

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

By Charlie Andrews—Cumming, Georgia



Come to “Georgia with Azaleas on My Mind.” The Azalea Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Azalea Society of America are hosting the joint convention in Atlanta, Georgia, Wednesday, April 19 to Sunday, April 23, 2023.

Leave the snow behind. Spring will be in the air. Your friends will be there. You will have much to see. Interesting presentations are planned. A plant sale full of hard-to-obtain azaleas and rhododendrons awaits. Beyond the convention, Atlanta and Georgia have much to see and do. Come join us.

## Hotel

You will have free parking, Wi-Fi, and local shuttle service at our convention hotel, the Atlanta Marriott Perimeter Center. The recently renovated hotel is located north of the city center and adjacent to MARTA, Atlanta’s rapid transit rail. Our rate applies for three days before and after the convention.

## 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/night

Comp/FreeWiFi in guest rooms

Comp/Free parking

Book your group rate for Azalea-Rhododendron Convention 2023 at:

<https://www.marriott.com/events/start.mi?id=1654295018042&key=GRP> or click on the hotel link at the convention’s webpage at <https://www.azaleas.org/convention-2023/>.

## Tentative Schedule

The convention begins on Wednesday. For board members of the two organizations, there will be a luncheon followed by the ARS and ASA board meetings in the afternoon. Adventurous attendees can take a float trip on one of Georgia’s rivers to see if we can spot our Oconee azalea (*Rhododendron flammeum*) in bloom. Plan to socialize on Wednesday and Thursday evenings at our receptions with cash bar before dinner on your own. Thursday and Friday are tour days. Saturday is a day of seminars and roundtable discussions. The ASA banquet and program is on Friday evening and the ARS banquet and program is on Saturday evening. Sunday tours and a Sunday-Monday overnight tour are available.

## Wednesday, April 19

Registration	7:30 a.m.
Tour	8:00 a.m.
ARS & ASA Board Luncheon	11:30 a.m.
ARS BOD meeting	1:00 p.m.
ASA BOD meeting	1:00 p.m.
Reception	5:30 p.m.

## Thursday, April 20

Breakfast	
Tour	8:00 a.m.
Plant Sale	
Reception	5:30 p.m.

## Friday, April 21

Breakfast	
Tour	8:00 a.m.
Plant Sale	
ASA Banquet	6:30 p.m.

## Saturday, April 22

Breakfast	
Seminars	8:30 a.m.
Plant Sale	
ARS Banquet	6:30 p.m.

## Sunday, April 23

Plant Sale	
Tours	8:30 a.m.

## Sunday-Monday, April 23-24

Post-Tour	TBD
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## Tours

All tours are optional. Choose which ones fit your schedule and tour conditions.

**Wednesday:** We have planned a **paddling trip** to float past *R. flammeum* while in bloom. Limited to 35 people.

**Thursday:** In the morning, we will tour the 30 acres of the **Atlanta Botanical Garden** in Atlanta's Piedmont Park. You will experience the groves of deciduous azaleas planted in the woodland promenade. You will have time to enjoy the Fuqua Orchid Center and stroll through the tree-canopy walk above the azaleas. See: <https://atlantabg.org/map-location/azalea-walk/>. After a picnic lunch from Henri's, we will be off to the **Atlanta History Center and Museum** located in Buckhead to visit 33 acres of historic gardens and woodland trails including the ARS azalea bowl. You can also visit the Cyclorama, the historic Swan House, and the many other exhibits on Atlanta's history. See: <https://www.atlantahistory->

[center.com/buildings-and-grounds/goizueta-gardens/rhododendron-garden/](https://atlantahistory-center.com/buildings-and-grounds/goizueta-gardens/rhododendron-garden/).

**Friday:** We head up into the foothills of the Georgia mountains to visit several outstanding gardens. **Gibbs Gardens**, created by Jim Gibbs, is situated on 376 acres at the foothills of the Southern Appalachians, with crisscrossing strolling paths. Multiple branches flow into and through the 24 ponds. You will stroll around the manor house pool and gardens, the rhododendron dell, and the magnificent Japanese garden sited on the largest pond and surrounded by topiary azaleas. The **Inspiration Gardens** has over 1,000 native azaleas with 100+ varieties; a complete collection of Encore® Azaleas, over 1,500 plants; hundreds of dwarf conifers and dwarf Japanese maples; dwarf roses and the complete KnockOut® Rose collection; all complemented with flowering trees and shrubs. Beautifully situated in the North Georgia mountains, the **Gardens at Eula Springs** was created by the inventor of the Cabbage Patch Kids, Xavier Roberts. We will stop and have lunch at a southern

The Japanese garden at Gibbs Gardens. Photo by Charlie Andrews.







Entrance to the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. Photo by Melissa McAlpin.

style home known as BabyLand General® Hospital where you can learn the history of the Appalachian craft that inspired the cabbage patch. Xavier has been hybridizing azaleas from seed for over a decade with the goal of producing a garden with many unique varieties.

**Sunday:** We offer several tour possibilities. For a small number (up to 12), a trip to Hurricane Creek is planned, where one may see some of the unusual **Hurricane Creek** azaleas in bloom. Only people who are able to hike some distances, climb steep hillsides, and cross streams can sign up for this tour. After the visit to Hurricane Creek, we will stop at the famous Dawsonville Pool Room for lunch. We highly recommend the Bully burger with fresh cut fries. Other private gardens will be open for self-guided tours.

**Sunday-Monday:** An overnight tour is planned for Sunday and Monday. The tour will traverse the foothills where we will visit some impressive waterfalls, and **Hamilton Gardens** at Lake Chatuge. This rhododendron garden was originated by Fred Hamilton, a member of the Azalea Chapter ARS. We will then head over to Athens, GA, to visit the **Georgia Botanical Gardens**, before returning to the hotel by 6:00 p.m. on Monday.

### Poster Presentations

On Wednesday and Thursday evenings, we will have welcome receptions with a cash bar, a per-

fect time to greet old friends and meet new ones. At the receptions, we will have posters stationed around, describing various rhododendron projects. These may include research, horticulture, education, conservation, citizen science, or plant exploration. The poster contributors will be there, available to give you a one-on-one short presentation about the project and answer any questions you may have. The idea is to talk about what is being done and what more should be done with rhododendron research.

### Seminars

Saturday is a day planned for seminars and roundtable discussions on plant and chapter topics. Six sessions are planned during the day. Currently planned topics are as follows:

- *Rhododendron smokianum*, a new North American species
- Why Is *R. occidentale* So Difficult to Grow in the East?
- Ideas for Rhododendron and Azalea Research
- Chapter Ideas for Success
- Rhododendrons for the Southeast
- Landscape Design

For those who prefer to see what is available in the Atlanta area on Saturday, we will have a list of many of the local attractions, including:

- Dunwoody Nature Center
- Dunwoody Cultural Arts Center
- Atlanta BeltLine Arboretum
- Chattahoochee River National Rec. Area



- Vickery Creek at Roswell Mill
- Blue Heron Nature Preserve
- East Palisades Trail
- Stone Mountain Park
- Cascade Springs Nature Preserve
- Historic Oakland Cemetery
- Fernbank Museum of Natural History
- Chattahoochee Nature Center
- Lullwater Preserve at Emory University
- Olmstead Linear Park
- Museum of Design Atlanta
- Atlanta Contemporary Arts Center
- Georgia Aquarium
- High Museum of Art
- Martin Luther King, Jr. historic sites
- National Center for Civil and Human Rights
- Jimmy Carter Presidential Library & Museum
- Margaret Mitchell House
- Zoo Atlanta
- Center for Puppetry Arts
- Atlanta Ponce City Market
- Fox Theatre
- College Football Hall of Fame
- Museum of Aviation
- Telus Science Museum
- Etowah Indian Mounds

## Banquets

The **ASA banquet and annual meeting will be on Friday night**, and the **ARS banquet and annual meeting will be on Saturday night**. While

the banquet meals are an optional extra fee, the banquet programs and meetings are part of the registration fee.

**Friday night**, the keynote speaker will be **Susan Treadway**, the granddaughter of Mary Gibson Henry. Susan is the director of the Henry Foundation for Botanical Research in Gladwyn, Pennsylvania. She will tell us about **the intrepid explorer Mary Gibson Henry**, one of 20th century's early conservationists, who sought to preserve North American native plants. Her many plant explorations into remote and undeveloped areas, especially throughout the American South and Southeast were remarkable. Accompanied with a copy of Bartram's Travels, Mary Henry waded into Georgia swamps and climbed Appalachian mountains in search of native azaleas long before Henry Skinner made his epic journey. Hers is an interesting story you will not want to miss.

**Saturday night**, you will be entertained by **Tom Johnson**. Tom is vice president of the Azalea Society of America. He recently retired as executive director of Magnolia Plantation and Gardens in Charleston, South Carolina. Before that he was horticulturist for the American Camellia Society and for the Jimmy Carter Center gardens in Atlanta. Tom has been blessed to take his southern

The gardens of Eula Springs surrounds BabyLand General Hospital.  
Photo courtesy of staff of BabyLand General Hospital.





heritage and Georgia red-clay roots with him as he traveled and visited gardens around the world. It has however led to some interesting stories as he carried his deep horticultural knowledge hidden under a south Georgia raising to different cultures around the world. We will join Tom as he takes a **humorous look at his journeys as a horticultural ambassador to the world.**

## Plant Sale

This is your chance to obtain ASA Legacy azaleas. (see: <https://www.azaleas.org/legacy-project/>), including some Stewart Hybrids named for major contributors of ASA and ARS, people you know. We will also have a selection of very old cultivars, some from 1850s. The ARS Azalea Chapter's John Kohli will introduce some of his azalea cultivars for the first time. A good selection of low-growing, late-blooming Satsuki Hybrids will be available. Over 500 rhododendrons and a good selection of deciduous azaleas will also be available.

## Logo Items

When you register for the convention, you have the opportunity to purchase caps, T-shirts, polo shirts, and denim shirts. These items can be purchased with the convention logo, ASA logo, or the ARS logo. Your ordered items will be available at the convention. Additional items can be ordered at the convention and shipped to you.

## Convention Registration & Website

The convention registration fee includes Thursday, Friday, and Saturday breakfast vouchers, Wednesday and Thursday hospitality receptions, Saturday seminars, and Friday & Saturday banquet programs, excluding banquet meals.

Registration fee	\$150
Board of Directors luncheon	\$50
Friday banquet meal	\$80



Atlanta Botanical Garden. Photo by Lily Leiva.

Saturday banquet meal	\$80
Wednesday tour	\$150
Thursday tour	\$100
Friday tour	\$85
Sunday Hurricane Creek tour	\$25
Sunday-Monday tour	TBD

## Logo items:

- Cap \$20 (with ASA, or convention logo)
- T-shirt \$15 (convention logo screen print)
- Polo shirt (SM-XL) \$35 (with ARS, ASA, or convention logo)
- Denim shirt short sleeve \$35 (with ARS, ASA, or convention logo)
- Denim shirt long sleeve \$40 (with ARS, ASA, or convention logo)  
(name on right chest additional \$5)  
(plus sizes additional \$2 per size)

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

## Georgia, Georgia

In summary, there is so much to see in Georgia! We have the flora and so much more. It is easy to get to Atlanta. Your plant friends will be here. We're going to have a fun time, a great time. Pack your bags, put in your ear pods, turn on Georgia's own Ray Charles while he sings Georgia's state song, and come to **"Georgia with Azaleas on My Mind."**

