

# 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](http://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 wild-life 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](http://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