

Georgia with Azaleas on My Mind: 2023 ARS/ASA Joint Convention Preview

By Charlie Andrews—Cumming, Georgia

The 2023 ARS/ASA Joint Convention is being held in Atlanta, Georgia Wednesday, 19 April to Sunday, 23 April. You can forget the winter because spring will be here. Atlanta is a city of trees. The first thing you will notice about Atlanta is it is green. It has the largest tree canopy of all large US cities with an amazing 47% coverage. It is a city of parks. We love flowers here. The native azalea is our state wildflower, and Georgia is proud to have 12 species of azaleas growing naturally within the state, more than any other state.

Convention Hotel

Atlanta is easy to get to from anywhere. Whether you will be traveling by air or road, many routes lead to Atlanta. Our convention hotel is the Marriott Atlanta Perimeter Center, located north of downtown Atlanta and adjacent to Atlanta's rapid transit MARTA. (MARTA is convenient to the airport and all downtown attractions.) The hotel has undergone a recent \$15 million hotel renovation. We have negotiated a great rate of \$134 per night, which also applies for three (3) days before or after the convention. You will have free parking and free hotel shuttle within a two-mile area.

Our hotel is in the Dunwoody area, with access to shopping, dining, parks, and more. Nearby are seven parks with 170 acres of green space including Dunwoody Nature Center. Perimeter Mall is the second largest mall in the Southeast, with 200 specialty stores. Woodhouse Day Spa is within the mall. Enjoy wine tasting at Vino Venue, Atlanta's wine school or partake in the many excellent dining opportunities in the area.

Hotel Reservation Link

Azalea-Rhododendron Convention 2023

Start Date: Tuesday, April 18, 2023

End Date: Monday, April 24, 2023

Last Day to Book: Friday, March 31, 2023

Atlanta Marriott Perimeter Center for 134 USD per night

COMP WIFI IN GUESTS ROOMS

COMP SELF PARKING

Book your group rate for Azalea-Rhododendron Convention 2023 at <https://www.marriott.com/events/start.mi?id=1654295018042&key=GRP>



Native azaleas at the Atlanta Botanical Gardens.

Photo by Pim Rust.

Tours

Our main tour days will be Thursday and Friday. Additional optional tours are also planned. On Thursday, our tour will center on the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. The Atlanta Botanical Gardens is an urban oasis in Midtown Atlanta, featuring 30 acres of gardens, displays, and exhibits. These include the Rock Garden, Flower Walk, Conifer Garden, Fragrance & Sensory Garden, Skyline Garden, and the Conservation Garden. Additional stops may include the Atlanta History Center and Garden and Piedmont Park. The Atlanta History Center has a rhododendron and azalea dell originally developed by the Azalea Chapter ARS. Piedmont Park began as a fairground for exhibitions in 1887. The Olmsted Brothers prepared a plan for the park in 1912, which was never fully implemented but greatly influenced the development of the park.

Friday is reserved for Gibbs Gardens and Babyland General Hospital and Garden. Gibbs Gardens is a world-class, 300-acre residential estate garden in the foothills north of Atlanta. The property boasts a spring-fed stream surrounded by ferns, native azaleas, dogwoods, and mountain laurels to which have been added Japanese maples, oaks, hollies, rhododendrons, and 16 gardens including the Japanese and Waterlily Gardens, Manor House Gardens, Inspiration Gardens (azaleas and conifers), Rose Gardens, Butterfly Gardens, and Wild-

flower Meadow. Many of you may know Babyland General Hospital for the famous Cabbage Patch Kids®, but little known is the wonderful collection of azaleas and other plants with which Xavier Roberts has surrounded his “hospital.”

Optional tours may include private gardens. On your own there is much to see in the Atlanta area and Georgia. Grant Park Zoo was established in 1889 in a 131-acre Grant Park greenspace. The zoo is home to some 1,500 animals. The Grant Park neighborhood contains the largest remaining area of Victorian architecture in Atlanta. The Atlanta BeltLine Arboretum is an unusual linear accredited botanical garden primarily dedicated to trees, woody plants, and native and notable perennial plants, all eventually via a 22-mile loop of multi-use trails, modern streetcar, and parks based on railroad corridors that formerly encircled Atlanta. Oakland Cemetery is one of the oldest in the city and known not only for the funerary art and architecture, but also for its landscaping. The Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area is a federal park along a 48-mile stretch of the river with many miles of walking and bike trails. It contains natural flora and fauna habitats, 19th century historic sites, and Native American archaeological sites. The Carter Center and Jimmy Carter Presidential Library are located on 37 acres of garden and parkland. Atlanta was the home

of Martin Luther King, Jr. His birthplace and the church where he preached are only two historic sites related to Dr. King. The Atlanta Ponce City Market is an area of shops, food hall, housing, and office space on Ponce de Leon Avenue and along the Atlanta BeltLine. The main building was once the Sears retail store and southeastern distribution center across from the old Atlanta Crackers and Black Crackers baseball stadium. Atlanta’s High Museum of Art and its large collection are world famous.

Banquet Programs

We have two great presentations planned for you on Friday and Saturday nights, one on Mary Gibson Henry, an extraordinary plant explorer and another on the floral history of the Augusta National Golf Course.

Mary Gibson Henry was a self-taught field botanist and horticulturist with an international reputation. Born in 1884, Mary married a Philadelphia physician in 1909 who later became Philadelphia’s director of public health. She developed an interest in plants and read widely in botany and horticulture. She was especially interested in wild plants of the southeastern United States, inspired in part by William Bartram’s Travels. Beginning in 1929, she made many trips to the Southeast, the Atlantic Coastal Plain, into the Piedmont Plateau

Babyland General Hospital has more than their world-famous Cabbage Patch Kids. Photo courtesy of Babyland General Hospital.





The old Atlanta Oakland Cemetery is known for its architecture, flora, and famous people buried there. Photo by Melissa McAlpine, courtesy of Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau Marketing.

and the Appalachians. One of her main goals was to find outstanding forms of deciduous azaleas. Her first trip to the Southeast was in search of *Rhododendron speciosum*, now *R. flammeum*. She, with some of her children, also made plant exploration trips into an unexplored area of the Canadian Rockies in the Peace River area, where Mount Mary Henry in British Columbia is named for her. This intrepid plant explorer fearlessly wandered through pathless forests, waded into snake-infested swamps, crossed streams, and climbed mountains in search of America's floral beauties.

The Augusta National Golf Course is world famous as is the 13th Hole, but do you know the rest of the story? Of course, plants are a major part of landscape design. The property that Bobby Jones purchased was once Fruitlands Nurseries, where the Berckmans family grew and sold not only fruit trees and shrubs in the latter half of the 1800s but was also an early promoter of evergreen azaleas for the out of doors.

Seminars

Saturday is a day planned for short seminars and roundtable discussion sessions.

Plant Sale

As expected, many plants will be available at our plant sale, including rhododendrons, azaleas from Legacy Project hybridizers, and deciduous azaleas. A web page with images and descriptions of the plants will be available in December with the cultivars and species for sale.

Tentative Schedule

- Wednesday, 19 April
 - Breakfast (on your own)
 - Registration
 - Lunch (for ARS & ASA officers)
 - ARS /ASA Board of Directors Meeting (overlapping meetings)
 - Hospitality Reception
 - Dinner (on your own)
- Thursday, 20 April
 - Breakfast
 - Thursday Tours
 - Hospitality Reception
 - Plant Sale
 - Dinner (on your own)
- Friday, 21 April
 - Breakfast
 - Friday Tours
 - Plant Sale
 - ASA Banquet
- Saturday, 22 April
 - Breakfast
 - Azalea/Rhododendron 101 (half-day workshop for public)
 - Saturday Optional Tours
 - Seminar & Roundtable Sessions
 - Plant Sale (also open to public)
 - ARS Banquet
- Sunday, 23 April
 - Breakfast (on your own)
 - Plant Sale (morning; also open to public)

Convention Website

More details, including convention registration information, will soon be available on the 2023 convention web page found on the ASA website at <https://www.azaleas.org/convention-2023>.

So plan to come to Georgia with "Azaleas on My Mind" next April. The dates are Wednesday, 19 April to Sunday, 23 April 2023. You don't want to miss this!

Atlanta is a city of trees. Photo by Gene Phillips.

