

# President's Letter

## Charlie Andrews—Cumming, Georgia

### Let's All Meet in Louisiana!

If you have not yet made your reservations, now is the time to do so. Our 2022 Convention is Thursday through Sunday, March 10-13, 2022, in Lafayette, Louisiana. You can register on our ASA website ([www.azaleas.org](http://www.azaleas.org)). For hotel reservations, contact the convention hotel, Holiday Inn & Suites Lafayette North ([www.holidayinn.com/lafayettenorth](http://www.holidayinn.com/lafayettenorth)).

It has been a long time since we have been able to get together to see our friends and talk plants. Our Houston and Charlotte conventions had to be cancelled. We are planning a safe convention in a wonderful location. It's time to venture outside.

Louisiana has so much to offer. Yes, there are the azaleas. We will see many glorious plants and landscapes. There is also the history. We will be in the center of an area with Native American, Acadian, French, Spanish, African, and English heritage. The word "Cajun" comes from the French "les Acadiens." Creole generally means a person or people of mixed colonial French, African American, and Native American ancestry.

Along with this rich history come architecture and food. We will see much of the historic district and some outlying areas, such as Avery Island. Not to be missed is the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where we will see the magnificent Century Oaks, live oaks planted by the school's president in 1901.

Many people come to Louisiana for the food alone. Renowned for Cajun and Creole cuisine, Louisiana is a gourmet's paradise, known for grits, seafood, meat dishes, desserts, and famous mixed drinks. Examples include shrimp and grits, trout amandine, crawfish étouffée, oysters Rockefeller, jambalaya, red beans and rice, smothered pork chops with rice and gravy, po' boy sandwich, café au lait with beignets, pralines, and bananas Foster.

The acidic soil is ideal for azaleas, and we anticipate seeing them at their prime along the Azalea Trail and in the gardens we will visit. Here Southern Indian hybrids and many other varieties flourish. Overwhelmed with their obvious suitability for the Louisiana climate, we have to smile when we think back that evergreen azaleas were originally considered only useful as "hothouse" plants, too tender to be grown outdoors. Then in the mid-1800s, that belief was disproved in the mild climate of the southeastern United States.

We have some excellent speakers lined up with Heather Kirk-Ballard, Asst. Professor of Horticulture, LSU AgCenter; David Creech, Emeritus Professor (Horticulture) and Garden Director, Stephen F. Austin State University; and Buddy Lee, Director of Plant Innovations, Plant Development Services, Inc (PDSI). Buddy will speak on the past, present, and future of azaleas.

Face masks, complimentary hand sanitizer, and hand wipes will be available to all. We want everyone to be safe.

*Laissez les bon temps rouler.* Let's let the good times roll in Lafayette, March 10-13, 2022.

~ Charlie



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

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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 Donna Palmer, Secretary, 1106 S. Evans Road, White Hall, AR 71602-9430 or visit [www.azaleas.org](http://www.azaleas.org).