

President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia

As we reach the final months of the year things are starting to slow down, we can reflect on all of the great things happening in the society. Like many plant societies, we continue to work to maintain and increase membership. I'm happy to report that not only are we maintaining our membership levels, but they are increasing. This is the result of a lot of hard work at the grass roots level. A key part of the effort is public exposure...educating the public about the society and our purpose. Another major part is maintaining members once they join the society. This is done through providing interesting programs and a purpose for members at the chapter level. At the national level, we published a manual on good ideas for running a successful chapter. It brings together ideas from a number of chapters, in our society and others. I encourage chapters to review the manual and implement some of the good ideas and submit their own ideas for inclusion in future updates to the manual. The manual is available on the website at "About the Society/Chapters/Resources."

Propagation and perpetuation of azalea varieties is also a major goal of the society and a key element of the Legacy Project. We have successful projects under way across the society. Additionally, there are more varieties in the wings which will be officially added when the sponsors feel their efforts have matured. Some of our chapters hold cutting exchanges where members share cuttings of Legacy varieties and others, and educate members on how to propagate new plants from the cuttings. If you need more information on propagation methods, there is a Propagation tab on the society website which contains several approaches to propagation. I encourage you to institute a formal propagation program in your chapter. A side benefit is that in a few years, you will have plants ready to exchange with other members and for plant sales and generation of revenue for your chapter.

Our recently recognized Azalea Cities continue to actively promote azaleas. Several society members joined the folks in Graham County/Robbinsville for their second annual azalea festival. This festival is an outgrowth of a decade long effort to preserve native azaleas on Hooper Bald. Jasper Texas and the Texas Forest Country chapter continue to promote azaleas in east Texas. They recently received a substantial grant from the state of Texas for multiple projects within the city, many involving beautification efforts including azaleas. I hope to attend their azalea festival next year after the Houston convention and see the results of their efforts in person.

Finally, we have been apprised of an effort by the US Forest Service which will be detrimental to native rhododendron, azaleas, and kalmia. They have determined that the above mentioned plants are invasive and there are plans to remove them and prevent their recurrence. The society has officially expressed our concern about this proposed effort. The Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society has a great website set up to explain what the Forest Service is proposing as well as detailing what has been done and what can be done to broadcast our concerns and objections to this proposed effort. I encourage you to visit www.arspvc.org/alert.html for more information on what you can do.

Thanks for all of you for your hard work in promoting azaleas and the society. I think we can all be proud of our efforts.



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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Immediate Past President — J Jackson

Directors

Terms expire 2020

Fred Anderson

Robert Thau

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Terms expire 2021

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Chapter presidents serve as ex-officio directors.

Chapters

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(chartered May 1980)

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Lars Larson, *Pres.*

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(chartered June 1981)

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Lake Michigan

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(chartered 2018)

Ronnie Palmer, *Pres.*

Texas Forest Country

(chartered 2018)

Robert Thau, *Pres.*

At-Large Contact

Robert Thau

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual amount of \$30; life-membership for one or two persons at the same address is \$600. Members receive *The Azalean* and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society. For information and a membership application, write to Leslie Nanney, Secretary, 8646 Tuttle Road, Springfield, VA 22152 or visit www.azaleas.org.