

# President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia

As I write this letter, my sprinklers are working full time outside trying to keep my azaleas from wilting in the unusual heat and dry weather we have been experiencing on the East Coast this fall. Nothing is more discouraging for a gardener than to see his or her hard work dry up and die. Fortunately, most of us realize that's part of the process and we continue on in our dance with Mother Nature.

By the time you read this message, most of our gardens will be mostly dormant for the winter. I say mostly, since many of us include plants which have winter interest, either through interesting foliage or early blooming (e.g., hellebores, witch hazel, camellias etc.). I would encourage you to explore some of these companion plants for inclusion among your collection of azaleas.

Winter is also a time for us to recoup from the previous year's efforts and plan for the next. I continue to bring up the Legacy Project in my messages, since I think it provides a purpose for our efforts. For example, the Northern Virginia Chapter has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Meadowlark Gardens and has planted and continues to maintain a Legacy Garden of Joe Klimavicz azaleas. Currently they are working to prepare beds for additional plantings and have planned another Legacy Garden with Bob Stewart azaleas. They are also working with the Norfolk Botanical Garden to expand their collections of McDonald and Glenn Dale azaleas. Finally, they have an ongoing propagation program and feature Legacy azaleas in their plant sales and auctions. The Texas Chapter is working with the Gayla Mize Garden of Stephen F. Austin University to expand their collection of Aromi azaleas. The Texas Forest Country Chapter is working closely with the city of Jasper, TX, on a beautification project which features azaleas, including Legacy varieties, as a prime focus. I know there are additional initiatives ongoing throughout the society and will report on them in future messages.

I also reported in the Fall issue on a program by the US Forest Service to remove azaleas from selected areas of our National Forests. The letters from our society, the American Rhododendron Society (ARS), and individual concerned citizens have been heard by the Forest Service and have resulted in a dialogue being opened with them. We will have more information at a future date, but in the meantime, I encourage you to continue to monitor the Potomac Valley Chapter of the ARS's website on the subject: [www.arspvc.org/alert.html](http://www.arspvc.org/alert.html).

As we approach the new year, this is the time for us to be planning our programs for next year. Most of the activity within the society occurs at the chapter level. This is where the "rubber meets the road." There are so many ways we can increase our exposure to the general public. Developing good programs and activities are ways to attract and maintain members and grow the society. As I have mentioned previously, we have created a manual of good ideas for chapter success, and it is available on our website at "About the Society/Chapters/Resources." I encourage you to read this manual and consider implementing some of the recommendations. We are also open to other suggestions to improve the success of our chapters. They can be sent to me at [president@azaleas.org](mailto:president@azaleas.org).

I hope to see many of you at our 2020 National Convention in Houston. This is the first time we will be meeting in Houston, and I'm looking forward to seeing a new part of the country, new gardens, and meeting with old friends.



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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## 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](http://www.azaleas.org).