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The Azalean

Journal of the Azalea Society of America

President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia



This will be my last President's Message for *The Azalean*. After four years, I am coming to the end of my second term. I have enjoyed meeting and working with a large number of our members. I think that we continue to do a good job in promoting azaleas and I hope to continue working towards that goal. I thank all of the members who served in elected positions at the society or chapter level and all others who have made and continue to make contributions to the society. I will miss those friends and dedicated members who are no longer with us, but who will continue to live on in our memories.

I've been especially pleased to see all of the Legacy Project initiatives ongoing throughout the society. Many chapters are propagating Legacy varieties and introducing them to the general public through plant sales. While others are working with public gardens and arboreta to establish Legacy Gardens. This is an excellent way to promote and perpetuate the legacy of some of the beautiful azalea varieties found naturally in the wild by collectors or produced by hybridizers, many of whom are members of the society. I'm also pleased that there are chapters within the American Rhododendron Society (ARS) which are also promoting azalea Legacy Gardens.

Unfortunately, COVID threw a monkey wrench into society activities during the last year of my presidency. It hit us by surprise in March of 2020 when cases sprung up overnight at Rice University in the area of the planned Houston Convention. Out of an abundance of caution and concern for the health and welfare of our members, we reluctantly made the decision to cancel the convention. This was a disappointment for all of us given all the work that the planning committee had done for the convention. The Charlotte planning committee reworked their concept for the 2021 convention to comply with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), however, they had no control over their two main garden venues cancelling out given the continued COVID situation.

Many of our chapters continued to conduct chapter activities, albeit differently than in the past. Some have gotten used to meeting virtually via Zoom or other electronic means. Some are considering continuing to use electronic means to reach geographically dispersed members once live meetings recommence. We will attempt our first society wide Zoom event with the 2021 Virtual Convention in May. I see that as possibly being a component of future conventions.

I'm looking forward to things getting much better later in 2021. With more of the population being vaccinated and with continued adherence to CDC guidelines, I think that we will be able to get back to somewhat normal operations. I'm especially looking forward to getting back together with friends who I haven't seen for a couple of years. I've seen photos of some of the venues in Lafayette, LA, and I think we'll have a great convention there in 2022.

I will continue to be active in the society. I'm concurrently serving as president of the Northern Virginia Chapter and am a member of the planning group for the 2023 joint ASA/ARS Convention in Georgia sponsored by the Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASA and the Azalea Chapter of the ARS. I look forward to continuing to work with my friends and fellow members of the society. I hope to see you 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 *Tsu tsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

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Rick Bauer

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Deadlines for *The Azalean*:

- Summer 2021 issue is due April 15, 2021
- Fall 2021 issue is due July 15, 2021
- Winter 2021 issue is due October 15, 2021
- Spring 2022 issue is due January 15, 2022

Remember, you too can write for the *The Azalean*!

Contact: theazalean@gmail.com.

On the Cover

The Historic Mouton Gardens Grand Mall Boulevard in Lafayette, LA, is one of the tour destinations of the ASA 2022 National Convention. Photo Credit: Mrs. Donna R. Cummins. She is a resident in Mouton Gardens.



McFarlane Nature Park Receives Gifts of Native Azaleas

By Karin Guzy, The Cobb Land Trust Inc.—Marietta, GA

On November 14, just as the weather turned, 58 native azaleas moved to their new home at McFarlane Nature Park in East Cobb County, Marietta, GA.

The 12-15-foot tall azaleas were pruned, dug, and wrapped at the home of Jan Spring, where she lived for 42 years. Her garden is less than one mile from the park. When her home was sold, it was clear that most of the azaleas were endangered by the development plans of the new owner.

Spring had a very rural childhood in western Kentucky where she became enamored of nature.

When she moved to her property in the Atlanta Country Club in 1978, it was covered with “scuppernong vines, saw-briar bushes, honeysuckle, Virginia creeper, weeds and snakes,” she recalls. “The first two years I never stepped outside without a rifle or a shovel in my hand. I killed so many big, fat snakes that I skinned them and made belts for Christmas presents.”

But the other thing that came with the property was an experienced gardener for a neighbor. The neighbor, Jack Halliday, loved wild azaleas. He told Spring that the area “had been covered with native azaleas before the development started.” Initially there were six pink azaleas growing along the creek that ran through her property. They are “so pretty and smell so sweet,” she says, “I was smitten and determined to rescue and preserve as many as possible.”

Jan herself tells the tale of her growing relationship with these plants:

“Two nurseries in North Georgia sold wild azaleas and Jack knew the owners so I bought a lot of my orange bushes from them. My good friend Jenny and I moved four very-large pink azaleas from her grandmother’s farm in Gwinnett County (GA). I started following road construction news in Cobb County to stop bulldozers so I could dig up wild azaleas.

“For years I carried a washtub, shovels, gallon

jugs of water and three kids in the back of my station wagon. My kids played in the car and I rescued wild azaleas.”

Spring recalls the locations of her digs, some near expanding expressways, growing shopping areas, and new residential developments. She ended up with over 60, of all colors – pink, white, yellow, orange, gold, flame, and bicolor. “Magnificent glory in springtime,” she recalls.

When her collection became endangered by the sale of her property, she approached her nearby neighbor Karin Guzy, chair of The Cobb Land



Trust, which owns the 11.5-acre McFarlane Nature Park, to ask about donating them. The park already held a collection of 42 native azaleas planted in the display gardens and woodland. Master Gardeners of Cobb County have worked at the park weekly since 1993 developing display gardens of Piedmont Region native plants. Guzy did not hesitate to say yes.

The women began to plan how they could make the move for the very mature plants. Spring called it “girl power.” Jan pursued

donations from neighbors to pay the expenses of the move while Karin called azalea experts to gather their best advice.

The first call was to Ernest Koone, owner of Lazy K in Pine Mountain, GA. Guzy took lots of notes as they spoke, absorbing the advice that Koone had to offer. At the end of the phone call, he said he could donate 100 plants to the park to help offset the costs of the move. He was already familiar with the park from having supplied hundreds of azaleas to the Georgia Native Plant Society for their annual spring plant sales, held at McFarlane. Of course, his offer was accepted. Two of his plants moved to the farmhouse yard. The remainder were sold to cover expenses.

Karin then reached out to hybridizer Earl Somerville, who also lives in Marietta, GA. Somerville offered confirmation of much of the



advice she had already received, plus planting tips from his years of experience with the plants. Sommerville suggested that he could donate 20 plants or so to the park. The offer was, of course, accepted. Guzy turned to her husband, saying, “I have to stop talking to people about this or we will have more plants than we can handle!”

The Master Gardener crew at McFarlane was enthusiastic about the additions. They set to work transplanting some already established shrubs to make room to spotlight six of the new azaleas. As the move-in date approached, they dug and prepared the holes to receive them.

Spring spoke with a landscaper who worked in her neighborhood. Jeff Miller, of Blade and Bush, offered his time and crew to dig the plants, wrap the roots, and move them to the park, at no cost. Two of his crew also dug 52 of the holes around the perimeter of the 11.5-acre park. Guzy and her husband distributed a bag of pine bark mini nuggets to each planting hole—marking the hole with a pink-flagged bamboo stake.



Jan and her regular helper, David Zarate, started pruning the plants as they entered dormancy, taking 12 and 15-foot tall plants down to about four feet tall to compensate for the inevitable root loss. “Pruning all those buds and cutting off all that growth,” she said, “was like cutting off my own arms and legs.”

Guzy started recruiting volunteers to help put the plants into their new homes. “My hope,” she said, “is that the azaleas will wake up at the park in spring and wonder how they got there.” She shared digging and planting instructions found in the Summer 2016 issue of *The Azalean*, written by Charles R. Andrews III, of Cumming, GA.

The azaleas, with their burlap-wrapped root balls, arrived at the park on November 13. The morning of the 14th, the volunteers arrived—wearing their masks, gloves, and sturdy shoes, and carrying shovels. About 40 people focused on getting the plants in the ground, which was accomplished in short order. Guzy drove the perimeter with a 25-gallon water tank to water them in. Boy Scouts from Troop 797 followed to mulch the newly planted azaleas with pine straw, having been taught the difference between volcanoes and donuts!

Now the wait. Will they notice the move? With the buds pruned off, there will be no floral display from them until Spring 2022, but a good show of healthy new growth will be satisfying. We will all be watching.

About the Author:

Karin Guzy is the Chair of The Cobb Land Trust Inc. She can be reached at karinguzy@gmail.com or 678-860-4445. To follow the project or learn more, visit <https://www.facebook.com/McFarlanePark/> or <https://cobblandtrust.org/index.htm>.

Photos courtesy of The Cobb Land Trust Inc.

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Azalea Society of America 2021 Virtual Convention

May 20–22, 2021 • Friday–Sunday

By Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia

COVID-19 has been adversely impacting all of our lives. With the arrival of viable vaccines, hopefully this difficult period will soon come to an end. Unfortunately, it will continue to impact our lives for the immediate future.

As COVID started raging last spring, the first society impact was the cancellation of the national convention in Houston. The health and safety of our members is foremost. We had been monitoring the COVID status, specifically in Houston. The weekend before the convention there was a spike in COVID cases at Rice University, in the vicinity of our convention hotel. Given that situation and the risk of flying in an enclosed space with possibly infected passengers, we reluctantly made the decision to cancel.

The planning for the Charlotte convention was already well underway. COVID required them to re-examine the planning of the convention. All efforts were made to conform to the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). All indoor activities (e.g., banquets, busses, speakers) were cancelled. The open garden venues (reached through private transportation) and the outdoor plant sale remained. Individual members would have the opportunity to meet with friends, informally in small groups (hopefully complying with CDC guidelines). Given the continued COVID threat, the two main venues cancelled their support of the convention. This necessitated the cancellation of the convention.

Most of us have become accustomed to “meeting” virtually through media such as Zoom. A suggestion was made to try to hold the convention virtually. Apparently other societies have attempted this successfully. The society board of directors agreed to give this approach a try.

The convention will be held the weekend of 20-22 May and will consist of speakers, recorded garden tours (both private and public gardens) and the annual meeting. It will be free of charge. Society members are encouraged to send in videos or video slide shows of their gardens. Videos should be in .wmv, .mp3, or .mp4 format. They should not violate copyrights. If you are planning on providing videos, contact Paul Beck at treasurer@azaleas.org to arrange for transfer of the video. All videos must be received by 9 May.

Because of the current uncertainty as to what videos we’ll have available for the convention, a final agenda can’t be published until after 9 May. It will be provided via email and on our society website no later than the week before the convention. We will also include instructions for accessing the convention at that time.

I know this has been a difficult time for all of us. Hopefully, we’ll all be able to get back to normal soon. We are looking at possibly holding a regional meeting in the fall to be able to meet in person. We also are looking forward to next year’s convention in Lafayette, LA. A preview of that convention will be part of our virtual convention.

Chapter News

Northern Virginia Chapter

Rick Bauer, Corresponding Secretary

The chapter ended the year with our annual meeting on 6 December, conducted via Zoom. We normally hold the meeting in conjunction with a holiday social, however we had to cancel the social due to COVID. We elected new officers and approved our budget for 2021. Despite COVID, we had a successful year financially. As a result, we were able to approve a donation of \$1000 to the national society in memory of our associate member Robert Thau. Additionally, we set aside \$2500 for the repair of the sprinkler system at Meadowlark Gardens which serves the area of the Klimavicz Legacy Garden. Finally, we received a presentation on the Bowie Mill azaleas, one of the varieties in the Legacy Project.

We are planning our next meeting on 21 March at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church if they reopen their meeting room, otherwise it will be conducted solely via Zoom. We're planning on conducting all future meetings via Zoom in addition to meeting in person since we have a large number of members spread across the country (and some across the world).

The chapter would like to welcome Lyn Moen, Great Falls, VA, Andrea Plummer from Washington, DC, Jim Hassel from Horseheads, NY, Mark and Karen Gunnell from Frederick, MD, Linus Chen from Oakton, VA, Ryck Birch from Natick, MA, Mike Jones from Sebastopol, CA, Mike Hudgens from Hayes, VA, and Toshiko Uchiyama and Eleanor Hagerman from Annandale, VA.

Arkansas Chapter

Ronnie Palmer, President

We held a meeting on November 9, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 7:22 by President Ronnie Palmer. This was the first Zoom meeting of the Chapter and there was a total of 12 members present via Zoom.

Ronnie explained that due to the pandemic, all current officers agreed to continue in their capacity until we can return to more normal activities. There were no objections by any of the members present, so until further notice, Ronnie Palmer, President, Steve Brizzi, Vice President, Bob Benbow, Treasurer and Janet Rensing will continue as elected officers. Cheyenne Benbow will continue

to assist Bob as an informal Assistant Treasurer. Steve Brizzi began a discussion on the development of Legacy Gardens and explained how the National ASA encourages the development of Legacy Gardens.

Janet Rensing presented a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Woodlawn Glenn Dale Legacy Garden."

Ronnie explained to those present that the board welcomes your thoughts' and your opinions as to the possibility of our chapter implementing this type of garden in Arkansas. Woodlawn is a signpost in Lonoke County, on Highway 31, east of Cabot. The project if implemented would take commitment from the ASA membership and would require partnering with other groups for it to be maintained into perpetuity. It would do us no good to plant a garden and then have it fall by the wayside in a few years.

Steve Brizzi has found a location in the Fayetteville area that could be developed into a Carden-Harris Legacy Garden. It would be on a smaller scale, but it would require much of the same commitment from the ASA and other groups.

It was emphasized to the members present that this was just the beginning discussions and that everyone's input was needed before any final proposals could be presented.

The meeting ended abruptly because of time constraints with the Zoom Session. ASA Member Terri Waterman has volunteered the use of her Zoom account for future meetings, we are very thankful for her generosity, which will enable us to have many more zoom meetings without interruption.



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When Does My ASA Membership Expire?

By Paul A. Beck, Treasurer

As treasurer of the ASA, that is the question that I am most often asked, especially around the end of the year. There are several ways that you can determine the answer to this question without having to call or email the treasurer. If your membership is expiring at the end of the year, you will have been sent a reminder in December, via email, or a paper reminder if you have no email address on file with the ASA.

The address label on each copy of *The Azalean* should have EXPIRATION printed above and to the right of your name. I am aware that the 2020 Winter issue did not have it on the label; that was a mistake. At any rate, there should be either the year through which your membership is valid, or one of three words: LIFE, SUBSCR, or GRATIS. If it says SUBSCR, that means you have signed up for a yearly subscription through PayPal. If you would like to sign up for a subscription, please see the Join Us, Renew or Donate page on the ASA website.

Another way to determine your membership expiration is to view your record on the ASA website. You must be logged in to the website to view membership data. Once you are logged in,

open the membership data page from the About the Society/Members menu item. Your chapter membership will be displayed.

At the end of the line containing the member's name are two dates, (1) when you first joined the Society, and (2) the expiration year. In January and February each year, the expiration date is shown in red if you have not renewed for the current year.

In addition, your own personal record has two links at the end of the line, View and Edit. View is used to display the details of your record, including a history of dues payments, associate chapter membership payments, and any donations you may have made to the Society. The Edit link will allow you to change any information in your record except for chapter affiliation and expiration date. If you wish to change your chapter affiliation, contact the treasurer.

As a final note, if you move, please remember to notify the treasurer, or better yet change your record yourself. If you fail to update your address when you move, your copies of *The Azalean* will probably be returned to the treasurer or possibly disposed of.

Welcome New Members!

The Alabamense Chapter welcomes:

- Glenn Keith Bush, Nashville, TN
- Marc Johnson, Opelika, AL
- James Lewis, Perry, GA
- Andrew Reynolds, Auburn, AL
- Noah Yawn, Maylene, AL

The Arkansas Chapter welcomes:

- Bill Pinkerton, Crossville TN

The Northern Virginia Chapter welcomes:

- Ryck Birch, Natick, MA
- Mark & Karen Gunnell, Frederick, MD
- James Hassell, Horseheads, NY
- Andrea Plumer, Washington, DC
- Toshiko Uchiyama & Eleanor Hagerman, Annandale, VA

New At Large members include:

- Julia & Charles Adkins, Beaufort, NC
- Susan H. Gordon, Wakefield, RI
- Hadden Lucas, Greenville, SC
- Alberto Merlo, New York, NY
- Caroline Riggins, Winterville, GA
- Connor Ryan, Mentor, OH
- Brian Skeuse, Stockton, NJ
- Diane & Ronald Whiddon, Baton Rouge, LA



Recognizing Generous ASA Members

By Paul A. Beck, Treasurer

I would like to recognize and thank the following members who made donations during 2020 totaling \$3,505 to the **Operating Fund** and \$3,035 to the **Azalea Research Fund** of the Azalea Society of America. My apologies if I missed anyone.

Operating Fund

\$5 to \$49

Banks, David
Carlson, Barbara & Larry
Ciolino, Vincent
DuRant, Nelson & Suzi
Gregg, Dianne & James
Gutierrez, Joseph, MD, FACS
Harding, Susan & Douglas
Harrison, Eve & Bob
Krabill, Dan & Barbara
Matthews, Jim
McDavit, William & Mary
Pairo, Ellen-Jane & Bill
Settle, Gloria
Willis, Lloyd & Margaret

\$50 to \$99

Bange, Faith & Gerald
Burd, Ginger & Sam
Ciolino, Vincent
Creech, Dr. David
Hargroves, Nancy & Herbert
Kelly, Martha & Bob
O'Dell, Jerry
Smith, Ray

\$100 to \$499

Louisiana Chapter ASA
Stump, Barbara

\$500 to \$999

Beck, Carolyn & Paul

\$1,000 and over

Northern Virginia Chapter ASA
Magnolia Plantation & Gardens

Azalea Research Fund

\$5 to \$49

Appell, Anne Marie & Thomas P.
Brown, Stanley & Gay, Kitty
Ciolino, Vincent J.
Harding, Susan & Douglas
Miller, Joe & Kardak, Halit
Ritch, Francine
Sperling, Barry
Wallace, Peter
Willis, Lloyd & Margaret

\$50 to \$99

Burd, Ginger & Sam
Hargroves, Nancy & Herbert
O'Dell, Jerry

\$100 to \$199

Andrews, Mardi & Charles
Jones, Bill

\$2,500

Dolan Gardens (Frances Jones)

Kinney Azalea Gardens, Rhode Island—Part 2

By Dr. Susan Gordon—Kingston, Rhode Island

[Editor's Note: This is part two of a two-part series. See Part 1 in the Winter 2020 issue.

Correction: The captions on photos 3 and 4 of first part of this article in the Winter issue were reversed.]

Next Generation Ownership

Lorenzo became quite ill in 1993. His daughter Betty (Elizabeth Kinney) and son-in-law Tony Faella largely gave up their own home to help care for him. On his passing, the mantle of garden ownership was placed on them. Tony and Betty Faella were educators, not horticulturalists. But they had always been there to pitch in—doing the books and accounting, helping with storm clean-ups, designing and building picturesque bridges to span seasonal streams—and much more. Tony's expert and thoughtful mowing defines beds and makes the entire garden feel welcoming.

In 1995, the Faellas added nine acres to the garden. This acquisition brought the garden to a new level. A true feeling of spaciousness and sense of place ensued. I remember distinctly, standing in the kitchen with them, and asking what is the first thing you'd like to see on the new land? Their response, "a Moon Gate." The next evening, I was at a RI Nursery & Landscape Assoc. meeting. John Manchester, a long-time friend, sat across the table. To say John is a local landscape architect and stone mason, is akin to describing Neil deGrasse Tyson as an astrology professor at Harvard.

Tenets in the garden's design have always included:

- Maintain intersecting loops of dirt roads, allowing vehicular access, although it's a stroll garden.
- Include large swaths of lawn, allowing for romantic vistas as well as giving humans access and places for passive recreation.
- Make the view from the dining room's picture window exceptional and a priority.
- Extend the garden's season of appeal.
- Add color! Lorenzo, his heirs, and the author, all love color, but include white in almost every planting.

I asked John if he'd ever made a Moon Gate. He replied, "No, but I'd like to." I asked what it would cost for the design. He held up his cocktail napkin and said, "I just did it." A design consultation and a watercolor rendition later, Tony said, "Build it!" and John did. The Moon Gate was completed for Tony's 75th birthday. It has become the garden's focal point and trademark. (See Photo 5.)

My Role in the Garden

Lorenzo hired high school kids to help with the gardens. In 1976, he hired a skinny, stubborn 16-year-old to take over propagation, as well as general help with the gardens. She is the author of this article. She had grown up on a nearby wholesale/retail nursery. Her father was a consummate horticulturalist and ingenious to boot. She learned how to dig, stitch, and drum lace (tie inter-connected ropes around large root balls for transport) from him, as well as to water trees using 100-gal drums and hoses. No irrigation; just suck on the hose, and hope no one was living in it.

That was over 40 years ago. In retrospect, she was another person, so I'll switch to the first person now.

Within a few years, Lorenzo treated me more as a peer and partner. I remember being incredibly excited when, together, we picked out new cultivars from the Roslyn Nursery catalogue. Soon I was going on trips with him. Meeting the likes of Caroline Gable, Everett Hershey, and Fred Galle. We made many evening trips to the Connecticut Rhododendron Society spring truss shows. It was on those evening drives, two hours each way, that he shared many stories about other plantsmen, and the history he'd lived through.

I had close to *carte blanche* in planting and landscape design, as well as hiring and overseeing other employees. Our extensive woodland trail system is the result of my desperation (See Photo 6.). I had plants to line out and I was out of room! Lorenzo Jr.'s criticism was rare, but cutting. A big error would result in "Well Sue, did you think you were going to college?"

After college, I largely ran the gardens. Like many collectors, as plants got big or numerous, Lorenzo would sell some. With my nursery back-

ground, I felt strongly the gardens should support themselves via sales. We sell small plants retail to visitors, etc. But over the years, our niche has become evident. We now also sell large/specimen material to landscape architects, contractors, estates, and arboreta.

The one area in the garden where I started with an actual design goal is Galle's Footsteps. Usually the landscape, or some element, informs the planting layout. Galle's Footsteps is, with the exception of the area and plantings surrounding the Moon Gate, the first planting completed in the Faellas' newest land parcel.

On Fred Galle's passing, I wished to honor his legacy. Each of the five footstep-shaped beds in this area contain plants created by a single hybridizer. The thought was to suggest how, in horticulture, we learn from and build on others' work. The funny part of the story is, just as it was completed, Fred's niece and nephew asked if I would consider adding a northern tribute to him in the gardens. I don't remember exactly what was said,

but the gist of it was "I just did."

The gardens have changed a good deal in the last 40 years. We're not completely organic, but darn close. We don't use any insecticides. We don't remove leaf litter and allow many fallen logs to remain. By doing this, having native trees for canopy species, and leaving as many native forbs* and shrubs as possible, we encourage (and cherish!) the local biodiversity. The result is a lot of breeding songbirds, and a good bio-control system.

A Debt of Gratitude

The Faellas' contributions to the gardens are innumerable. From my perspective, the biggest is their love of people and the hospitality and joy with which they welcome everyone.

Lorenzo's shoulders may have been deemed too thin to withstand serving in WWI, but he was the giant upon whose shoulders the rest of us stood to create the Kinney Azalea Gardens.

Photo 5: The Moon Gate. Photo by Lorna Wright.



To Visit Kinney Azalea Gardens

The gardens are open daylight hours (dawn till dusk), every day.

They are supported by donations and the sale of plant materials.

- Online:
Kinneyazaleagardens.com and on Facebook
- Physical Address:
2391 Kingstown Rd., Kingston, RI 02881

About the Author:

Dr. Susan Gordon has been the horticulturalist and manager of the Kinney Azalea Gardens since 1976. In addition to spending time with her three dogs, she was an adjunct professor at URI for 35 years. She is a past president of the RI Nursery & Landscape Association (RINLA) and chaired their education program for 30 years. She has written chapters of their certification manual as well as that of RI's Coastal Resource Management Council. She continues to write and lecture for RINLA and other groups. Susan can be reached at sgordonkinney@gmail.com or at (401)782-8847.

*A forb is any non-woody flowering plant that is not a grass. The word is derived from Greek meaning pasture or fodder.



Photo 6: A dirt road, leading to the woodland trails. The large pink azalea in the foreground is the Glenn Dale 'Dawning'. Photo by Lorna Wright.

The Kinney Azalea Gardens brochure and map.

Welcome to the Kinney Azalea Gardens! We hope you will enjoy the many varieties of azaleas growing in the Gardens. Please proceed at your own risk. Start at the entrance marker - a 100th birthday present to Mr. Kinney. Pause often to look around you, to take in the many vistas which are carefully planned so that the gardens look different from every direction. Take time to look at all of the plants, as there are also rhododendrons and many other shrubs, trees, wild flowers and specimen evergreens. Enter the new back area through the stone Moon Gate, built in honor of Tony Faella's 75th birthday.

Explore the small paths on the map which provide a variety of experiences for visitors of all ages. Take the Dogwood Trail to the white dogwood tree, look at the wild flowers in Wildflower Walk, see the leucothoe plants in Leucothoe Loop, and the pepperbush at Pepperbush Point.

Mostly you will see azaleas - from the small plants just getting started to the older, larger plants from 5 to 60 years old. Can you find the "pixie" and Pixie azalea along Pixie Path? You will find Geisha azaleas near Hemlock Square. Notice the pink and white flowers on the same branch! Spruce Square shelters flowering plants beneath giant evergreens. Mr. Kinney's own varieties, The Kinney hybrids, are found on the K Path. Nearby are Japanese umbrella pines and yellow and orange deciduous azaleas. Take Bridge Way over the wooden bridge to another part of the gardens. Enjoy the Circle Path, Catalpa Corner and Azalea Park on the way to Jungle Trail. Jungle Trail has bamboo and other unusual plants. Godzilla Bend has "real" (but tiny) monsters hiding in an evergreen tree.

Paul's Path is named in memory of Paul Santer. Paul and his fellow intern, Philip Thibaudeau, designed and established this path in 1995. Galle's Footsteps honors the late Fred C. Galle, friend of Mr. Kinney, and authority on azaleas and hollies. Today's hybridizers rely on Galle's texts.

Come often, relax and enjoy the paths and flowers!



Azalea 'Lorenzo Kinney'
Photo by Lorna Wright.

Thar’s Honeysuckles in Them Thar Swamps

By Charles R. Andrews III—Lee County, Georgia

[Editor’s Note: This is slightly modified from an article that originally appeared in *Azalea Blooms*, the Azalea Chapter ARS chapter newsletter.]

Our native azaleas, or “wild honeysuckles” are like gold. Georgia claims the most species. One can find some of her 12 species up near the Tennessee and North Carolina border and throughout the state down to the Florida border, 300 miles to the south.

Monica Williams found gold in her swamp down in Lee County. Not knowing about native azaleas, at first she did not know what she had found. Monica has a treasure trove on her hands.

Lee County (county seat Leesburg), in the southwestern part of the state [Figure 1: GA county map; Lee Co highlighted.], is situated immediately above Dougherty County (Albany). In order not to embarrass yourself, those of you not familiar with the pronunciation of Georgia town names need to know that this city is pronounced “Awl-Benny,” with accents on both of the two, not three, syllables. It was once part of Creek Indian territory, ceded to the State of Georgia in 1825. A year later, the county was created and named after distinguished Revolutionary War cavalry commander Light Horse Harry Lee. Lee County’s eastern boundary is the Flint River. Kinchafoonee and Muckalee Creeks are major tributaries. The county is in the Coastal Plain, with typical pine barrens, natural ponds, and swampy areas around the watercourses and drainages. In many undeveloped or uncultivated areas, undergrowth is periodically burned.



Figure 1: Lee County highlighted in red.



Photo 1: 40-yr-old *R. austrinum* in Johnny's yard. (Photo by Golden.)

Johnny Golden, a school official in Leesburg, seems to have been one of the few in Lee County to have developed an interest in native azaleas. He has been in love with native azaleas for years. Some of the azaleas in his yard are now over 40 years old. [See photo 1.] Johnny connected years ago with Smitty Smitherman of Auburn University, who would drive hundreds of miles in search of native azaleas. Smitty came to Lee County, where they inspected some sites. [See photo 2.] Johnny continued his contact with Smitty. Through my correspondence with Johnny, I was introduced to Monica and Lee County azaleas. Monica's property is on Muckalee Creek, not far from where it joins the Flint River.

The Flint River begins as a spring branch at Hapeville, just north of the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, draining under the tram tunnels to the concourses at the airport and then under I-285 west of the I-75 interchange. It

Photo 2: *R. canescens* in pine woods. (Photo by Golden.)



flows generally south in a winding fashion paralleling I-75 until it begins to turn more to the southeast toward Fort Valley. From there it winds again more due south into Lake Blackshear. Leaving the lake, it begins a southwesterly flow down to Albany into Lake Chehaw. Another long winding, southwest stretch takes it into Lake Seminole below Bainbridge where it joins the Chattahoochee River and becomes the Apalachicola River. Many creek and branches join in along the Flint River's 344-mile-long journey. [See Figure 2: Flint River map.]

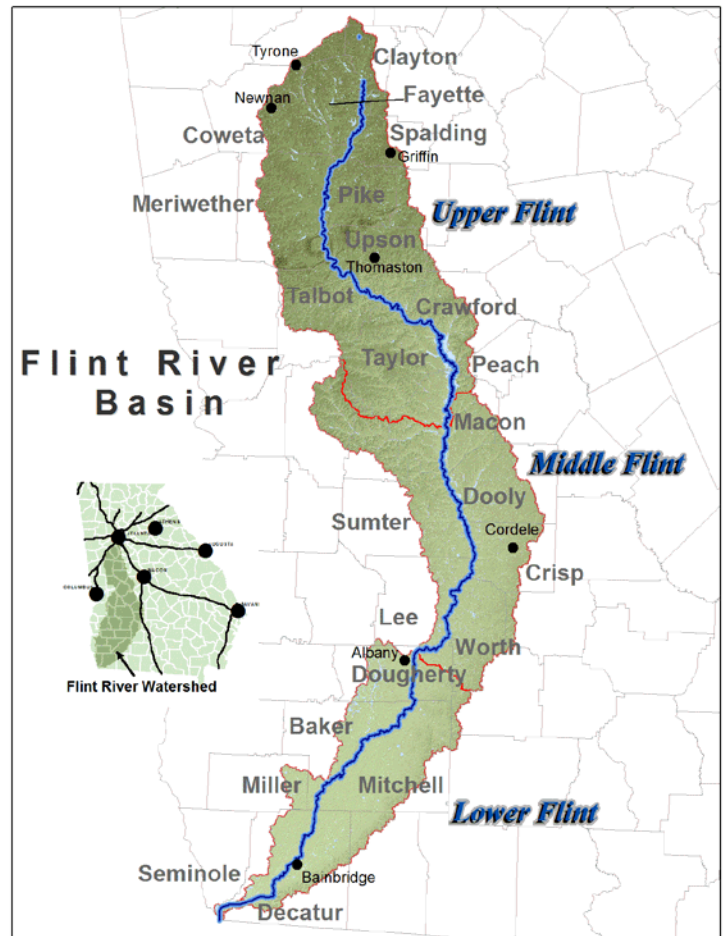


Figure 2: Flint River Basin

In 2017, Johnny published in the *Lee County Ledger* an informative article explaining various species that might be in Lee County and asking anyone who may have azaleas on the property to contact him. Monica saw the article and contacted Johnny. Monica, a respiratory therapist, and Ed Williams, a pharmacist, purchased a 77-acre tract adjoining their home in the south end of the county in 2015. Their swampy tract, bordering the Muckalee, had been clear-cut and was re-growing into a dense thicket. Monica discovered some attractive plants blooming on the property and started googling wild flowers: “bushes, white,



Figure 3: Georgia *R. alabamense* counties in bright green. More counties may have Alabama azaleas. Some reported sites may be incorrectly identified.

tubular, fragrant, spring.” She was led to native azaleas. Until that moment, she never knew there were native azaleas in Lee County. One type was called swamp azalea; Monica had a swamp. She was satisfied with “swamp azalea.”

When Monica called, Johnny came to see her. She was excited to meet someone who knew about native azaleas, and he was delighted to see her and her swamp. Johnny thought her “swamp azalea” was actually *Rhododendron alabamense*, the Alabama azalea. She wanted to learn more. Johnny invited Monica to see the native azaleas in his yard and generously shared articles and books on the subject. Johnny and Monica began working as a team locating more native azalea populations in Lee County. Johnny called on Patrick Thompson, who had gone into the field with Smitty Smitherman.

In the spring of 2018, Patrick Thompson, arboretum specialist from the Davis Arboretum at Auburn University, came to see the azaleas, especially *R. alabamense*. Patrick confirmed that Monica’s swamp did indeed have the Alabama azalea. This is important because it is the easternmost site yet recorded for the species. *R. alabamense* is not common in Georgia; in fact, it is not common in Alabama. It is found scattered in some counties of western Georgia. [Figure 3.] Patrick reported on his trip on Facebook, where our azalea group found out about it.

After off and on communication with Johnny for a year or so, I asked if I could come down to see the winter floral buds, then return later during bloom season. Our conversations revealed that there are much more than just *R. alabamense* there. Though I expected the Piedmont azalea (*R. canescens*), there seemed to be Florida azaleas (*R. austrinum*) and swamp azaleas (*R. viscosum*). Could they also have Oconee azaleas (*R. flammeum*) and Red Hills azaleas (*R. colemanii*)? I shared with Ron Miller the conversations and photos Johnny and Monica had sent. The possibility of finding these species intermingling there in Lee County piqued his interest. This led to our trip November 6-8, 2020.



Photo 3: Sutton’s Landing.

Friday

Ron suggested we meet at Sutton’s Landing on Kinchafoonee Creek, south of Leesburg. [See Photo 3.] He would be driving up from Pensacola, FL, with his boat. I would be driving down from Cumming, GA. Ron was late arriving because he had trouble restarting his truck after getting gas—a portent of things to come. At the landing, the truck would not restart. Fortunately, we easily transferred boat and trailer to the hitch on my vehicle.



Photo 4: Kinchafoonee Creek *R. austrinum*.

We called Johnny, who spent all Friday morning and into the afternoon helping us find a mechanic. It appeared to be something causing a shorted circuit. The best we could do is have Ron's truck taken in to a shop that afternoon to be worked on the following Monday. Nothing else could we do but go look for azaleas.

We first put the boat in the water at the landing and in just a few hundred yards up and down from the boat ramp found quite a few plants of *R. austrinum* and one *R. alabamense*. [See photo 4.] Near the bridge on US 19 above Sutton's Landing we stepped ashore and found a colony of *R. austrinum* a short distance away from the creek in dense shade. The plants were spindly and almost totally void of flower buds. After a quick look along the creek near the landing, we left for Monica's swamp, where Monica and Johnny gave us a tour.

On her property, beavers keep the drainage flowing into Muckalee Creek dammed, creating a pond and keeping the area swampy. Ed cut cart paths through the property. Using the cart paths,

Photo 5 (at left): Ron Miller, Johnny Golden, and Monica Willians inspecting *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans*.

Photo 6 (in middle): *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans* blossom. Photo 7 (at right): *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans* winter buds.



Monica has been continually finding new azaleas in the overgrown brush. The area is quite dense with re-growing sprouts of southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), southern live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), sand laurel oak (*Q. hemisphaerica*), redbay (*Persea borbonia*), and seedlings of red maple (*Acer rubra*), pawpaw (*Asimina parviflora*), inkberry (*Ilex glabra*), American holly (*I. opaca*), yaupon holly (*I. vomitoria*), sweetshrub (*Calycanthus floridus*), swamp titi (*Cyrilla racemiflora*), sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), fetterbush lyonia (*Lyonia lucida*), red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), deerberry (*Vaccinium stamineum*), and Elliott's blueberry (*V. elliotii*).

The azaleas were completely hidden in the dense undergrowth. Monica began spotting more plants and clearing out around them. Monica would spy a blossom or flower bud and cut and slash her way to the plant. This would open up one or more plants. She has discovered many more plants since Patrick's visit. The primary azaleas fighting for survival in the thicket are *R. austrinum* and *R. canescens*. There are also many *R. alabamense* and at least one patch of *R. viscosum*.

The *R. viscosum* there most certainly appears to be var. *aemulans*. This distinct, early blooming, fuzzy-budded variety has gone into obscurity since it was merged into the species *R. viscosum* without any taxonomic recognition. The plants at Monica's are identical to those Ron has seen from Florida to East Texas, with one exception. Some of these plants in the peaty, boggy area have grown to a height of 8 feet. *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans* is considered a low-growing plant. Monica's *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans* had a few open blossoms and like all *aemulans* is quite stoloniferous. Some branches had as many as 7 flower buds crowded on the terminal ends, not unusual for this plant. [See photos 5-7.]



Photo 8: *R. austrinum* in Monica's swamp.
(Photo by Williams)

From pictures Monica shared, we know there are many Florida azaleas on the property. Pictures show the yellow blossoms in varying shades and our inspection found glandular hairs on the new growth and leaf petioles. [See photo 8.] The photos of her pinks actually vary from white through white with pink tubes to strong pinks. [See photo 9.] *R. austrinum* is a tetraploid while *R. canescens* is a diploid. One big question is whether some of the pinks on the property are pink tetraploids, which may be a pink form of *R. austrinum* and not *R. canescens*. Photos sent to us after the trip confirm at least some pinks are *R. austrinum*. We need to inspect pinks in bloom to find more pink tetraploids.

Photo 9: *R. canescens* in Monica's swamp.
(Photo by Williams.)



In a relative high area in the swamp where water occasionally overflows during periods of heavy rain, we were taken to a plant that might possibly be *R. colemanii*. We collected samples for ploidy tests (results: diploid, not *R. colemanii*). Monica showed us another plant that was probably a hybrid. [See photos 10-11.] Within a few feet we found a Piedmont azalea and an Alabama azalea. We also collected samples of this one for tests (results: diploid).



Photo 10: *R. canescens*-*R. alabamense* hybrid? in Monica's swamp.

Photo 11: *R. alabamense* seed capsule in Monica's swamp



In another amazing area, a large group of Florida azaleas and Alabama azaleas were growing together, side by side. Neither Ron nor I had ever see these two species mingling like this. This patch is a place to look for natural triploid hybrids in the springtime.

Over near and along Muckalee Creek, *R. alabamense* appears to dominate. Monica took us to an area at the creek and pointed to a magnificent



Photo 12: *R. alabamense* “The Queen.”

azalea, 12 feet tall. “Bow to the queen,” she commanded. We have never seen such an Alabama azalea. With 20 to 30 trunks, an inch or two in diameter, and smaller stolons on the outer perimeter, the giant shrub rises up from a wide-spreading crown and arches out over a 25-foot area. The leaves were in their fall transition from green to an amber-yellow. [See photo 12.] In the immediate area along the creek bank and nearby were many smaller Alabama azalea plants. The pleasant distraction and learning experience of Friday afternoon began to ease the tension from Ron’s truck problems.

Saturday

On Saturday, we put the boat in the water. Ron has often observed that many azaleas are accessible from a boat that are not from land. One has the option of beaching the boat and walking as well. From Sutton’s Landing, we eased down the Kinchafoonee and then up the Muckalee. Along the stream banks, the most prominent tree was bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), draped in moss. [See photos 13-14.] We also saw river birch (*Betula nigra*), sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), sweetbay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana* var. *australis*), southern live oak, sand laurel oak, overcup oak (*Q. lyrata*), red maple, redbay, hollies, swamp titi everywhere, deerberry and Elliott’s blueberry, and witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana* or maybe *H. macrophylla*). Also common on the sandy banks was saltbush (*Baccharis halimifolia*), with its late fall-flowering fluffs of snowy white flower heads. We saw occasional clumps of taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), a non-native, invasive tropical plant loosely called elephant-ears. In one particu-

lar spot along the water’s edge, we saw a large, attractive spread of swamp marigold (*Bidens aristosa*). [See photo 15.]

Photo 13: Bald cypress on Kinchafoonee Creek.



Photo 14: Red maple on Kinchafoonee Creek.



Photo 15: Taro and swamp marigold on Kinchafoonee Creek.





Photo 16: *R. alabamense* on the Muckalee

Photos 17: *R. alabamense* on the Muckalee



Our eyes, however, were scanning the banks for the telltale sign of azalea buds and fall leaves. Once we spotted a plant, we inspected the buds and leaves to determine the species. We found *R. austrinum* (large canescent buds and glandular new growth) and *R. alabamense* (small ovoid buds with brown border along scales) along the banks of the Kinchafoonee. [See photos 16-17.] From the mouth of the Muckalee up to the Williamses' area, we found *R. alabamense* and *R. canescens* (canescent buds and non-glandular new growth) [See photos 18-19.], but no *R. austrinum*. On most all the azaleas, winter buds were plentiful. Seed pods were almost nonexistent.

This experience with the Alabama azaleas was eye-opening. We are used to seeing Alabama azaleas as hillside plants, up on the sides of often dry ridges and away from the bottoms of the draws. They are described as a plant that seems to prefer dryer soil than Piedmont azaleas, which are some-



Photo 18: *R. canescens* on the Muckalee.

Photo 19: *R. canescens* on the Muckalee.



times found nearby, often lower down in more moist conditions. Here the Alabama azaleas are often in a few feet of the water line or up somewhat farther on the banks. I repeat what I have said many times. One should never make absolute statements about our native azaleas. They will often make a fool of you!

After our boat ride, we drove to a park on the Muckalee called Pirates Cove Nature Park. [See photo 20.] In the park along the creek is a section about 100 yards or so with a large number of *R. alabamense*. These are similar to others farther down the creek. Here, though, the quantity is perhaps greater than any other section. Residential development has taken its disastrous toll on native plants along Muckalee Creek, including the rare *R. alabamense*. One must ask, how many Alabama azaleas were there along these banks years earlier? We hope Lee County authorities will take action to protect this treasure.



Photo 20: *R. alabamense* in Pirates Cove Nature Park.



Photo 21: Flint River in November.

Sunday

Sunday we explored several sections of the Flint River, first below and then above Lake Blackshear. Ron found and photographed *R. flammeum* above the lake 15 years ago. Below the lake, low water levels prevented us from journeying up more than a couple of miles. Above the lake, we launched at a landing where Ron camped in years past. The Flint is a beautiful, scenic river, with occasional bluffs as it winds and twists its way along to the Chattahoochee. [See photo 21.] We enjoyed the boat ride. This time though, we found no azaleas. We will have to wait until spring to find them.

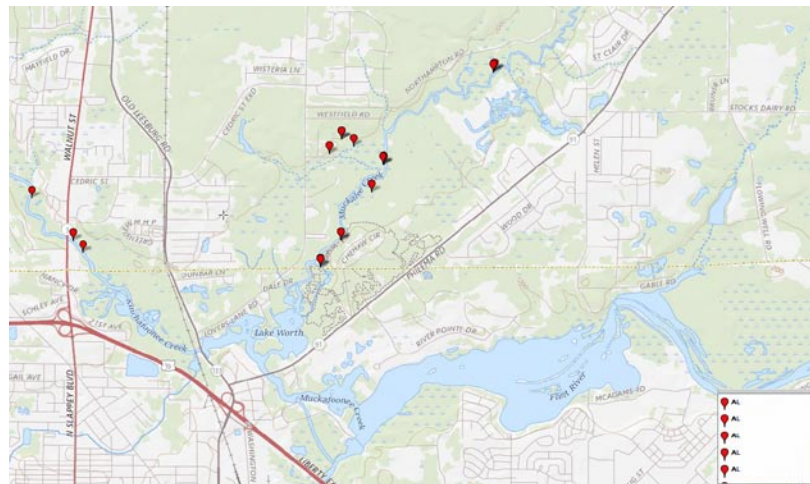
Monica found gold in her swamp. Her and Ed's azalea paradise requires some attention, but what a find! The undergrowth needs to be controlled. Desired plants must be located, identified, and given breathing room from the dense surroundings. They should be allowed to strut their stuff. One thing is certain: there are many more azaleas in her swamp, fighting against the competing vegetation. What will she find? Natural hybrids? Additional species?

For me this was an enlightening trip. Lee County needs more exploration. I found *R. alabamense* and *R. viscosum* var. *aemulans* do not read their plant habit and habitat descriptions in our plant books. Lee County is near the limit of northeast distribution for *R. austrinum* and the eastern limit for *R. alabamense*. Yet both species seem to be found in significant quantities. One would think as the limits of distribution are reached that a plant becomes scarce. *R. alabamense*, particularly on the Muckalee, seems plentiful up to Pirates Cove Nature Park, except where residential develop-

ment along the creek has destroyed the natural habitat. [Figure 4: Map of *alabamense* R & C saw in Lee Co]

Monica and Johnny were gracious and excellent hosts. I left late Sunday for a long drive home. Ron, unfortunately, had to remain for several more days, waiting on his truck. He drove it home Tuesday. A week later at home in Pensacola, his truck again would not start. For a man whose calling card says, "Have boat, will travel for plants," Ron was not a happy camper.

Figure 4: *R. alabamense* locations seen by Ron Miller & Charlie Andrews. Pins may represent more than one plant. (Map GPS locations generated by Miller.)



About the Author:

Charles Andrews is a native azalea lover who wants to know everything he can about this wonderful group of plants. He is the Vice President of the Azalea Society of America, and is the immediate past president of the Azalea Chapter, ARS. He can be reached at (770) 630-9798 or candrews@mindspring.com.

All photos in this article are by Charles Andrews, unless noted.

Debut Announcement
Azalea Society of America
2022 National Convention
March 10–13, 2022 • Thursday–Sunday
Lafayette, LA
(Mardi Gras is March 1, 2022)

“Le Sentier et Les Jardins Historiques des Azalées de Lafayette”

“Un Mardi Gras de Fleurs”

“Lafayette’s Historic Azalea Trail & Gardens”

“A Floral Mardi Gras”

The Louisiana Chapter and Lafayette’s Azalea Trail chairperson Denise Lanclos are planning the ASA Convention, scheduled for March 10–13, 2022 (Thursday – Sunday). The convention will take place in Lafayette and the Acadiana Area – the heart of Louisiana’s Cajun Country. We will have an azalea plant sale, along with other exciting plants, educational speakers, historical trolley or coach tours of the trail and gardens along with much more. For a preview of Lafayette’s trail please visit www.azaleatrail.org.

Some of the scheduled tours will be as follows:

- The Alexandre Mouton House & Gardens, an 1800 circa historic home & museum. The Gardens have been revitalized with beautiful azaleas, camellias, and other southern plants. The University Cypress Lake and surrounding blocks lined with majestic live oaks planted at the turn of the 20th century encompass an area which the university has revitalized with more than 300 azaleas.

- The Oil Center Cultural & Historic District features a recent revitalization of the “Million Dollar” road; Coolidge Boulevard with ‘George Lindley Taber’ and ‘Mrs. G. G. Gerbing’ azaleas embraced by ‘Shishi Gashira’ camellias and crape myrtles.

- Lafayette Visitors Center grounds in the Gateway feature a large pond with fish and turtles. The landscape is covered with azaleas, camellias, various irises, crape myrtles, live oaks, Louisiana bald cypress, and native Louisiana wildflowers to give visitors a spectacular view of the gateway.

- Moncus Central Park, a 100-acre development, was previously the University of Louisiana—Lafayette Equestrian Center (The Horse Farm). The park has a beautiful landscape of live oaks, pines, and cypress trees with a dog park, botanical and ravine gardens, wetland boardwalks with diverse ecosystems, mounds and ponds, and forest trails. An Amphitheater and Children’s Tree House are



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being developed this year. In 2020, the Louisiana Chapter partnered with Scenic Lafayette—Azalea Trail, Parish Proud, and local donors to plant a showcase of azalea varieties at the entrance to Moncus park. More at www.moncuspark.org.

- All Seasons Nursery & Landscaping, located across from Moncus Park is Lafayette’s premier landscaping and nursery company. They are the “go to” nursery for Lafayette’s Azalea Trail plants.
- Rip Van Winkle Gardens at Jefferson Island is 15 acres of semi-tropical gardens nestled among 350-year-old oak trees dripping with moss. Rip’s Rockery is home to the roseate spoonbill birds. Jungle Gardens at Avery Island is a 170-acre semi-tropical garden of azaleas, camellias, and colorful bamboo as well as alligators and snowy egrets.

An optional tour on Sunday, March 13th will include Vermilionville Living History & Folk Life Park with Cajun Music & Dancing. This park features azaleas, native plants and gardens, a na-

tive American area, oaks, and a pond. Historical homes from the area’s first settlers are what make up this living history folk life park. Adjacent to Vermilionville is the Acadian Cultural Center—Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve that has tours and films in an extensive museum of artifacts. More information at <https://www.nps.gov/jela/new-acadian-cultural-center.htm>.

Hold the date—March 10–13, 2022! Hotel venue details coming soon along with transportation options and registration details. We will highlight featured venues and activities in upcoming issues of *The Azalean* and on our national www.azaleas.org website.

Coordinators of the Convention:

- Dr. Allen Owings, President of Louisiana Chapter of the Azalea Society of America, aowings64@gmail.com
- Mrs. Denise R. Lanclos, Lafayette’s Azalea Trail Chairperson, deniselanclos@cox.net



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- *William Wordsworth*

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