

The Azalean

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President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia

As I write this message, I have just returned from another successful convention, this time in Little Rock, AR. As has been the case in previous conventions, I really enjoyed the opportunity to get together with old friends, make new ones, and visit some beautiful gardens and hear interesting speakers.

Society conventions are usually sponsored by a society chapter (sometimes in conjunction with another organization) and take place generally in the geographic location of the chapter. The society does not have a chapter in Little Rock, though we do have members in Arkansas. This convention was the result of collaboration between a number of groups...the Louisiana Chapter, ASA members in Arkansas, other ASA members throughout the US (primarily in the area of plant sales) and most importantly by the Arkansas Master Gardeners, and in particular, Janet Carson, the head of the Master Gardeners in Arkansas. We thank all those involved for the time and effort they expended to ensure the convention's success.

We also tried out a new idea this year by holding an Azaleas 101 workshop for members of the Master Gardeners. Seventy participants heard discussions about azalea varieties including specific talks on natives and Encores, propagation, planting, insect and disease control and the Legacy Project. The audience was very attentive and interacted actively with the speakers. In addition to educating the Master Gardeners on azaleas, we gained 70 new members for the remainder of the year. The workshop was a new idea which was very successful. We need to continue to think about new ideas for getting the message about azaleas out to the general public and attracting potential azalea enthusiasts to the society.

The most important aspect of the annual conventions is that it brings members from across the US and Canada to the same location each year to share ideas and information. It is also a chance to learn from azalea experts. This year was no different. We had presentations on the migration of azaleas across the globe, native azalea species, and azalea varieties developed in Arkansas. All presentations were interesting and informative. During the business meeting of the convention, I once again brought up the importance of capturing and documenting information of this sort. The Legacy Project is one way to do this for specific hybrid groups. A subset of the project is writing articles for publication in *The Azalean* or other journals. If you have knowledge of ANY aspect of azaleas, I encourage you to write an article. If you know anyone who is an expert on any aspect of azaleas, encourage them to write, or work with them to capture their information.

The Board of Directors (BOD) discussed ways in which chapters could take more responsibility for encouraging the renewal of memberships. Guidelines and a process are being developed now to assist the chapters in this regard. In addition, a document containing suggestions for running a successful chapter program is also being finalized. Additional suggestions are being solicited from chapter presidents and other BOD members and will be finalized this summer. Gaining new members is one thing. Retaining them is another. The latter requires giving the member "bang for their buck." That is, there need to be benefits associated with chapter memberships. We hope that by sharing good ideas, we will foster the development of more successful chapters.

I'm excited about the enthusiasm, new ideas, and energy I'm seeing in the society at all levels. I encourage all of you to actively participate in and volunteer to assist in chapter and society activities.



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

Larry Coleman's garden is officially called Stonewoodbridge Gardens in the ASA member database. The many rock water-crossings and built amenities in the garden indicate how appropriate this name is. Looking up at the trails leading down his garden, it really is almost a "cliff garden." The scale of the undertaking is indicated by the number of ASA members shown in this image, who are still dwarfed by the "wall of planting pockets" along the well-mulched trail zig-zagging down the rock hillside. A few members are identifiable: In red jacket upper right, ASA Vice-president Charlie Andrews; photographer (on lowest ground level) John Perkins takes photo of Sally Perkins (New Hampshire members in NVA Chapter) standing next to Arkansas at-large member Larry Coleman (in blue jacket). [Photo Barbara Stump]

Azaleas and So Much More in Arkansas!

By Barbara Stump—Nacogdoches, Texas

We had early Spring weather in Little Rock April 5-7 for the annual ASA convention: cold rain, some sleet, some snow. Great for watering the plants and providing interesting contrast to the vivid colors of azaleas, rhododendrons, and frequent rocky counterpoints in all our garden visits. Eighty-one people attended the convention, from 15 states and three from Ontario, Canada. Holding it at the Little Rock Holiday Inn Airport was such a convenient location, since all our meetings were held there, and people could fly in if they hadn't driven.

Kudos to Gerald Klingaman of the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks and Janet Carson of University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service and volunteers from both the Arkansas Master Gardeners and ASA for their excellent organization of all elements of the convention. Along with the actual organization of the events, they also made sure the media knew the ASA was in the various locations in central and northwestern Arkansas, as evidenced by newspaper articles with wonderful color photos sent to me by Larry Coleman: Mary Jo Shivey's April 12, 2018 "Beyond Garden Variety: Azalea Group Tours Batesville Oasis" from the *Batesville Daily Guard* and Janet Carson's "Amazing Azaleas" January 27, 2018, article from the *Little Rock Arkansas Democrat Gazette*.

Plant Sale

The first night got us all off to a great start with a reception held in the plant sale room. The plant sale team of well-known azaleaphiles, hybridizers, or propagators made this a truly select plant sale. Local Arkansas nursery owners Ronnie and Donna Palmer and Larry Coleman brought wonderful material as did Carolyn Beck and the Bauers, who brought in plants hybridized by Joe Klimavicz, Bob Stewart, as well as Holly Springs, Glenn Dale, and Satsuki hybrids. There were plants in 4-inch pots and some in 3-gallons. Buddy Lee brought Encore® azaleas for sale and for participant favors and large Southern Living® bags to tote our plants, since they helped sponsor the convention. Thanks to Paul Beck's

plant sales system, the plant list of 296 different varieties had been on the ASA web for weeks, and people who knew what they wanted could zoom in to pick up their list of special and rare azaleas, then check out with cash or credit card.



▲ Photo 2—You-Ying and Andy Whipple talk with Buddy Lee



▲ Photo 3—Charlie Andrews and John Perkins at the opening night reception and plant sale, likely discussing—what else—azalea heritage or taxonomy.

▼ Photo 4 - Buddy Lee and Peggy Cox from LA Chapter pose with Dale Berrong of Central Carolinas Chapter by the entrance sign of the Palmers' home gardens and nursery. Not only is Dale a frequent hiker in the Appalachians, but he was president of the North American Maple Society for several years.

▼ Photo 1—Plant sale conviviality and a wealth of great cultivars.



(But as always, you had to be fast to get everything on your list as LA Chapter member Jim Campbell and I found out.) A few specimen Japanese maples went out the door to early shoppers as well. Several Arkansas members helped with the automated checkout system, including Donna Palmer and Gerald Klingaman. Paul Beck is to be congratulated again for the design of this point-of-sale system that he can take to any convention. The plant sale was open the next two nights as well; plenty of opportunity to shop. [Photos 1-3]

Garden Visits

The group of gardens and stops organized for this convention was superb, that's the only word for them. Even the bus rides with some rain, some sleet, were instructive. We were told that Arkansas topography is defined by the only mountain ranges between the Appalachians and the Rocky Mountains. South of Little Rock the Ouachita Mountains cut across Arkansas in a broad swath from southwest to northeast. Little Rock and environs are in the broad valley of the Arkansas River. Finally, the northwestern area of Arkansas, known to most of us as the "Ozarks" is the Ozark Mountain Plateau, the eroded remains of the Ozarks. We saw all three areas.

April 6 Tours

Azalea Hill Gardens and Nursery. We first drove southeast of Little Rock to Pine Bluff to tour the Palmers' Azalea Hill Gardens and Nursery [Photo 4], which they began building in 1969. Their home place is on the property, so they are surrounded by 30 years of propagating and planting out. Even in the rain, it was wonderful to see his collections of both evergreen and deciduous azaleas. While there Stan Brown showed me "Angie", the azalea he named for his daughter. Of special note were both a deciduous Exbury hybrid, 'Cannon's Double', [Photo 5], and 'Lilacina'



Photo Allen Owings

▲ Photo 5—Allen and Dale found a stellar deciduous azalea in the rain at Azalea Hill Gardens and Nursery: R. 'Cannon's Double' which is an Exbury Hybrid.



Photo Unknown

▲ Photo 6—Evergreen *Mucronatum* azalea 'Lilacina' purpureum at the Palmers' nursery. The day was very wet and dark, so this image is from the ASA website.

▼ Photo 7—Garvan Gardens offered golf cart tours (for hire) to those who wanted to see the whole garden. Shown here (l to r) Jim Brant, Guide, Carolyn and Paul Beck, Senora Simpson, and Dianne Gregg.



Photo William C. Miller III



Photo Barbara Stump

▲ Photo 8— Large banks of Kurume azaleas were in bloom in the Garden of the Pine Wind.

▼ Photo 9—Large banks of Kurume azaleas were in bloom in the Garden of the Pine Wind.



Photo Barbara Stump

the only fragrant evergreen azalea spotted by Bill Miller. [Photo 6]

Garvan Woodland Gardens. Next, we motored northwest to near Hot Springs for our “lunch stop” set in a garden paradise. Now part of the Fay Jones School of Architecture + Design at the University of Arkansas, this huge garden began as a legacy project of philanthropist Verna Cook Garvan, in remembrance of her father’s successful Malvern Brick and Tile and lumber businesses that she managed in later years with her husband, Patrick Garvan. This huge public garden is certainly set up for visitors—not only did they have a nice meeting room for our box lunches, but they provided large (six-person) golf carts with guide/drivers to carry people around if desired. [Photo 7] The people who took this option were able to see more of the garden than I did, but I chose to walk the four-acre Garden of the Pine Wind, an incredible Japanese-style “...rock and stream garden designed by Little Rock landscape architecture firm MESA (Merle E. Seamon & Associated) in conjunction with Dr. David Slawson, a nationally recognized expert in Asian art and garden design, and Liz Frazier of LA Design Company in Hot Springs, AR,” according to the Garvan Legacy leaflet from the gift shop. As our photos show, this was a grand garden stop. [Photos 8-10] This was also where I realized that we were visiting a part of the US where rocks are important aspects of the economy. Our hotel also had a large “rock fall” beside the road leading to check-in.

Our two hours at Garvan allowed many of us to fill our cameras with sights of bridges, manicured evergreen azaleas, exquisitely pruned *Viburnum* trees, and many pools and views of Lake Hamilton. All this was connected by smooth asphalted trails wide enough for the golf carts and several people to walk abreast. The entrance to the Pratt Welcome Center was an effective use of bright orange “Florida Azaleas,” huge rocks, trimmed evergreens, and ferns leaning over a pool of quietly circulating water. This garden is a treasure and has benefited from lots of support over the years. The presence of the huge many-sided open-air Garvan Pavilion, Anthony Chapel, a carillon tower, a named Bride’s House, and a named Groom’s House, plus the current construction of a major “treehouse” project to help interpret nature to children indicate robust financial support. In addition, our guide said that they get over 1,000 hours

▼ Photo 10—True to the Japanese design aesthetic, rocks were integrated into planting beds and into sculptural bridges.



Photo Barbara Stump



Photo Barbara Stump

▲ Photo 11—Ann Woods’ Garden gave us lots to consider if we wanted to add herbaceous perennials and Japanese maples to our gardens.

▼ Photo 12—Bleeding heart (*Dicentra* sp.) in the Woods’ Garden. Perfect timing for early spring bloomers.



Photo Barbara Stump

▼ Photo 13—The Woods’ cottage gardens were well-protected from bad weather and animals by a stone wall, with insets of stained glass. Shown here is one of the specimen Japanese maples.



Photo Barbara Stump

▼ Photo 14—To be honest, the day was cold and wet. Some truly enjoyed the Woods’ workshop with a roaring fire.



Photo William C. Miller III



Photo Barbara Stump

▲ Photo 15—The warm salmon pink of this *Magnolia* hybrid in full bloom shone like the sun next to the Woods' farm pond.

▲ Photo 16—Miss Margie Jenkins, Buddy Lee, and Margie's niece Sue Madison of Arkansas.



Photo Barbara Stump

▼ Photo 17—The Batesville County Recreational Facilities... what a resource, which we truly enjoyed for our lunch break.



Photo Barbara Stump

▼ Photo 19—Luckily the Japanese maples were fully leafed out to frame the fabulous views of the garden.



Photo Barbara Stump

of volunteer time from six senior retirement communities in the neighborhood, especially during set-up of their very successful annual Christmas lights show. For more information, visit www.garvangardens.org/

April 7 Tours

Woods Country Garden. We first visited a very special woodland garden built by two “hands-on” Arkansas Master Gardeners. Ann Woods and her husband, Tony, have a large country lot with a big fish pond, home, and barn near Searcy, AR, northeast of Little Rock. The private garden behind their wooden Arts & Crafts-looking house was small, but exquisite. It was truly a plants-person’s garden, filled with specimen annuals and perennials just beginning to flower. Those of us who now live in the too-warm South salivated over plantings of *Edgeworthia* ‘Akebono’, *Heuchera*, *Baptisia*, *Epimedium*, blooming hellebores, bloodroot, *Aquilegia*, *Viburnum* ‘Keno’, tree peonies, specimen Japanese maples, and her favorite azalea, ‘Mt. Saint Helens’. Sally Perkins pointed out a Smoky Mts. native *Uvularia grandiflora* commonly known as “Mary Bells.” [Photos 11 & 12] The Woods’ rose garden was pruned and ready for the season, protected by a low warm-golden stone wall. The wall itself was a garden feature, having insets of stylized stained-glass lilies. [Photo 13] The Woods not only opened their garden to our ASA convention, they were also hosting the Arkansas Master Gardeners in the afternoon. Another wonderful aspect of this stop was the equipment barn in which there was a roaring fire in a stove and plenty of seating for those who needed to warm themselves. [Photo 14] As we were leaving, *Magnolia* x ‘Coral Lake’ was in full bloom, with welcome warm salmon pink flowers silhouetted by their large farm pond. [Photo 15]

Lunch in Batesville. We moved northward on to Batesville, AR, the oldest incorporated city in Arkansas for our lunch stop at the Batesville County Community Center and Aquatics Park. This project provides a wide range of recreational services—swimming, gymnastics, manicured public park, event spaces, meeting rooms—to the whole county, including four school districts. What a fine facility, and an excellent option to get us out of the cold weather.

▼ Photo 18—Fresh snow on bright red Kurume ‘Christmas Cheer’ azalea in Larry Coleman’s garden. One of over 30 hybrid groups in his collection. Because of the cold weather, most blooms during tour time were Kurumes and large-leaf rhododendrons.



Photo Buddy Lee



Photo Robert Stassen

▲ Photo 20—From here the trail through Larry’s garden looks nice and easy.

▼ Photo 21—Larry Coleman caught in front of the tea house he built overlooking one of his koi ponds. Also shown (l to r), Rosa McWhorter (NVA) and Nancy Niehaus (TX).



Photo William C. Miller III

▲ Photo 23—Old Mill Gardens was in full early spring bloom when we visited. A glorious way to end a full day of beautiful gardens.

▼ Photo 24—This rusticated bridge over the stream in the Old Mill Garden is an example of the work of artist Dionicio Rodriguez.



Photo Barbara Slump

▼ Photo 22—ASA membership chairman and Texas Chapter President Robert Thau studies Larry Coleman’s engineering of his stone retaining walls, ponds, and waterfalls. Robert’s home garden is not as steep, but chances are he’ll figure out a way to channel frequent rains away from his ever-growing collection of azalea cultivars.



Photo Barbara Slump

▼ Photo 25— New Arkansas members join other chapter members and reluctantly leave the Old Mill Garden (shown l to r): Stan Brown; Senora Simpson (Ben Morrison Chapter), Bob Stassen, Tom Milner (Louisiana Chapter), Janet Carson.

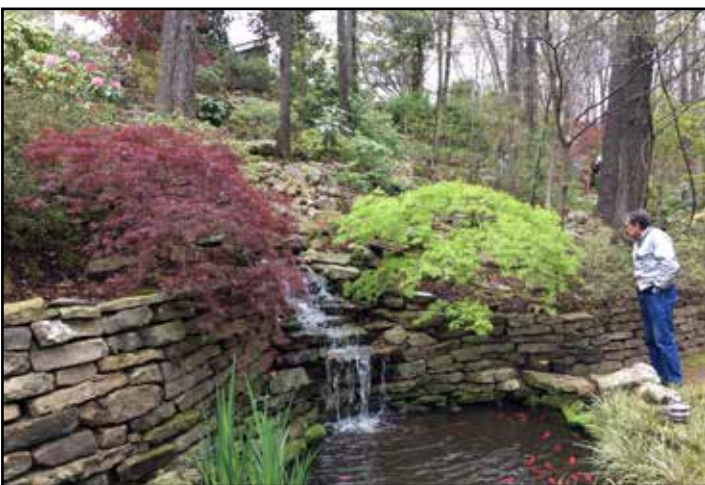


Photo Robert Stassen



Photo William C. Miller III

[Photos 16 & 17]

Larry Coleman Garden. Our next garden stop was Larry Coleman's garden, also in Batesville situated in the northern part of the state in the Ozark Mountain Plateau. It turns out the cover photo for the Winter 2017 issue of *The Azalean* didn't do this garden justice. Our buses turned into what looked like a nice typical suburban subdivision, with Kurume azaleas decorated with snow. [Photo 18] We were led to the "backyard" and invited to visit with Larry about his antique car and license plate collections in his garage and then to see the rest of the garden in his backyard. The Japanese maples were in full spring leaf color and several winding paths led us down his very steep 250-foot-tall hillside. [Photo 19] Everywhere we turned there were exquisite expertly pruned Kurume azaleas, and views that could take your breath away. Our dear friend Miss Margie Jenkins made it down the very steep zig-zag trail with Aaron Cook and others helping her. [Photos 20 & 21] At the bottom of the garden we saw Larry's tea house and four koi ponds. He built the 100-foot-long retaining wall, the ponds, and the tea house himself. [Photo 22] When asked why he chose a Japanese theme for the garden, he said he "just likes Japanese" inspirations. Again, for those of us from further South, it was a treat to see lepidote rhododendrons thriving in a garden where cold-tolerance is more important than heat-tolerance.

The feeling was of being on the side of a steep hillside in Japan. The sound of running water into the four ponds accompanied our frenzied snapping of pictures. Hard to explain, but this garden was nearly vertical and a wall of color and variety in leaf and flower. We couldn't have come at a better time.

Unique specimen plants from his 25 years of work on the garden included a mature Japanese Umbrella Pine (*Sciadopitys verticillata*) he'd grown from seed, a Japanese double-flowered Kerria, and 200 other specimen trees. One of his special favorites was a 65-year-old Formosa azalea he inherited from his grandmother. He told me he has some 30 hybrid groups of azaleas, but he is "...more about different colors where I want them along with early, middle, and late blooms." He had four or five macranthas in bloom in early June and will have some natives later. He now has a man who helps him once a week for a few hours.

Old Mill, North Little Rock. Our last tour stop was along Lakeshore Drive, which allowed us to visit the Old Mill, built in 1933 to look as if it dated to the 1830s when such mills were used to grind grain. Built next to branch of the Arkansas River, the site is part of the Lakewood neighborhood and is built in a wide ravine. The "rusticated" bridge and ancillary concrete structures designed by artist Dionicio Rodriguez to look like gnarly wood make this a frequent stop for visitors. While we were there students from a local high school prom were everywhere taking photos in their "prom best." This is a Pulaski County Parks & Recreation Department project and the gardens by the entrance and an overlook are maintained by the Pulaski County Master Gardeners and volunteers. Because of its age and historical importance, the site has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. [Photos 23-25]

Speakers—April 6

Stan Brown—

"Woody Plant Breeding in Arkansas"

At-large member from Clarksville, AR, introduced as one of the best plantsmen in the state, gave an overview of his wide range of plant breeding experiences as well as an overview of early plant selections in Arkansas as far back as the 1880s and on into our century. For example, two are still in the trade today: an apple "picked out of random seed orchards" ('Arkansas Black' apple selected in the 1880s) and a native herbaceous perennial Arkansas *Amsonia hubrichtii* commonly called "Blue Star" in the 1930s.

Another way to get new plants is to cross them. The first day he began to work for the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville in 1960 he made blackberry crosses. The university has introduced almost 100 different plants since then, mostly focusing on fruit varieties.

They also researched crape myrtles and began plant breeding, setting out different varieties to evaluate them. He mainly worked with grapes, peaches, and apples, and four crape myrtles. Also, in the 1960s he worked with a Dr. Watts on one butterfly bush and two red-leaf peaches; one weeping and one dwarf peach are in the trade today.

Brown also worked with crape myrtles crossing *Lagerstroemia faurei* with *L. indicia* to develop hybrids and planted them out in fields to develop the most disease-resistant and reddest foliated varieties. The National Arboretum introduction of 'Tonto' was based on Brown's use of these crosses. *L. x 'Freedom'* does rebloom and is tolerant of adverse conditions and free plants were available for Brown's work. Another smaller selection was patented and is in the trade.

He did not ignore azaleas either. The most prominent azalea grower, with many of his own "originations" was John Carden of Ft. Smith, AR. Brown bought plants from Carden's Nursery in the late 1960s and 1970s for resale. Carden collected seed from his favorite varieties and selected from the seedlings. His daughter Mary Margaret Carden and husband Gerald Harris continue to grow John's selections and some of their own at Carden-Harris hybrids in Branch, AR; they grow 30-40,000 azaleas including those from other hybridizers each year. Several Carden-Harris azalea hybrids were in the convention plant sale, including a dwarf 'Martha Hitchcock'.

Bob Bogle, one of Brown's friends, was the first store manager of Sam Walton's first Wal-Mart store in Bentonville. He asked Brown if he could get him nursery stock for the store. Brown delivered; a good number of the plants were Mr. Carden's azaleas, and so were some of the first plants sold at a Wal-Mart about 1970.

In Fayetteville, AR, cold hardiness was a factor so Brown did cross Gable azaleas and other varieties, so they would be hardy in northwestern Arkansas and available to the public. One selection went with him when he moved to Clarksville, AR: It was propagated locally, and he says it's his best so far. He named it 'Angie' for his daughter, and he knew Miss Margie didn't have it. He made a special presentation of

this azalea to Miss Margie Jenkins, and AR member Ronnie Palmer said he'd propagate some 'Angie' plants for future convention plant sales.

Gerald Klingaman

A key member of the team who put this convention together, Gerald has been the Operations Director of the Botanic Garden of the Ozarks in Fayetteville, AR, since 2010. He writes weekly horticulture columns for the media. His presentation on the "World Wide Distribution of Azaleas" will be featured in a future issue of *The Azalean*.

Annual Meeting—April 7

President Rick Bauer opened the annual meeting on April 7; he summarized the key elements in his President's Letter in this issue (see p. 26). Paul Beck followed with the Financial Report for 2017, which is shown on p. 36, and an update on the ASA website redesign. Exceptional Service Awards are shown on p. 47. [Photos 26-28]

► Photo 26—Treasurer Paul Beck delivers his reports on ASA finances and website redesign.



Photo William C. Miller III

► Photo 27—Membership Chairman Robert Thau delivers his report: "Each one recruit another one."



Photo William C. Miller III

▼ Photo 28—Editor Barbara Stump congratulates Rick Bauer on being the author of the Best Article Award in *The Azalean* for 2017, "The Legacy Project Update," which was published in the Winter 2017 issue.



Photo William C. Miller III



Photo Unknown

▲ Photo 29—Reverend John Drayton Chapter President Tom Johnson and his wife Mary Ann invited us all to attend the 2019 convention in Charleston and Summerville, SC. Early details are available at the Magnolia Plantation & Gardens website (see back cover ad), with more coming in the fall 2018 issue of *The Azalean* and on the ASA website.

▼ Photo 30—The Little Rock location made it possible for four society presidents with nine years of presidential wisdom and talent to attend and add depth to BOD and member conversations throughout the convention. Pictured here (l to r): John Migas (2011-2012; MI Chapter), Aaron Cook (2009-2010; Vaseyi Chapter), Rick Bauer (2017 to date; NVA Chapter), Buddy Lee (2003-2006; LA Chapter).



Photo Gerald Klingaman

▼ Photo 31—ASA member-lecturers provided the best of the best in each area of azalea background and horticultural practice in the *Azaleas 101* program. Pictured, front row (l to r): Larry Palmer, Margie Jenkins, Charlie Andrews, Robert Thau, back row: Allen Owings, Buddy Lee, Rick Bauer.



Photo William C. Miller III

Website Redesign—Paul Beck

Paul Beck outlined the redesign of the ASA Website that he and Dave Banks as co-Webmasters have created over the past year.

Azaleas 101 Report

Rick Bauer also reported on the event superbly organized by the Arkansas Master Gardeners group and their leader, Janet Carson, and Gerald Klingaman, with help from ASA members Ronnie Palmer, Allen Owings, and Robert Thau. This first-ever introductory overview of azaleas and how to grow and care for them was attended by 70 people. [Photo 29] The objective was to introduce the large group of active Arkansas Master Gardeners to the ASA. To encourage them to join us, they were given a six-month ASA membership as part of their registration and will receive two issues of *The Azalean*. We are hopeful that they will renew memberships for 2019.

Charlie Andrews—Keynote Address

See p. 43 for Part I of the banquet presentation by Vice-President Charlie Andrews. Part II will be published in the Fall 2018 issue.

2019 Convention Preview— “History, Azaleas, and Sweet Tea”— March 14-16, 2019

Tom Johnson of Magnolia Plantation and Gardens near Charleston, SC, and President of the Rev. John Drayton Chapter gave a quick overview of the 2019 convention venues: Magnolia Plantation Gardens, Middleton Place, Mepkin Abbey, and a tea plantation, all near Charleston, SC. Most of the housing and dining arrangements will be centered in near-by Summerville, SC. Details are forthcoming in the Fall 2018 issue. Note that this is a relatively early timing for the convention, so be sure to make your plans early. Check ASA Website for updates.

Thoughts on the 2018 ASA National Convention

John Migas—Saugatuck, Michigan

As I reflect back on the ASA convention held in Little Rock, Arkansas, just a few weeks ago, I'm really glad to have attended. If it wasn't for Beverly Knight of Hazleton, Indiana, inviting me to ride along with her and husband Steve, I might never have registered.

Wednesday morning April 4th, I woke early to begin my 800-plus-mile drive. Little did I know that our temperatures were to drop down to 25°F, changing heavy rains to snow. After raining for the past 24 hours, snow had covered the roads. It wasn't until I reached the end of my road that I realized what was under the snow: solid ice. That's when I went right through the intersection and onto the main road. No stopping, no turning, no braking, no salt, no nothing. Good thing it was 4:00 a.m. Being April, Michigan State and County snow plow trucks had already been converted to road work vehicles and the plows were removed. So, we were on our own. My first 75 miles took me almost 3 hours of white-knuckle driving. I stopped counting after seeing 25 semis either jack-knifed, turned over, or in a ditch. Finally, the sun started coming up and I was now in Indiana without snow. I still had another 275 miles to get to the Knights' home. Talk about being wiped out.

As most attendees' experience, “registration day” seems to become an eternity of anticipation. As that day draws nearer, our minds seem to switch gears and all we can think about is getting away. Adding the thought of traveling to a new destination makes it even more exciting.

We, Azalea Society convention attendees, are a breed apart from most others. At this convention, we experienced cold, rain, winds, and even snow. Yes, we experienced snow for the first time that I can ever remember at a national convention. Not only did we experience Mother Nature as her finest, many blooms were yet to awaken. Stop after stop, we could only hope and pray for the sun to show itself, which it finally did on Day 2. Add all of this to the equation, yet not one complaint.

We attendees are a breed apart; we are at these conventions for each other. In most cases we only get to visit each other once a year, at these conventions. Rain or snow, blooms or no blooms, we'll be there. I miss seeing the members we have lost over the years, but our stories will last a lifetime. That's why the same members are there year after year; it's the stories that these conventions create.

One last thing to reflect on: I did sit in at the BOD meeting, attended the annual meeting on Saturday night, and spoke to several Board members. I walked away with a feeling of being proud about where this society is heading. We have a tremendous Board that really cares about the ASA, and those members are doing a tremendous job. I appreciate all of them and feel that they are all a “breed apart.”

John Migas was ASA President from 2011-2012. He grows many azaleas on his property and does garden design and installation.

ASA Financial Statement - December 31, 2017

Paul A. Beck, Treasurer

INCOME STATEMENT		BALANCE SHEET	
Year 2017		December 31, 2017	
INCOME		ASSETS	
Contributions, Donations & Gifts ¹	\$11,215	Checking	\$11,619
Dues Income (Life & Regular)	\$15,655	Savings	\$27,455
Seed Exchange	\$540	PayPal	\$311
The Azalean Income	\$3,310	CDs	\$158,258
Investment Income	\$2,306	ARF Stock Investments	\$31,921
Total Income	\$33,026	Total Assets	\$229,564
EXPENSES		LIABILITIES AND RESERVES	
Grants	\$0	Uncashed checks	\$455
Professional Fees ²	\$5,400	Credit Card Account	\$117
Printing, publications, postage ²	\$7,297	Operating Fund	\$37,632
Other expenses ³	\$886	General Endowment	\$82,183
Total Expenses	\$13,584	Research Fund	\$109,177
INCOME – EXPENSES 4	\$19,442	Total Liabilities and Reserves	\$229,564

1 Includes \$3,515 to the Azalea Research Fund, \$3,590 in large donations, \$875 in excess dues, and \$3,235 in other donations (mostly from George Harding Foundation).

2 Only three Azaleans were published in 2017; The Winter issue came out in early 2018; this issue cost \$4,209.

3 The chapter reimbursement expense of \$5.00 per member, or \$1,725, normally paid in December, was not made until early January 2018.

4 The net revenue for 2017 would have been \$13,508 if the above two items were expended in 2017. This means that 2017 was a very good year financially. Most of the overage was due to a much heavier than usual level of donations to the Society.

A Note from a Member...

Jeff Abt—Nacogdoches, Texas

I hope some of the readers of this journal are acquainted with the Southern Garden History Society, which is another wonderful gardening organization. SGHS members are keen gardeners that have a passion for Southern culture and tradition in their gardens. Their annual meeting each spring brings to the forefront a piece of gardening history in the American South.

For me, the meetings are a chance to broaden my horizons, visit gardens, and attend lectures. I can truthfully say these annual meetings have changed my life as a gardener.

This last April my wife and I attended the SGHS annual meeting in Jacksonville, Florida. One of the highlights was a visit to the famous Glen Saint Mary's Nursery. The nursery, begun in 1882, has had a storied impact on Southern horticulture. The Tabers are into their fifth generation of nurserymen. We all are well acquainted with the justly famous 'George Lindley Taber' azalea. It

was wonderful to take a tour of the nursery, which is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

SGHS members spent a delightful evening at the nursery having dinner right there in the garden adjacent to the original house of George Taber (currently the home of George Taber III). But the piece de resistance was that the folks of Glen Saint Mary's Nursery sent us all away with our own small clay pot of 'George Lindley Taber'. This azalea is common throughout the South. It is common in my hometown of Nacogdoches, Texas. But this particular plant has taken root in my heart as it is especially valued because it was a gift from the Taber family.

Jeff Abt is vice president of the ASA Texas Chapter and has recently retired from 25 years of writing a weekly gardening column for the *Nacogdoches Daily Sentinel* newspaper. To learn more about the Southern Garden History Society, visit southerngardenhistory.org

Chapter News and New Members

Alabamense Chapter

Welcomes new members: Juanita Dodd, Johnny Golden, Ed & Monica Williams, and James Willis.

Ben Morrison Chapter

Diane Reinke, Secretary

Chapter members enjoyed a delicious luncheon at Christopher's Restaurant in Crofton, Maryland, on February 28. The chapter donations were approved to: 1) the Pineville Presbyterian Church in Pass Christian, Mississippi, to complete the rain drip water system in the church's garden in memory of Ben Morrison, and 2) to Friends of the National Arboretum in memory of Deborah Hughes, a member who passed away last summer.

Members Jerry and Faith Bange gave a most informative slide presentation on daylilies. Jerry and Faith are very active in the National Capital Daylily Club and regional organizations, have an extensive collection of daylilies, and are very knowledgeable about growing them. The scientific name for daylily is *Hemerocallis*, a Greek word meaning "beauty for a day." The presentation included a slide containing a diagram of the parts of a daylily plant, lovely photos of various types of cultivars, and ways to propagate and hybridize daylilies. Faith and Jerry also provided handouts on how to grow daylilies and back issues of daylily publications. A very warm "thank you" to Faith and Jerry for helping us to enhance our knowledge of the plant world.

The chapter will hold a cutting exchange, plant auction, and potluck luncheon at the home of Carol Segree on the last Saturday of June. Members of the Potomac Hosta Club and the Northern Virginia Chapter of ASA will be invited to attend.

The chapter welcomes new members: from Maryland—Niels Cordes and Debra Wertheimer, Baltimore; Michael Rhoads, Barnesville; Cecile Benigni and Bonnie Kramer, Brookevill; Patricia Busche, Gaithersburg; and John Rhode, Towson; from West Virginia—Nettie Bernady, Hedgesville, WV; and from Virginia—Emilie Larson, Vienna and Bill and Linda Pinkham, Carrollton.

Louisiana Chapter

Both Allen Owings and Margie Jenkins were honored by other horticultural organizations (see page 46). Way to raise the profile of the ASA!

The chapter also welcomes new members Hunter and Meg Charbonnet from Covington and Gaye Ingram from Ruston, LA.

Northern VA Chapter

Barry Sperling, Corresponding Secretary

The Northern VA Chapter started the calendar year with a well-attended talk by Barbara Bullock, Curator of the Azalea and Rhododendron collection at the National Arboretum.

She described her efforts to identify many of the unlabeled plants she found on arriving, get plants matched up with the information in the Bell Book, and organize the parentage of the released Glenn Dales.

The club is looking forward to the establishment of the Klimavicz Garden within the large Meadowlark Gardens in Vienna, VA. We are being asked to volunteer some time to the upkeep and I'm sure that many will be happy to do that. Klimavicz hybrids are currently introduced to the trade through the White Nursery in Germantown, MD. The Whites are chapter members. As an aside, the White Nursery hosted an Open House May 20th from 9 – 5.

Coming up are our tours of member gardens in late April and early May, the annual azalea sale at Green Spring Gardens in Annandale on May 19th, the annual Cutting Exchange on July 15th and the large Auction/Sale on September 15th. The last two will be at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in West Springfield.

We're always happy to see visitors at our events, so come by if you're in the area!

The chapter welcomes new members: Barbara Bullock, Riverdale Park, MD and Fred Sweat, Stafford, VA.

Rev. John Drayton Chapter

The chapter is busy organizing the 2019 convention and has added a number of new members to help: from Charleston: W. Sloan Coleman, Susan Garrison, & Nolan Prestwood; from Goose Creek: Kristine & Mark Amundson; from Johns Island: April & Caleb Brumfield; from Ladson: Tracie Mitchum; from Moncks Corner: Angela Boltz, Brian Mathieu; from Reevesville: Verd vanBezooyen & Jennifer Weber; and from Summerville: William & Sarah Bares, James & Rebeccas Barrier, Aniya Cohen, Bonny & David Ferguson, Tom & Susan Harshbarger, and Kolby & Melissa Kahley.

Texas Chapter News

Sherrie Randall, Secretary

Chapter members held a very successful plant sale during the 30th annual Jasper Azalea Festival March 17th, selling more than 80 plants and signing up five new members. One of these new members, and our youngest, Lillian Pruett, jumped right in to help sell plants. Buddy Lee also joined us for the day as he was officially recognizing the City of Jasper as an ASA Azalea City.

The following weekend, the chapter held its spring meeting at the home of Charles and Sharon Bradberry. We were treated with lunch and a tour of their gardens. Our business meeting included the approval of the application and process for awarding two \$500 horticulture scholarships: One each will be awarded to a student at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) and Tyler Junior College.

Our fall meeting location is tentatively planned at Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center in Orange, Texas,

which has been in a rebuilding phase since major damage from Hurricane Harvey in August 2017.

The Texas Chapter welcomes new members: from Louisiana—James Burnett, DeRidder and from Texas—Ginger Boswell, Magnolia; from Jasper: Maryanne M. Bianca & Jerry Hoffman, Jan Burks, James Burnett, Keith & Belinda Daniel, Laura Golden, Julia McCormick, Suni & Lillian Pruetz; and Joette Reger from West Lake Hills.

Tri-State Chapter

Welcomes new members: John Golab, Inverness, IN and Peter Podaras, Tipp City, OH.

Vaseyi Chapter

Welcomes new members: Denise Acquista, Crossville, TN, and Friends of the Library in Robbinsville, NC.

At-Large

The ASA welcomes other at-large members: from Georgia: Jan & Joe Nicholson, Canton; Henry Phillips, Savannah, and Marsha Zeagler, Sylvania; and from Washington: David Farrell, Marysville.

Total new members this quarter—between Azaleas 101 and very active chapter recruiting: 113!



Photo Unknown

▲ Texas Chapter meeting (standing l to 4: Vice President Jeff Abt, Secretary Sherrie Randall, Treasurer Don Parsons, Barbara Stump, meeting host Charles Bradberry, gathered around President Robert.)



Photo Unknown

▲ First presentation of a Texas Chapter horticulture scholarship to Cierra Krause, a sophomore student of Dr. Jared Barnes, Assistant professor of Horticulture at SFA. Shown (l to r), Treasurer Don Parsons, Ms. Krause, Dr. Barnes.

▼ Texas Chapter booth at Jasper Azalea Festival (standing l to r: Barbara Stump, Chapter President Robert Thau, Azalea City Chair Buddy Lee; seated: Sherrie Randall, our other ace propagator—besides Robert.)



Photo Fred Newlan



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Welcome New Arkansas Members from so Many Cities
and a National Park!

Batesville: Doug Brodie, Alice Witterman

Beebe: Deborah Zimmer, Billie Howard

Benton: Phyllis Kirtley, Ron Matlock, Sandra Rial

Brinkley: Brenda Neal

Bryant: Nita Hogan, Patti Jacuzzi, Pamela Woollis

Cabot: Dorothy Meckes, Janet Rensing

Colt: Mitch Crow

Conway: Richard Klerk

Dover: Sheila Walker

Fayetteville: Sue Cato, Marilyn Misenhimer, Sue
Madison, Bob Stassen

Greenbrier: Sheila Nash

Higden: Linda Varnadoe

Hot Springs: Robert Benbow, Karl & Terri Waterman

Hot Springs National Park: Katie Gibson, Deby
Prince

Hot Springs Village: Debra Atchison, Brenda
Aycock, Valerie Nuckels

Jacksonville: NoraAnn Goss, Sandra Hall

Little Rock: Bennie Adams, Evangelina Atkinson,
Trudy Baxter, Joellen Beard, Linda Bell, Marie
Claunch, Letitia East, Mary Evans, Murray
Harding, Judy Hornibrook, Martha Hunt, Vicky
Kessel, Chris Lalande, Kathy Ratcliffe, Pinella
Sanders, Lyle Van Arsdale, Fran Vaught, Jackie &
Walter Walker, Patti Womble

Malvern: Gail McClure, J. Mark Shipp

Maumelle: Janet Bowen

Newark: Rita Clark

North Little Rock: Anne Darnaby, Kathie Poole,
Cheryl Fallis, Susan Holloway, Becky Rainwater,
Pat Smith

Pangburn: Charletta Pruet

Russelville: Susan Colles, Frank & Linda
Russenberger

Sherwood: Joan Howard, Valerie Smith

Springdale: Steve Brizzi

Waldo: Bettye & Max Gunnels

Ward: Debora Carpenter

Wheatley: Judy & Larry Nash

White Hall: Frances Harrison, Linda Soffer

Azaleas 101 Program

Basic Education About the South's Most Popular Landscape Shrub

“Welcome and Why Azaleas?”—Janet Carson,
University of Arkansas, Cooperative Extension
Service; Rick Bauer, President – ASA

“Introduction to Azaleas: Varieties, Blooming, Soil,
Irrigation and Fertilizer”—Ronnie Palmer, Arkansas
Member ASA

“Do’s and Don’ts of Azalea Planting”—Buddy Lee and
Miss Margie Jenkins, Louisiana Chapter ASA

“Azalea Propagation”—Robert Thau, President, Texas
Chapter ASA

“Going Native with Azaleas”—Charlie Andrews,
Georgia Member, Vice-president, ASA

“The Azalea Legacy Project: Preserving our Plants”—
Rick Bauer, Northern Virginia Chapter ASA

“Insects / Diseases and Other Important Azalea
Issues”—Allen Owings, Louisiana Chapter ASA

“Encore® Azaleas: ‘Autumn Amethyst’ to ‘Autumn
Twist’”—Buddy Lee, Louisiana Chapter ASA

Save the Date:

Special Follow-on Event October 20, 2018

Bob Stassen from Arkansas reports that the Ozark Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society is sponsoring an event in Fayetteville, AR, at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, October 20, 2018. Mitch Mordvedt will speak on deciduous azalea types for the Ozark region. All members of the Azalea Society of America are invited to the day’s event as well. There will be free plants for all attendees. For more information, contact Bob at: coolplanter@hotmail.com with ‘Azalea’ in the subject line.

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American Azaleas, Part I

Charles Andrews—Cumming, Georgia

This is Part I from the keynote presentation given at the ASA convention, April 7, 2018. Part II is planned for the Fall 2018 issue.

Introduction

You don't know how much I appreciate this opportunity to talk about one of my three loves, the three of which are my wife Mardi, trout fishing, and native azaleas.

I do not want to give the standard eye-candy presentation of these no-doubt amazingly beautiful natives. This is an opportunity for us to consider how complex a group of plants they are, how confused we have been about them, what we are just now learning, and what we need to do in the near future. Follow me as we traverse through a maze of complexities you may not have been aware of.

Azaleas

American azaleas—native azaleas or “wild honeysuckle”—are part of the dynamic duo of evergreen and deciduous azaleas. We all know azaleas come in two basic flavors: chocolate and vanilla. Actually, evergreen and deciduous, though not everyone knows the two are not botanically very closely related. They are both called azaleas today only because Carl Linnaeus put both types in the same genus, which he named *Azalea*. It is almost impossible to force a cross between plants of the two types. The rare seedling is almost never vigorous or healthy. Deciduous azaleas are more closely related to the large-leaved *elepidote* rhododendrons than they are to evergreen azaleas.¹

Evergreen azalea species are solely Asian, while deciduous azaleas are found in Asia, Eastern Europe, and North America. Of the deciduous, the lion's share is found in North America, with 17 species as currently counted.

Stepchildren

All azaleas are now classified in the large *Rhododendron* genus, and some consider azaleas the stepchildren of *Rhododendrons*. More than one botanical author has written of “true rhododendrons” and then of azaleas as if azaleas were not true rhododendrons. Arguably, the large rhododendron genus of around 1,000 species could conceivably be divided into multiple genera, as several botanists have suggested—(*Ledum*, *Tsusiophyllum*, *Rhododendron*, *Azalea*, *Menziesia*, *Azaleastrum* (Cox²); *Ledum*, *Tsusiophyllum*, *Rhododendron*, *Azalea*, *Menziesia*, *Azaleastrum*, *Hymenanthes*, *Therorhodon* (Copeland³). But as of now, azaleas are just as much a rhododendron as *Rhododendron maximum*, the Rosebay rhododendrons, or *R. lapponicum*, the Lapland rosebay.

Leonard Frisbie, founder of the Pacific Rhododendrons Society, who eventually did so much to bring attention to *R. occidentale*, the western azalea, began his interest in rhododendrons with a personal bias against deciduous azaleas. Introducing a 1949 article “Series *Azalea*: Subseries

Luteum,” Frisbie wrote:

In writing about the deciduous rhododendrons, which many consider to be a poor country cousin to the more spectacular evergreen sorts, I would like to have it understood that I am not trying to place them on par with the other Series. With me they very definitely run third place behind the quality evergreen species and hybrids. But they do have a place in our gardens.⁴

Frisbie was not alone in considering our American deciduous rhododendrons third-class citizens.

I am one, however, who thinks these stepchildren, the American azaleas, are magnificent. The wild plants are not gaudy or flamboyant. They do not look like they have been put on steroids. They have a natural beauty. The flower trusses are in perfect balance with the size of their leaves. The plants blend well in a natural setting with both evergreen and deciduous plants. Our native azaleas offer strong and varied fragrances unparalleled in other rhododendrons species. Our natives come in many colors, including many vibrant shades of orange and yellow. Proper selection will give bloom periods from early spring until fall. And azaleas are generally less troublesome than their large-leaved counterparts.

What's not to like? Oh, they are deciduous? Well, let's rid our gardens of hydrangeas, dogwoods, cherries, witch hazels, winterberries, forsythia, lilacs, and, of course, roses.

Complex Group of Plants

Our native azaleas are a very complex group of plants and not well understood. The problem begins with species. We all talk about species as if we know what we are talking about. We say, “I have this species,” or “I have that species,” as if we are talking hard facts.

The truth is botanists cannot agree on what a species is. There is no exact definition. Genus and species are man-made concepts in an attempt to classify plants and animals. They are not exact, provable entities like $1+1=2$, or the second law of thermodynamics, or iron, gold, and helium. Yet we use the terms so casually we accept them as hard facts when much of botany, including the taxonomy part is soft science akin to economics, political science, and social studies.

Plants, especially our native azaleas but also *Vaccinium*, *Crataegus*, *Solidago*, *Rubus*, *Hamamelis*, and parts of *Quercus*, do not always fit neatly into the pigeonholes described in the books and identification keys. I believe our American azaleas may be misclassified. It is not clear how many species we really have or should have. Is it the current 17 or should it be more? Perhaps it should be less, say 3 to 5, with more subspecies, varieties, and forma.

What is clear is that there are contradictions and inconsistencies in the current list and difficulties in assigning many of our wild plants to one of the taxa. Our plants have highly variable morphological characteristics that overlap the manmade species descriptions. Where does one species end and another begin?

The “this is a hybrid” excuse goes only so far. Earl Sommerville has said most natives are hybrids, and from the viewpoint of gene exchange he is possibly correct. The idea of an evolutionary tree where this species evolved from that species may be all wrong. Our native azaleas for the most part are a promiscuous bunch. Given half a chance, they will exchange spit with almost any other native azalea. The heritage of our azaleas does not look like a branched tree; it looks more like a spider web of cross pollination back and forth, back and forth, for millennia.

We normally think of a hybrid as H=A x B. A major problem with native azaleas in the wild is that species A and species B have to be somewhere within pollination range to have such a hybrid. Often, they are not. This suggests that these so-called hybrids are as much stabilized as the so-called species. Perhaps we have species and hybrids all wrong. Both are part of a continuum. Speciation is as much a function of our language as of evolutionary processes.

I would argue that the real dynamic entity that uses its gene pool to adapt for survival is at a higher level than the current 17 species, *R. vaseyi* and *R. canadense* excepted. It is more at the *Pentanthera* level. Perhaps it is the group that is evolving and not the declared individual species. To avoid confusion, however, we’ll refer to the 17.

We assume from our still held pre-Darwinian ideas that species come before hybrids, but is this true? It seems species equilibrate out of the cobwebs of hybrids.

We have the real world and we have herbaria. The real world – the populations of the mountains, balds, woodlands, plateaus, and plains of North America – does not match well with the 17 species as described. Nevertheless, we need to know what they are. (See Table 1.)

I like to think of some of them in groups:

- ▶ I put *R. canadense*, *R. vaseyi*, and *R. occidentale* each in a separate group of one. *Canadense* and *vaseyi* are so different from anything else, and *occidentale* is the only azalea on the West Coast.
- ▶ The group of early pinks is comprised of *R. canescens*, *R. periclymenoides*, and *R. prinophyllum*.
- ▶ The early whites are *R. alabamense*, *R. atlanticum*, and *R. eastmanii*.

- ▶ I also place *R. colemanii* and *R. austrinum* each in a group of one. *Colemanii* is the latest named species, a tetraploid. *Austrinum* is often yellow or orange, but it is quite different from other orange azaleas. Arguably, I could consider *colemanii* and *austrinum* combined into a single group.
- ▶ My orange group is made up of *R. flammeum*, *R. calendulaceum*, *R. cumberlandense*, and *R. prunifolium*.

North America has the lion’s share of deciduous azaleas. There is only one in Eastern Europe and a small handful in Asia. In America, one is west of the Rocky Mountains, *R. occidentale*.

All the rest reside from eastern Texas and eastern Oklahoma to New England and southeastern Canada. In the main, you will find these 16 species of eastern North America in and around the Appalachian Mountains. They do trail down into the foothills and plateaus and to both the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plains. The disjunct populations of *R. prinophyllum* in Arkansas and Missouri suggest the

Table 1—17 North American Species

<i>R. alabamense</i> Alabama azalea	<i>R. canadense</i> rhodora	<i>R. flammeum</i> Oconee azalea	<i>R. vaseyi</i> pinkshell azalea
<i>R. arborescens</i> sweet azalea	<i>R. canescens</i> Piedmont azalea	<i>R. occidentale</i> western azalea	<i>R. viscosum</i> swamp azalea
<i>R. atlanticum</i> coastal azalea	<i>R. colemanii</i> Red Hills azalea	<i>R. periclymenoides</i> pinxterbloom azalea	
<i>R. austrinum</i> Florida azalea	<i>R. cumberlandense</i> Cumberland azalea	<i>R. prinophyllum</i> roseshell azalea	
<i>R. calendulaceum</i> flame azalea	<i>R. eastmanii</i> May white azalea	<i>R. prunifolium</i> plumleaf azalea	

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Photo Charlie Andrews

▲ Photo 1— *R. canescens* from Lumpkin County, Georgia.

▼ Photo 2— *R. periclymenoides*, the pinxterbloom azalea.



Photo Charlie Andrews

distribution of this species may once have been much larger. The sweet spot is the southern Appalachians, though Georgia, with its geography comprised of mountain, Piedmont, and Coastal Plain regions, which has 12 indigenous species, more than any other state.

The primary reason for this distribution is acid soil and moisture. Look at a soil map of the U.S. and it compares closely with the distribution of our native azaleas. Where soils become calcareous and where average rainfall is less, azalea distribution ends.

I might point out that some of the western azaleas, *R. occidentale*, do grow in slightly acid to basic serpentine soils. Note three facts related to this: (1) Most *occidentale* do grow in acid, non-serpentine soils, (2) the serpentine soils are high in magnesium and iron and low in calcium, which may help alleviate the problem azaleas have with higher pH soil, and (3) the *occidentale* found in the serpentine areas do have some morphological differences from *occidentale* in other locations.

Problems with the Species

We do not have space to go over all the problems with the current species, but we can identify a few.

The main problem is inconsistency and arbitrariness in species assignment. Consider the *R. viscosum* complex. In her PhD dissertation, Kathleen Kron moved *R. oblongifolium* and *R. serrulatum* into *R. viscosum* without even variety

status. She also removed variety status from *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans* and *R. viscosum* var. *montanum*. Yet Kron kept *R. canescens*, *R. periclymenoides*, and *R. prinophyllum* as separate, distinct species.⁵

Aemulans is an early blooming plant, in flower generally from March to April. It is very low and running, forming colonies similar to *R. atlanticum*, and it has fuzzy, ovoid flower buds. *Aemulans* is a unique plant found in the Gulf Coastal Plain and west into southeast Texas on the edge of sandy drainages in the transition between dry and wet areas.

Serrulatum is a late summer and fall blooming plant, flowering in July to October. It is tall, non-stoloniferous, and has smooth lanceolate buds. *Serrulatum* is commonly found in the Florida Panhandle and adjoining states on sandy river banks and hummocks in swamps. *Serrulatum* is found growing on the Gulf Coast with its roots in heavy concentrations of salt. A common factor with these two distinctly different plants seems to be the narrow, white flower tube. These two types along with others are currently considered one species.

Canescens and *periclymenoides* are both early blooming, pink to white azaleas. *Canescens* is the most common azalea in the Southeast and *periclymenoides* dominates from North Carolina northward, though the two species do overlap in distribution. Their colors are similar, with *periclymenoides* occasionally producing shades of lavender. (Photos 1 and 2.)

Often stated as a distinctive feature are the glandular hairs on the tube of *canescens*, but *periclymenoides* also has a glandular tube form. *Canescens* is said to produce somewhat taller, more upright plants. These two types, along with others, are currently considered separate species.

If *viscosum* is one species despite its many variations, why not *canescens* and *periclymenoides*? Further, then why are the similar *R. cumberlandense* and *R. flammeum* separate? Or *R. cumberlandense* and *R. prunifolium*? Why cannot *R. calendulaceum* and *R. cumberlandense* be a ploidal series of a single species like the wandflower, *Galax urceolata*, and the American elm, *Ulmus americana*? Where is a thorough DNA research project when you need it?

Natural Hybrids/Introgression

Another complication in classifying and identifying a particular native azalea is natural hybridization. Of the 17 declared American species, most will cross with the other species, given the opportunity, and do. *R. canadense* and *R. vaseyi* are the exceptions. This means identification keys are of limited value to identify what species a wild plant may be. We look at a plant, but we have not been introduced to its parents or grandparents.

Clement Gray Bowers, who in 1936 wrote *Rhododendrons and Azaleas*, the first detailed book on the subject of rhododendrons by an American author, points out that some botanists considered *R. prinophyllum* to be a variety of *R. periclymenoides* and that transitional forms between the two of nearly all degrees have been found. He used the names *R. nudiflorum* and *R. roseum*, which have since been declared illegitimate.⁶

R. periclymenoides also hybridizes readily with *R. canescens*. Introduce me to somebody who can tell with

certainty to which species a pink azalea in this large overlap area belongs. Henry Skinner in his 1951 epic 25,000-mile journey “In Search of Native Azaleas” found on the southern end of the Cumberland Plateau below Sewanee, Tennessee, what he called:

a confused complex reminiscent of *R. canescens*, *nudiflorum*, *alabamense* – all thoroughly mixed together and varying in flower color from pure white to lavender, pale pink with pale tubes, and pink with deep red tubes, many of the plants being highly stoloniferous.⁷

On a brief, late swing through Arkansas, Skinner found *R. oblongifolium*, which is now included in *R. viscosum*. He found it growing side by side with *R. roseum* (now *prinophyllum*) and found evidence of hybridization between the two.

Skinner thought *R. flammeum*, the Oconee azalea in central Georgia was “a rather confused species” that “has been on too familiar terms with the aggressive *R. canescens*.” He found with the Oconee azalea, which he called by the old name *R. speciosum*, intermediates in characteristics and habitat between *R. alabamense* and *R. canescens*.

On Spruce Knob Mountain in West Virginia Skinner found *R. calendulaceum*, *nudiflorum*, and *roseum* all growing and blooming together. Skinner assumed there triple matings were occurring:

bizarre in the extreme – short and tall bushes bearing large or small flowers in every color from coral pink through salmons to rich lavender, pale yellow or pure white. The last was large flowered and otherwise identical with the Flame Azalea.

Skinner also climbed up to Gregory Bald and saw the well-known swarm of hybrids there.

In some other instances, Skinner’s assumptions of hybridization were incorrect. For example, *R. colemanii* is not an *alabamense* hybrid (Zhou)⁸.

Plantsman David Leach was primarily an evergreen rhododendron expert, but because they were in the genus he did investigate native azaleas. He provided conclusive evidence that *R. furbishii*, called a species by Walter Lemmon, was instead a hybrid and not a species. He proved this by crossing *arborescens* with *cumberlandense* and producing identical results. He also crossed *furbishii* with *furbishii* and produced some *cumberlandense*- and some *arborescens*-looking plants (Leach)⁹.

In June 1958, Leach was invited to Hendersonville, North Carolina, to tour rhododendron and azalea populations. For Leach the visit was an epiphany. He wrote (*Quarterly Bulletin ARS* 12:1)¹⁰:

The overwhelming impression of the azaleas is their massive diversity, far surpassing anything that the botanists have led us to expect. The North Carolina azaleas are a vast, amorphous population shifting endlessly in a dynamic evolutionary phase in which crosses in the wild and great masses of natural hybrids are commonplace. A revelation awaits any student of the genus ...

The travelling enthusiast might just as well leave his botanical keys at home. They are useless in any attempts to identify species in countless hybrid swarms which are encountered at every hand....
... They are a geneticist’s dream, but they are a taxonomist’s nightmare....

Leach went on to say the evidence is indisputable that azaleas are in flux, and the species in typical form are often the exception in “...vast seas of Azaleas undergoing introgressive hybridization.” He recognized that our wild populations often refuse to fit into the classifications we call species. Instead they are intergrading hybrids constituting uninterrupted progressions of variations linking them to their ancestry.

Leach did not think the so-called hybrids had a genetic disadvantage. In some sites he saw them thriving more than their progenitors.

I believe Leach’s observations are astute and still hold true.

Kathleen Kron was aware of all of the above and more when she wrote her 1987 PhD dissertation on revisions in *Rhododendron* section *Pentanthera*. Kron recognized that natural hybrids and hybrid swarms occur; however, she dismissed widespread natural hybridization, arguing only occasionally do actual habitat and flowering time overlap.⁵

In the 25 years since Kron rejected Skinner’s and Leach’s field observations of widespread natural hybridization, more and more observers have had a chance to study azaleas in their natural habitats. There is absolutely no doubt Kron was incorrect in her conclusion. Consider the following:

- We have found on many occasions “running arbs” in the Southern Appalachians, as did Henry Skinner, characteristic of the smooth-stem *R. arborescens* mixing with the highly stoloniferous *R. viscosum* var. *montanum*.
- Clarence Towe can show many examples of *R. periclymenoides* crossing with *R. calendulaceum*, the flame azalea, in South Carolina.
- John and Sally Perkins can show examples in Audra State Park, West Virginia of *R. prinophyllum* or *R. periclymenoides* crossing with the flame azalea. These probable *calendulaceum* crosses are strongly suggested by the hybrids being triploids, crosses of the diploid with the tetraploid. These crosses have been verified by ploidy testing.
- In the Florida Panhandle, Ron Miller can show tall *R. canescens* crossing with the low-growing and spreading *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans*, yielding a low, pink, colonizing plant.
- On Mt. Cheaha in Alabama, one can find *R. cumberlandense* in large numbers. Blooming earlier is *R. canescens* and later is *R. arborescens*. Yet sometimes the bloomings overlap. The obvious hybrids are outstanding.
- On Hurricane Creek in Lumpkin County, Georgia, where thousands of *R. canescens*, *calendulaceum*,

and *arborescens* reside, dozens of triploids plants have been ploidy tested. These plants often grow within a few feet of each other.

- Even some of the tetraploid plants seem to have long-term introgression with the diploids. How otherwise does one get a large-flowered strong pink tetraploid azalea with an orange blotch?
- Already mentioned is *R. flammeum*, the Oconee azalea. This azalea is often found with *R. canescens* and its intermediates. In Fulton County, Georgia, near the old Roswell Mill, *R. canescens*, *R. calendulaceum*, *R. flammeum*, and hybrids are all growing together.
- In Cherokee County, Georgia, is a location that has produced large numbers of tested triploids.

More and more natural crosses of the named species are being discovered. There is no doubt that given the chance most of our natives will cross and have for many, many years. The only way to untangle the mysteries is DNA testing and more ploidy testing.

To be continued.

Ploidy

Ploidy is a term that has to do with the number of sets of chromosomes a plant or animal has. Almost all animals have two sets of chromosomes and are called diploid, $2n$. Humans receive one set from each parent, the X and Y chromosomes. It is not unusual for some plant genera to exhibit different levels of ploidy. Diploid = 2 sets, triploid = 3 sets, tetraploid = 4 sets, and so on. Having more than 2 sets is called polyploidy. In sexual reproduction, tetraploids and higher polyploids have more genetic material to work with. This gives them a better chance at long-term survival. Triploids are usually sterile due to the odd number of chromosomes. Think of seedless grapes or other fruit. In native azaleas, we now know that *R. atlanticum*, *R. austrinum*, *R. calendulaceum*, and *R. colemanii* are tetraploid. All others are diploid. In some cases, ploidy testing may be the only way to separate one species from another similar one, e.g., *calendulaceum* from *cumberlandense*, or species from triploid hybrid.

DNA

DNA is an acronym for deoxyribonucleic acid. It is a chain of nucleotides, atoms of hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, carbon, and phosphorus, carrying the genetic instructions used in the growth, development, morphological characteristics, functioning, and reproduction of all known living organisms. In plants, DNA is inherited from seed and pollen parents. Careful DNA studies with native azaleas can help determine the relationships between plants and can allow us to better understand the species.

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Charles Andrews of Cumming, Georgia, is vice president of the ASA, a member of the Vaseyi Chapter of the ASA, and a former member of the Oconee Chapter. He is a plant lover in general, but his heart is with azaleas. He enjoys writing and speaking on azalea topics, contributes articles to *The Azalean*, and serves on the journal's Editorial Advisory Board. He also serves as president of the Azalea Chapter of the ARS. For over 35 years, Charles has been studying American deciduous azaleas. He and like-minded "azaleaphiles" spend many hours hiking in the field each year trying to better understand the distribution, habitat, characteristics, and dynamics of this amazing plant complex, primarily found in eastern North America. He believes these plants deserve more scientific study and horticultural emphasis. Charles is working to make accurate information on the history, identification, distribution, and culture of native azaleas more available.



Photo William C. Miller III

◀ The entrance to the visitor center at Garvan Woodland Gardens gave us an elegant hint of what was to come in the Garden of the Pine Wind during the 2018 convention. (See related article, p. 28).

Recruiting New Members

Membership Chairman Robert Thau—Jasper, Texas

Recruiting and maintaining members is a continuing issue faced by the society and its chapters. I have had great success in signing up new members in the Jasper area and want to share some approaches that have worked for me.

- ▶ I approached the Jasper Master Gardeners about two years ago and offered to do a workshop and give a tour of my garden. The goal was to provide greater exposure to the Azalea Society of America. This was the start of many talks and workshops and has resulted in more society visibility and more new members.
- ▶ I encourage members to contact local garden clubs and master gardeners and introduce them to the ASA. You will often find that they never knew there was an azalea society. They also are frequently surprised at the number of cultivars there are.
- ▶ I give tours of my garden and collection, which totals over 800 cultivars with more on the way. I tell them how they can propagate and care for the azaleas and do a "hands on" demonstration for those who are interested. Those who are ASA members—or become members at the demonstration—are given a cutting from my garden, and they provide me feedback on their propagation results. The word is getting out. I've been getting calls from people I don't know, wanting to see my garden.
- ▶ Our chapter has also joined the Jasper Chamber of Commerce and they have joined the ASA. They have been a great help in promoting the ASA.
- ▶ We also worked to get Jasper designated as an Azalea City in time for their 30th Year Festival. The local news and radio also played a big role with coverage and news articles. I walked into my bank and the teller knew about my garden and the ASA and asked me how to join. She signed up and got a free azalea for joining.
- ▶ I was asked to sponsor a 7th grader, who loves plants, for a junior high school Study Fair for gifted and talented students. I worked with her to teach her the basics of growing and caring for azaleas. She had a display of several azaleas, a poster and pictures of some of the new varieties, and ASA membership information trifold. When people came by, she would explain her display to them. She received an award for her display. I was proud of her. She and her mother are now members of the society.
- ▶ One member was excited about propagating azaleas but had no place to get cuttings. By being a member, I told her I will supply her with cuttings. She received about 125 cuttings to place in her newly constructed hot box.

These approaches have worked for me. I know there are many more ways of recruiting new members. If you have other successful approaches, please let me know so that I can share them with other chapters. Contact me at: rwillbubbathau@yahoo.com.

Special Recognition for Two ASA Louisiana Chapter Members

Another First for Miss Margie Jenkins

Louisiana's agriculture hall of fame has its first female member.

Margie Jenkins, an expert on cultivating landscaping plants, is among the 2018 inductees into the Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Distinction. The 96-year-old Jenkins has been prominent in Louisiana's landscape and nursery business for six decades. In addition to plant varieties, she's also knowledgeable about timber harvesting and dairy cattle and sheep ranching.

The hall honors people who have made significant contributions to the state's agriculture community. Jenkins joins Pierre "Pete" Lanaux, a sugarcane farmer for more than 70 years, among this year's inductees.

Induction ceremonies were held March 22, 2018, in Baton Rouge, presented by Louisiana Radio Network, the LSU AgCenter, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation.

▼ Margie Jenkins (center), Jenkins Farm and Nursery, Amite, LA, was inducted to the Louisiana Agricultural Hall of Distinction at their annual awards banquet held in Baton Rouge March 22, 2018. Margie is joined by Dr. Mike Strain (right), Commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and his wife Susan (left).



Photo Buddy Lee



Photo Buddy Lee

▲ Dr. Allen Owings, with brother Don and sister-in-law Donna Owings with dedicatory sign for the new garden named in his honor.

LSU AgCenter Garden Named for Allen Owings

April 26, 2018 was a big day for Chapter President Allen Owings—His friends at the LSU AgCenter and his many friends in other horticulture organizations threw him a BIG retirement party at the Hammond Research Station to celebrate his 25 years of People and Plants! Absolutely beautiful weather, with a large number of family, friends, and co-workers meant everyone had a great time. And, they honored Allen by dedicating the Dr. Allen Owings Sun Garden at the Hammond Station. This 5-acre sun garden will be used for evaluation of warm season and cool season bedding plants, along with herbaceous perennials, roses, ornamental grasses, and "newer" companion shrubs and small trees.



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to
Janet Carson

in recognition of your many contributions to horticulture by developing the Arkansas Master Gardeners organization and programs, for publicizing proper horticulture practices for Arkansas gardeners in print and via the Master Gardeners' website, and for assisting in planning and execution of the 2018 national Azalea Society of America convention in Little Rock. This has increased knowledge about azaleas for both Arkansas gardeners and visitors from across the US.

Janet Carson, we greatly appreciate you and thank you for your service and dedication.

▼ Rick Bauer presents the ASA Distinguished Service Award to Janet Carson with congratulations and thanks.



Photo Buddy Lee

AZALEA SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Azalea Society of America takes great honor in presenting
THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

to
Jim Brant

in recognition of his many contributions in promoting the propagation and preservation of native azaleas. Jim, as part of the American Rhododendron Society, recognized the need to preserve a large stand of unique native azaleas on Hooper Bald in the Nantahala National Forest, North Carolina. His efforts to organize the clearing of competing vegetation and planting of native species has resulted in the restoration of the native azalea population on Hooper Bald. This has provided a readily accessible area for the general public to enjoy the beauty of native azaleas.



Photo Buddy Lee

▲ ▼ Jim Brant was surprised by this award presented to him by the ASA. It paired nicely with his 2017 "Restored and Resilient Landscapes" Regional Forester Award from the US Forest Service. The two awards show both organizations recognize his years of work leading a 13-state effort on the Hooper Bald Restoration Project by steadily helping to clear the area of encroaching vegetation.



Photo Buddy Lee

See you in *Summerville!*

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