

“canes” at the base. Is this a good policy for mature tall growing deciduous azaleas, perhaps especially the canes with lots of lichen (indicating vibrant growth has ceased)? Or is it better to simply cut back individual canes to a branch about a fourth or a third of its total length? I intuit that a combination of those two approaches can make sense.

But situations can vary quite a bit. Is there someone amongst our membership with significant experience pruning mature deciduous azaleas? If so, an article with good guidelines would be useful.

Question 5:

How can you tell whether a particular cultivar of azalea will hygienically shed spent blooms? I have read the offhanded comment—and it seems to agree with my observations—that flowers with distinct sepals directly at the flower base will drop their spent flowers cleanly in the absence of petal blight. Those azaleas where the flowers are attached without sepals will hang on. Kurume ‘Snow’ is the famous example here.

Very often it seems to be double flower forms that do not have these sepals. The sepals have become part of the flower and thus don’t know how to let go.

(Am I the only one who vigorously shakes his azalea plants to shed somewhat degraded blooms, to thereby leave the bush neater with the remaining pretty blooms?)

Question 6:

It is well-known that azaleas have shallow root systems. But I believe that mature azaleas do send their roots a bit deeper than elepidote rhododendrons, which seem to have a root structure of a very superficial mat or flat saucer barely below soil level. Said differently, it seems to me that azaleas will more readily grow roots a few inches down into amended clay than rhododendrons, which kind of insist on growing in something close to compost.

Native azaleas in the wild can send out a very rangy root system that makes transplanting a significant challenge. Yet my impression of pot-grown deciduous azaleas is that they have reasonably compact root systems similar to evergreen azaleas.

Can any azalea maven shed more light on any of the questions raised? Please do. Send your articles and photos to theazalean@gmail.com.

Will Ferrell joined the ASA in 2001 at the Asheville Convention and gardens near Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He recently rejoined the Vaseyi Chapter, as it is closer to him. He is also the author of The Secrets of Sterling Shearin: The Noblest Cause, ...a story of romance and mystery interwoven with less well-known American Founding Fathers, set in the 1790s.

Membership Chairman’s Note

By Chris Wetmore—Central Carolinas Chapter

It is no secret these days that many plant societies struggle to retain membership. This is typically due to a small handful of individuals within the chapter doing a majority of the work. If one of these members leaves the chapter things can quickly fall apart.

This month I reached out to Rick Bauer of the Northern Virginia Chapter again for some helpful ideas that will go a long way in building and retaining a healthy chapter.

Rick’s Tips:

- Collaborate with other plant societies. Have joint meetings. Invite each other to your activities.
- Engage folks at your meetings (especially guests). Most are looking for a social outlet as well as knowledge about azaleas.
- Follow up on folks who haven’t renewed their memberships. Sometimes the personal approach is all that is needed.
- Engage with the public through plant sales, advertising, and opening meetings to the public.
- Get a Facebook page. Encourage your members to “Like” it and share it.
- Affiliate with a school or garden (we don’t do this...but I think it is a good idea)
- Give away free plants, either from chapter supplies or have plant exchanges. Most of us have plants which are now self-propagating to the point that we have too many.

CORRECTION

Editorial Correction, *The Azalean*,
Winter 2015, p. 77:

In the “Legends and Legacies” article describing the ASA/ARS Convention tour of the Cosby Garden, I regretfully called the hybridizer of the Bowie Mill azaleas “Bud” Claggett when his name should have been spelled “Buck” Claggett. I repeated this error in the index to the issues for 2015 and on the ballot for best article for 2015. I sincerely regret these errors.

Barbara Stump, Editor, *The Azalean*