

2021 Virtual Convention Summary

By Kathy Jentz—The Azalean, Editor

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, we recently held the Azalea Society of America 2021 Annual Convention virtually. Last issue, our outgoing president Rick Bauer, provided information about the virtual convention. I'm happy to report that event was a success and we shared some great content and had terrific participation by the ASA membership.

On the first night of the virtual meeting, Society members participated in the Zoom webinar "All About Azaleas—Propagating Evergreen Azaleas and Propagating Native Azaleas." This was the third in a series of four webinars sponsored by the Alabamense Chapter in conjunction with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Davis Arboretum. The propagating tips shared were priceless!

On the second night, we were treated to a presentation by Charlie Andrews, newly-elected President of the ASA, speaking on "The Azaleas of Hurricane Creek." This presentation was highly informative, with beautiful pictures of native azaleas and their naturally occurring hybrids.

On the final evening, we held our annual meeting, which included announcements of election results, award presentations, and a 2022 convention preview by Denise Lanclos.

The new Society President is Charlie Andrews, who most recently served four years as Society Vice President and the new Vice President is Tom Johnson, who was most recently the President of the Rev. John Drayton Chapter. The new Directors, with terms through 2023, are John Simmons, Fred Anderson, and Mike Bamford.

The best article award was presented to Barbara Stump for her article: "In Memory: Margie Louise Yates Jenkins 1921-2020." Distinguished Service Awards were presented to former editors of *The Azalean*, Barb Stump and Pam Fitch; Hale Booth, Director of the Azalea Research Fund; and Aaron Cook, former Society President and current president of the Vaseyi Chapter. Finally, our new president, Charlie Andrews, presented the Exceptional Service Award to Rick Bauer for his many years of service throughout the society, including the last four years as Society President.

Denise Lanclos gave a presentation on the beautiful sites we will be visiting next year when the Louisiana Chapter will be sponsoring the convention in Lafayette, LA. Azaleas are a major component of the landscape in Lafayette and it looks like it will be a great convention.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. David Creech from Stephen F. Austin University speaking on "SFA's Azalea Gardens: Past, Present, and Future." His knowledge and sense of humor were on display and are a great testament to how the SFA gardens have flourished under his leadership.

In lieu of actual garden tours, several members provided videos of private gardens and other related topics. They were of extremely high quality. Many of them were professionally done and even the homemade videos/video slideshows were excellent. The videos were placed on a private site on YouTube allowing members to view what they wanted, when they wanted to. If you didn't get a chance to view them during the convention, most of them are still available on YouTube. Search for Azalea Society of America and the available videos will be displayed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on many aspects of our lives, including forcing the cancellation of the last two on-site society conventions. Next year, we will once again have the opportunity to meet in person at the Society's convention in Lafayette.

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