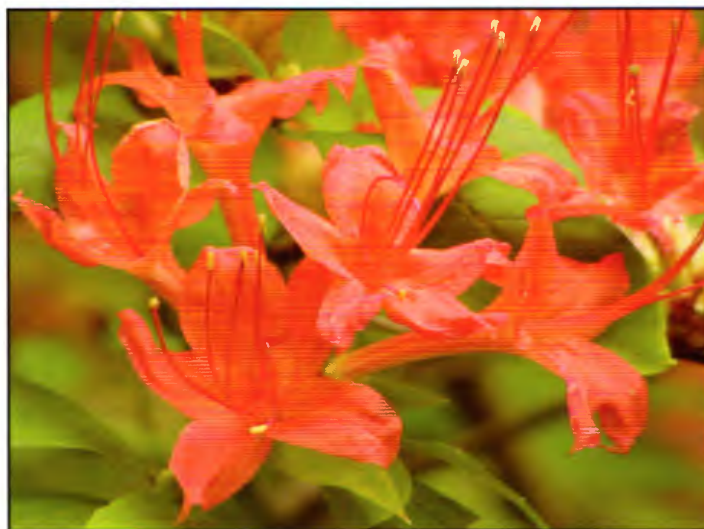


Photo William C. Miller II

▲ This coral-colored specimen of *Rhododendron prunifolium*, from a 1987 joint ARS/ASA national convention, has adapted well to its current Potomac, Maryland, environment.

people, and the fantastic rhododendron gardens were truly memorable.

At the banquet everyone was given a four-inch pot of *R. prunifolium* ‘S. D. Coleman’. I had never heard of *prunifolium* or Coleman. I flew the two little plants back to Washington, D.C. in an open tote bag—no problems. We planted them in two different places in our woodland garden. One was situated in an open spot, slightly SE of the house, and the other in a shadier place. The one in the open place grew strongly from the start and is now 10 feet high. The other one languished. It was moved around many times, hardly growing at all. Finally we moved it about six feet from the other one, at a slightly lower elevation. It is now half the size of the big one but is doing well. It starts blooming a week earlier than the bigger one, around the third week in July.

The blossoms are identical on both plants in color and size (about 1½”). Depending on the weather, the plants bloom for one month. They open slowly until the whole plant is in bloom. The color is not the same as the one on the Spring 2010 *The Azalean* cover—it is more coral. I wonder if they are one of the other July cultivars? There is a very large one at the U.S. National Arboretum that is the same color as mine. And there is a picture in Galle’s *Azaleas* book that is the color of my *R. prunifolium*.

The plants have never had any insect problem or powdery mildew. They got through the two blizzards we had here this winter. The larger one is recovering. The other one did not suffer at all. Both of them now bloom reliably. If they have one fault, it is that you cannot cut them for a flower arrangement because the next year’s buds are fully formed before they bloom—you would be cutting next year’s flowers as well as this year’s. If you could spare a whole side branch, it would be great for an Ikebana arrangement.

Dianne Gregg
Potomac, Maryland

