

# President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia

As I write this letter, we're in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This continues to be a difficult time, more so for some than others. I hope that all of you are following the advice of our health organizations and keeping your social distance and washing your hands. The most immediate impact of COVID-19 on our Society was the cancelling of the Houston ASA convention. Having co-sponsored a convention in the past, I know how much work goes into planning. We thank the members of the Texas Chapter for all the work they put into planning the convention and we're sorry we couldn't visit you in Houston.

The decision to cancel the convention was made shortly before the scheduled start as the COVID19 situation in Houston worsened quickly. Some members had already started their travels when the decision was made to cancel. Dan and Joanne Neckel from the Northern Virginia Chapter were already in Texas at the time of cancellation. As the old saying goes, they "made lemonade out of lemons" and visited sights on the convention itinerary. Joanne has written an article in this issue which gives us a little taste of what we missed.

Our next convention will be sponsored by the Central Carolinas Chapter in the Charlotte, NC, area. A preview of one of the convention's highlights is an article in this issue on the Bartlett Arboretum. This is a jewel among arboreta and is not normally open to the public. I'm certainly looking forward to visiting it next year.

The pandemic is also impacting activities at the chapter level as chapters cancel their planned activities. The pandemic needn't cause all activities to cease, however. The key elements to curbing the spread of the virus are maintaining the proper social distance, washing hands frequently, and, in some cases, wearing masks. Fortunately, our passion for azaleas (and other plants) can be met while maintaining safe practices. For some of us, this extra time at home has given us more time to tend to our gardens. Some public gardens continue to welcome visitors, though indoor facilities may be shut down and capacity controls might be in effect. Members in individual chapters have opened their gardens to visits by other chapter members, again ensuring safe practices are observed. Some chapters have gone the virtual route, gathering pictures from member's gardens, and publishing them in their newsletters (and in some cases increasing the frequency of these letters). Others are posting their photos to chapter Facebook pages.

Now is also a good time to get into propagating azaleas. It is a satisfying way to increase the diversity of azaleas and other plants in your garden. There are numerous resources with information on propagating azaleas and other woody plants, most notably *The Azalean*. The Spring issue was the latest with an article by Dale Berrong on cutting propagation. You can propagate cuttings from your own plants or get cuttings from other members, friends, and neighbors. It is a great way to expand your collection, especially if you are looking for varieties which you don't find in the big box stores. Many interesting and hard to find varieties are available in private gardens.

I look forward to the current COVID19 situation being over and things getting back to normal. The key thing is for all of us to stay safe by engaging in safe practices. While we're all cooped up at home, we also must maintain our mental and emotional health. Gardening is an ideal way to do that as I'm sure many, if not all, of you know. Take this opportunity to take care of all those deferred activities (e.g., weeding, transplanting etc.).

Hopefully in the not too distance future we will be through the current difficulties. I look forward to us getting back together again soon.



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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### Terms expire 2021

Dale Berrong

Jim Campbell

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### Terms expire 2022

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Chapter presidents serve as ex-officio directors.

## Chapters

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(chartered May 1980)

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(chartered May 1980)

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(chartered 2018)

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