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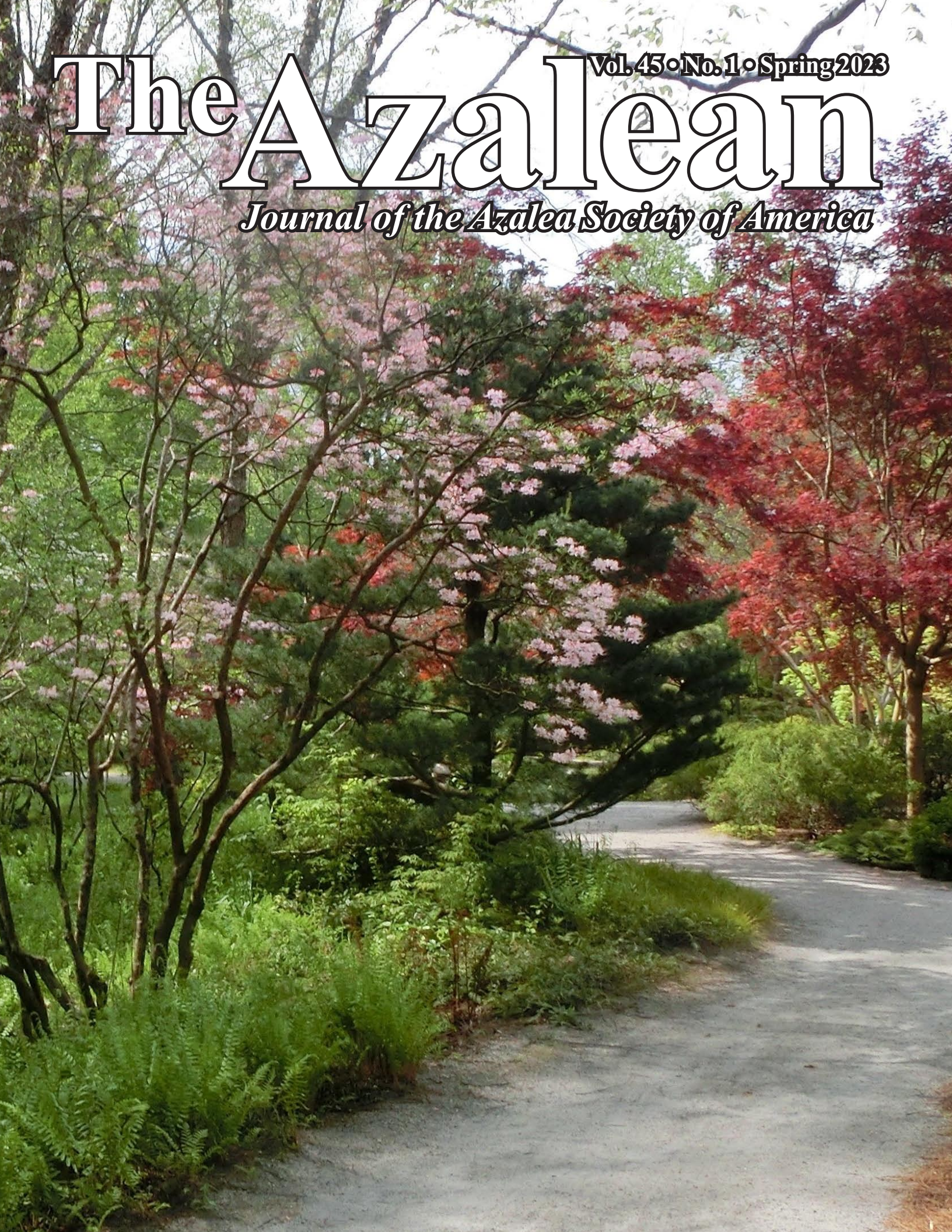
The Azalean

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



President's Letter

Charlie Andrews—Cumming, Georgia

Spring is in the air. It is time for snow and cold weather to depart. We are ready to be out in our gardens tending and talking to our plants. Yes, I talk to my azaleas. Don't you? It is the time for our enjoyable annual convention to get together with our friends. It is a time to begin field trips to see native flora in the wild and in public gardens.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote of proclaiming spring in the New England woods with the fresh Rhodora, *Rhododendron canadense*. We who have not seen them can imagine the excitement after a long and cold winter of spying the low shrubs covered with strong purple blooms on leafless branches. Emerson says:

> Rhodora! If the sages ask thee why
> This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
> Tell them, dear, that, if eyes were meant for seeing,
> Then beauty is its own excuse for being

Gardening is therapeutic. While work is involved, it can be relaxing. Gardening is for fun and cleansing of the soul. Learning about plants is also educational. That is where ASA comes in. We are here to promote azaleas and provide information on these beautiful plants. Unfortunately, the trend in large nurseries and big box stores is to offer only a small selection of varieties. Growers then propagate them by the tens of thousands. Gone are the days of nurseries where one had a choice of 200 or more varieties. Our ongoing Legacy Project continues to develop information and establish collections of azalea hybridizers. The project introduces these hybridizers and their hybrids to a wider audience and encourages their propagation. Most of these are American hybridizers.

The first successful hybridization of deciduous azaleas was the Ghent Azaleas. This took place in Ghent, Belgium, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, using North American azaleas and *R. luteum* from the Black Sea area. A baker in Ghent, who was an amateur horticulturist, discovered a method of how to cross late-blooming azaleas with early-blooming ones. For 200 years, we knew him only as P. Mortier. Then in the year 2000, a book written in Dutch came out, documenting the history of Ghent Azaleas. The authors and their research team undertook their own legacy project, documenting and collecting garden specimens of named Ghent Azalea cultivars. Their book reveals who P. Mortier was. In this issue, we begin a two-part article to introduce P. Mortier to the English-speaking world and address problems with earlier information on which species were used. Our first successful hybrids deserve to be better known.

~ Charlie

Azalea Society of America

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).

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 Mrs. Denise R. Lanclos, 132 Oakview Blvd., Lafayette, LA 70503. or visit www.azaleas.org.

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In This Issue

VOLUME 45 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2023

Features

Society News

Advertising Index

Deadlines for *The Azalean*:

- Summer 2023 issue is due April 15, 2023
- Fall 2023 issue is due July 15, 2023
- Winter 2023 issue is due October 15, 2023
- Spring 2024 issue is due January 15, 2024

On the Cover

Azaleas, ferns, and maples at Gibbs Gardens in April.
Photo by Pim Rust.

Remember, you too can write for *The Azalean*!
To submit your articles and photos for publication, contact: theazalean@gmail.com.

Azaleas Registered in 2022

By Michael Martin Mills—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The following azalea names were approved and added to the International Rhododendron Register in 2022 by the Royal Horticultural Society, which serves as the International Cultivar Registration Authority for the genus Rhododendron.

Guide to entries
Royal Horticultural Society color numbers in parentheses, unless another system is noted
X – primary cross
(s) – seed parent of cross, if known
x – cross of an unnamed parent
H – hybridized by
G – grown to first flower by
R – raised by
S – selected by
N – named by
I – introduced commercially by
REG – registered by

'Canobie Sunset', evergreen azalea. Bud: deep pink (52B), dorsal lobe darker, deep pink (51B). Inside of flower: strong purplish pink (55B), dorsal lobe deep pink (51B), veins strong red (53B), strong red (53C) spotting on dorsal lobe spreading to sides of adjoining lobes. Outside: strong purplish pink (55B), dorsal lobe deep pink (51B), midribs pale purplish pink (56C). Calyx: strong yellow-green (144A). Broad funnel, single, 2.25 inches (57mm) long x 3 inches (76mm) wide, with 5 rounded lobes, slightly wavy margins; calyx: 0.4 inch (9mm) long. Strong purplish pink (55B) style and filaments; yellow-green stigma, brown anthers. 2 flowers per terminal. Lightly fragrant. Blooming midseason (mid-May in New Hampshire). Leaves: emerging strong yellow-green (143A), maturing to dark yellowish green (139A); 1.5 inches (38mm) x 0.75 inches (19mm) in spring maturing to 2.5 inches (64mm) x 1.5 inches (38mm); obovate, cuneate base, obtuse apex, flat margins. Shrub: 4 x 4 feet (1.2 x 1.2m) in 30 years, intermediate habit, leaves held 1 growing season. Hardy to -15°F (-26°C), buds to -10°F (-23°C). Parentage: 'Fedora' (s) open-pollinated. G (1994), S (1998), N (2003), REG (2022): John and Sally Perkins, Salem, NH; I: Massachusetts Chapter, American Rhododendron Society. Etymology of name: the plant was first grown by Canobie Lake, NH. Synonym: P4M 5113. Notes: triploid (determined by test); blooms well in shade.

'Denise Stelloh', evergreen azalea. Bud, inside and outside of flower: strong reddish purple (N78B), with strong purplish red (72A) interior dorsal blotch spreading into adjacent lobes. Funnel, hose-in-hose, 1.5 inches (38mm) long x 2.75 inches (70mm) wide with 10 (5+5) rounded lobes, slightly wavy margins; no calyx. Reddish purple style and filaments; brown anthers. 2-3 flowers per terminal. Blooming midseason (late April in DC area). Leaves: strong yellow-green (144A), matte; 2.5 x 1.25 inches (64 x 32mm), elliptic, cuneate base, acuminate apex, flat margins. Shrub: 3 feet (0.9m) high x 3.75 feet (1.1m) wide in 10 years; intermediate habit, leaves held 1 growing season. Hardy to 0°F (-18°C) or colder. Parentage: ('Asahi-sakigake' x 'Margaret Douglas') (s)

X (‘Asahi-sakigake’ x ‘Margaret Douglas’). H (1998), G (2001), N (2021), REG (2022): Robert Stewart, Springfield, VA. Etymology of name: for the late Denise Stelloh, a key figure in and former board member of the Azalea Society of America. Note: The seed and pollen parents are sister seedlings hybridized by the registrant.

‘Doctor Evelyn’, evergreen azalea. Inside and outside of flower: vivid purplish red (67B), inside with red spotting on dorsal and adjoining lobes. Calyx: brownish green. Broad funnel, 2 inches (51mm) long x 2.25 inches (57mm) wide with 5-6 lanceolate lobes, wavy margins. Calyx: 0.4 inch (9mm) long. 2 flowers per terminal. Blooming midseason (mid-May in eastern Nebraska). Leaves: medium green, matte; 2.5 x 1 inches (64 x 25mm), oblanceolate, cuneate base, broadly acute apex, flat margins. Shrub: 2.25 feet (0.7m) high x 1 foot (0.3m) wide in 12 years; intermediate habit. Hardy to -10°F (-23°C). Parentage: (*R. yedoense* var. *poukhanense* x [*R. yedoense* var. *poukhanense* x unknown Belgian cv.]) selfed. H (2008), G (2020), N (2020), REG (2021): David Purdy, Omaha, NE. Etymology of name: for the hybridizer’s late wife.

‘Larry’s Big Red’, deciduous azalea. Bud: dark red. Inside and outside of flower: medium rose red (close to 50A, strong red) with a splash of orange inside. Tubular funnel, semidouble, 1.75 inches (44mm) long x 2.25 inches (57mm) wide, with 5 rounded, largely dissected lobes, wavy margins. Stamens petaloid; reddish style, green stigma. 10 flowers per terminal cluster; conical truss, 9 x 9 inches (229 x 229mm). Blooming early season (mid-May to mid-June in inland Maine). Leaves: medium green, semiglossy; 2.4 inches (60mm) x 0.7 inches (18mm); ovate, rounded base, broadly acute apex, downcurved margins. Shrub:11.5 feet (3.5m) tall x 18 feet (5.5m) wide in 20 years, intermediate habit. Hardy to -20°F (-29°C). Unknown parentage. H (c.1980): Roger Luce, Hampton, ME; G (1980s), N (2010): Larry Catlett, Leeds, ME; S (1988), REG (2022): David Ledlie, Buckfield, ME. Etymology of name: incorporating the nominant’s first name.

‘Margaret Vogel’, evergreen azalea. Bud, inside and outside of flower: white with vivid purplish red (67B) sectors, stripes or dashes; occasional flowers fully vivid purplish red (67B); faint yellow-green blotch in white flowers, purplish red blotch in red flowers. Calyx: moderate yellow-green (138C). Funnel, 2.25 inches (57mm) long x 2.75 inches (70mm) wide with 5 rounded to broad acute lobes, largely dissected, flat margins; calyx: 0.25 inch (6mm) long. White or red style and filaments, corresponding to corolla color. 2-4 flowers per terminal. Blooming midseason (late

April in DC area). Leaves: strong yellow-green (144A), semiglossy; 1.5 x 1 inch (38 x 25mm), elliptic, rounded base, broadly acute apex, flat margins. Shrub: 2.25 feet (0.7m) high x 2.75 feet (0.8m) wide in 10 years; intermediate habit, leaves held 1 growing season. Hardy to 0°F (-18°C). Parentage: (Shammarello's 'Desiree' x CB-1) (s) X 'Germanique'. H (1998), G (2001), N (2018), REG (2022): Robert Stewart, Springfield, VA. Etymology of name: for a member of the Azalea Society of America from Potomac, MD. Note: The seed parent is a Stewart hybrid, designated 8-1990-17; CB-1 was among seedlings discarded by the University of Maryland's breeding program; it was assigned its identification code by Stewart. No information on its parentage.

'Ronnie Palmer', evergreen azalea. Bud, inside and outside of flower: pale purplish pink, with deep purplish pink (N57C) lobe tips, more prominently on dorsal lobe. Calyx: moderate yellow-green (138B). Funnel, single, 1.75 inches (44mm) long x 2.75 inches (70mm) wide with 5 rounded lobes, wavy margins. Calyx: 0.2 inch (4mm) long. Filaments pale at base, with pink towards apex, anthers brown, with occasional petaloid stamens; style dark pink, with brown stigma. 2-3 flowers per terminal. Blooming midseason (mid-May in DC area). Leaves: strong yellow-green (143B), semiglossy; 2.25 x 1.25 inches (57 x 32mm), ovate, rounded base, broadly acute apex, flat margins. Shrub: 2 feet (0.6m) high x 2.25 feet (0.7m) wide in 10 years; intermediate habit, leaves held 1 growing season. Hardy to 0°F (-18°C) or colder. Parentage: 'Asahi-sakigake' (s) X 'Margaret Douglas'. H (1994), G (1997), N (2018), REG (2022): Robert Stewart, Springfield, VA. Etymology of name: for Ronnie Palmer of White Hall, AR, nurseryman, key figure in the Azalea Society of America, cofounder of its Arkansas Chapter.

'Tony Dove', evergreen azalea. Bud: variably: white; or palest purple; or strong purple (N80B). Inside of flower: variably: white, with strong purple (N80B) sectors or streaks; or palest purple with strong purple (N80B) sectors or streaks; or entirely strong purple (N80B). Blotch: strong reddish purple (NN78C) of inconsistent prominence. Outside: variably: white, with strong purple (N80B) sectors or streaks; or palest purple with strong purple (N80B) sectors or streaks; or entirely strong purple (N80B). Calyx: moderate yellow-green (139D). Funnel, single, 2 inches (51mm) long x 2.75 inches (70mm) wide with 5 rounded lobes, wavy margins. Calyx: 0.25 inch (6mm) long. Variable filaments and style, most white, some reddish; yellow-brown anthers; occasional petaloid stamens. 2-3 flowers per terminal. Blooming midseason (early May in DC area). Leaves: emerging strong yellow-green (143A), maturing to moderate yellow green (139D), matte; 1.25 x 0.5 inches (32 x 13mm), elliptic, cuneate base, acute apex, flat margins. Shrub: 3 feet (0.9m) high x 5 feet (1.5m) wide in 10 years; open habit, leaves held 1 growing season. Hardy to 0°F (-18°C) or colder. Parentage: 'Seattle White' (s) X 'Quakeress'. H (1998), G (2001), N (2018), REG

(2022): Robert Stewart, Springfield, VA. Etymology of name: For James Anthony Dove Jr., noted author, horticulturalist, public garden manager, and former president of the Azalea Society of America.

'Zebedees' Steele', deciduous azalea. Bud: largely reddish orange. Inside and outside of flower: vivid yellow. Tubular funnel, single, 1.5 inches (38mm) long x 1 inch (25mm) wide with 5 broad acute lobes, frilly margins; insignificant calyx. Yellow style and filaments; yellow-brown anthers; green stigma. 12 flowers per ball truss; truss 3 x 3 inches (76 x 76mm). Lightly fragrant. Blooming midseason (June in Nova Scotia). Leaves: medium green; 1.75 x 0.75 inches (44 x 19mm), ovate, cuneate base, broadly acute apex. Indumentum: hairs, midrib, green. Shrub: 3.25 x 3.25 feet (1 x 1m) in 10 years; dense habit. Hardy to -4°F (-20°C), buds to 14°F (-10°C). Parentage unknown. H: Richard M. Steele, Rose Bay, Nova Scotia; G: Richard M. or Diana Steele (his daughter); N (2010), REG (2022): Helen and Bill Zebedee, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Etymology of name: Combining the surnames of the nominants and the hybridizer.

References

Names conform to the rules and recommendations of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants, Ninth Edition* (2016). Color names are from *A Contribution Toward Standardization of Color Names in Horticulture*, Robert D. Huse and Kenneth L. Kelly; Donald H. Voss, editor.

How to Submit New Registrations

To register an azalea or rhododendron name, electronic registration applications from North Americans should be submitted at the www.rhododendron.org/plantregistry.htm page. The site also provides instructions and forms for downloading and completing manually. Those submitting paper applications should use only the current form (revised 2015). The quickest way to obtain paper forms is to ask a friend with Internet access to go to the website and print the form and instructions. Questions, completed paper forms, all photographs and requests for paper forms should be directed to Michael Martin Mills, North American Registrar, arsregistrar@gmail.com; 632 Burnham Road, Philadelphia, PA 19119; 215-844-6253. There is no fee.

Registrants outside of North America should direct inquiries to Sharon McDonald, International Rhododendron Registrar, sharonmcdonald@rhs.org.uk; mailing address: RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB, United Kingdom.

International Rhododendron Register & Checklist (2004)

Digital versions (PDF format) of IRRC and its Supplements are accessible, without charge, at www.rhs.org.uk/plants/plantsmanship/plant-registration/Rhododendron-cultivar-registration/Rhododendron.

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'Canobie Sunset' — Sally Perkins
'Doctor Evelyn' — David Purdy
'Larry's Big Red' — David B. Ledlie
'Zebedees' Steele' — Bill Zebedee

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The Mysterious Baker of Ghent: Mysteries of Monsieur Mortier and the First Ghent Hybrids

By Charles R. Andrews III—Cumming, Georgia

The mysterious baker of Ghent
Mixed a flame with a swamp and then went
And stirred in some Pontic
And some say Piedmontic
Oh, what a sight and a scent!

Introduction

In a two-part article, we will first review what little information was commonly known for almost 200 years about the breeder of the first successful deciduous azalea cultivars and his hybrids. In the second part, we want to spread the word on who this man really was, this mysterious P. Mortier, a baker of Ghent.

Ghent Hybrids Began with P. Mortier

Ghent Hybrids are the first successful deciduous azalea hybrids to be developed. These hybrids originated early in the 1800s in Ghent, Belgium with a man known as P. Mortier. For two centuries, we have known almost nothing about this man, not even his first name.[1] It was as if a veil had been placed over the man and his work, obscuring details. Is it not puzzling that no one in all these years was interested enough to discover more about this man himself? We do not know when he began breeding azalea hybrids. We do not know for certain the actual species he may have used in his breeding program. We do not know which of the early known cultivars were his creations. When the curious take some effort to learn what is published about Mortier, they soon find that a sentence or two is all that is available.

Multiple records tell us that he was a baker by trade, but nothing was reported about his bakery. We know he liked plants and flowers, especially azaleas. He seemed to have done what no other hybridizer had done up to that point in time: he managed to cross late-flowering deciduous azaleas with early-flowering ones. The deciduous species, those from North America and the one from the Pontic Region of Eastern Europe, have a diverse range of colors from whites to pinks and from yellows through oranges to deep reds. Some have blotches, and some are fragrant. Mortier may have crossed several of the Americans and added the Pontic azalea to the mix in his horticultural experiments to produce a dramatic array of color combinations never before seen. Over the last 200 years, that is about all we have learned of P. Mortier. There, in the small scraps of horticultural history, his personal story ended. Yet, this mysterious Mortier lit the fuse for a colorful explosion: the early hybridization of deciduous azaleas.

Early Hybridization

Horticultural hybridization was in its infancy in the eighteenth century. Thomas Fairchild, a Hoxton nurseryman, took a feather and dusted the stigmas of carnation (*Dianthus caryophyllus*) with pollen from the flower of Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*). The resulting seedlings had pink double blossoms like the carnation but with clustering heads like sweet William. This revolutionary experiment in 1716 drew the attention of some members of the Royal Society of London, and in 1720, Fairchild's hybrid was presented to the society. Fairchild, however, panicked and claimed the hybrid was accidental, that the plants had pollinated themselves. You see, Fairchild feared for his soul. While he understood the relatively new sexual theory of plants, the contemporary belief was that God created all plant species. Was Fairchild playing God? When Thomas Fairchild died in 1729, he bequeathed £25 to his parish church, St. Giles, Cripplegate, to preach "annually forever" a sermon "on the wonderful works of God in the Creation." The Fairchild Sermon continues to this day.[2]

Nurserymen soon overcame their fear of offending God and began experimenting with plant hybridization. European gardening began to flourish, with nurseries offering exotics from all over the world and new man-made hybrids. On the Continent, people in the Low Countries, with their relatively mild climate, began cultivating exotic plants and showed a great interest in botanical novelties. Ghent, Belgium, an old town on the Scheldt River, between Brussels and Bruges, was for a time under French control and for a time

part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Ghent established a horticultural industry and became a flower capital, in large part by efforts of the Royal Society for Agriculture and Botany in Ghent. Students of English history know that Britain and the United States agreed to end the War of 1812 with the Treaty of Ghent (24 Dec 1814).[3]

As early as the seventeenth century, the bishop of Ghent, Antoine Triest, was a supporter of horticulturists. By the end of the eighteenth, Ghent had begun its own botanical garden, founded by Bernard Coppens and Charles Van Hulthem (1764-1832) as Napoleon Bonaparte was assuming power in France. Napoleon had no interest in flowers or gardens, and he planned to convert the new Ghent Botanical Garden into a military post. Van Hulthem petitioned Josephine, and the garden escaped destruction. At the beginning of the new century, the flower trade was small, but it grew. Ghent became a major center, first mainly with roses, camellias, then expanding to azaleas, orchids, begonias, and other plants. The passion for exotic flowers led to the creation of the Ghent Society of Agriculture and Botany in 1808.The society held their first flower and plant exhibition in 1809, expanding to become the Ghent Floralies. The Ghent Floralies has become the largest flower show in the world, now held every five years. Even in the first years, it became widely known. Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, Albert Gallatin, Benjamin Smith Barton, William Bartram, Henry Muhlenburg, Stephen Elliott, David Hosack, Frederick Pursh, and François Andrè Michaux were at one time exhibitors, among many other well-known individuals.[4]

Who Was P. Mortier?

Mortier was a charter member of the society, listed among 47 founding members as "*P. Mortier, amateur fleuriste* [florist]" and was one of the judges for the spring 1816, winter 1818, spring 1819, and winter 1820 expositions. He exhibited a wide variety of plants from 1809 until 1817, including *Arbutus, Azalea, Camellia, Cassia, Citrus, Clematis, Correa, Cunila, Cyclamen, Digitalis, Erica, Ficus, Gardenia, Glycine, Hakea, Hydrangea, Jasminum, Leptospermum, Paeonia, Pelargonium, Pyrus, Rosa, Solanum, Stachys, Tulipa, Tropaeolum, Viburnum,* and *Westringia*. Mortier displayed an *Azalea nudiflora* (now *Rhododendron periclymenoides*) in February 1810 and an *A. viscosa* (now *R. viscosum*) in June 1816. His double white *Camellia floro albo pleno* was the best cultivated flowering plant at the Ghent winter festival in 1811. Another *Camellia japonica* received honorable mention in February 1813 as did his *Paeonia suffruticosa* in February 1815. He was said to be an honest baker, with a passion and zeal for horticulture that made him an excellent observer. He was involved in the early development of what became the Belgium graft for propagating camellias. In more recent thesis research of exotic plants in Ghent in the first half of the 1800s, Mortier is identified as one of 13 main professional growers in the first decade of the 1800s, but he considered himself more of an enthusiast. His name is listed on some of the daily sales sheets of the Frascati Inn in Ghent as seller and buyer. This establishment was an early form of a garden center where plants were auctioned. On several sheets in 1808, we find him identified as Pierre Mortier, baker, of Hoogbrugge. Recently, we found Mortier's first name in another obscure place. In the Royal Society secretary's extract from the meeting of 6 Feb 1811 where Mortier's award was noted, he was identified as "*à Mr Pierre Mortier, Fleuriste en cette Ville* [florist of this city]." These references in the horticultural records with his first name obviously have been overlooked since.[4]

Deciduous Azaleas in Ghent

Deciduous azaleas appeared in Ghent early in the 19th century. Nurseries around Ghent had access not only to some of the North American azaleas but also to the Pontic azalea of the Caucasus (*A. pontica*, now *R. luteum*). In the nearby village of Wetteren were the established gardens of Monsieur Hopsomere and of Viscountess Vilain XIV, both of which had many American plants. These gardens were known to have collected both North American and Pontic azaleas. Local Ghent newspapers first show sales of azaleas in Ghent in April 1805. These were *A. pontica* and *A. aurantia* (*R. calendulaceum*). In 1806, *A. cocchinia* (possibly *R. flammeum* or *R. calendulaceum*) and *A. pontica* were offered. In 1807, we see *A. nudiflora* and *A. viscosa* in sales. The first *A. calendulacea* (now *R. calendulaceum*) did not appear in exhibition until February 1817, but an *A. nudiflora* var. *aurantiaca*, which may have been a *R. calendulaceum*, appeared in 1809. In the history of the Ghent Society, we find that some members of the society visited horticultural establishments in England and brought back plants from all parts of the world. Mortier is specifically named as one of the early visiting society horticulturists. Jean Henry Mussche published *Hortus Gandavensis* in 1817. This document contains a list of all the plants in the botanical garden in Ghent at that time. *A. pontica* was listed. The American species were A. *nudiflora, A. calendulacea*, and *A. viscosa*. Mussche listed the species plus nine varieties for *A. nudiflora*, including *coccinea*, *aurantia*, and *bicolor*. Those varieties may have been *R. flammeum*, *R. calendulaceum*, and *R. canescens*. He included six varieties for *A. viscosa*. For *A. calendulacea*, he included one, *crocea*, the yellow one.[5]

A group from the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society in Scotland visited Ghent in 1817 and in the garden of a Monsieur de Wulf, the owner of a boarding school for young gentlemen, saw a Pontic azalea that Wulf had procured, which he called variety *tricolor*. The striped flowers were yellow, pink, and white. Pink and striped are not characteristic of the yellow-flowered Pontic azalea. The supplier of Wulf's plant is unknown. One possibility is that this hybrid may have been one of Mortier, and Wulf's boarding school may have been a bakery customer of Mortier. "*J. B. de Wulf, instituteur* [teacher]" was an early member of the society.[6]

Frederick Street estimates Mortier's pioneer breeding work ranged between 1804 and 1834. Frederic Lee gives beginning dates from the 1820s. *Trees and Shrubs Online* suggests Mortier made his crosses in the 1820-1830s, and his plants soon entered the trade, reaching Britain by 1831. Clement Gray Bowers specifically states that Mortier produced his first hybrid in 1825. We shall see from contemporary newspaper evidence that Mortier, while advertising other plants earlier, began promoting azaleas at least by 1820, with no indication of whether these first advertised were his own hybrids. Charles Van Geert, the well-known horticulturist and nurseryman from Antwerp, wrote in 1835 that it was Mortier who raised the first Ghent Hybrid, and teasingly added, without leaving any list of cultivars which were Mortier's, that he raised "nearly all the superb varieties which are now disbursed and cultivated so extensively through Europe." Early evidence suggests that most of his hybridization work occurred during the 1820s. By 1834, Mortier was retired, not only a retired baker, but a retired azalea hobby-hybridizer, renowned for his work.[7]

How Did Mortier Cross Early and Late Blooming Plants?

What we actually "know" of Mortier's hybridizing comes from the writings of five near contemporaries of Mortier: Louis Van Houtte, Jan Van Geert, Dieudonné Spae, Frans de Potter, and Hubert Jean Van Hulle. Later writers repeated their information with occasional additional conjecture. These early horticultural writers credit Mortier as the first to discover a method to cross azaleas that bloom at different times and as the originator of the Ghent Azaleas, the first successful group of deciduous azalea hybrids. Subsequent hybridizers had an easier job, especially if Mortier's multigenerational seedlings used in follow-on crosses bloomed more closely together. Louis Van Houtte said that Mortier "proceeded mysteriously" and "married clandestinely." At one point, Van Houtte stated that the earlier varieties were used to fertilize the late varieties, and at another, he named the late-blooming *A. calendulacea* as the pollen carrier. Dieudonné Spae reported that "He had the ingenious idea of delaying the earliest flowering varieties, of crossing them with late flowering varieties," without saying which was the pollen parent. Frans de Potter tells us that Mortier "brushed them both," and Hubert J. Van Hulle that he "had the idea of delaying the varieties with early flow-

ering, very often surprised by the spring frosts, and of fertilizing them with the varieties with late flowers." None of these writers, contemporaries of Mortier, explained how Mortier delayed, forced his plants, or saved pollen.[8]

The early hybridizers crossed deciduous azaleas by simply taking pollen from stamens of one azalea in flower and placing it on the stigma of another azalea simultaneously in flower. At this early stage, hybridizers did not know how to preserve pollen, nor have the means. Unless stored dry and frozen, pollen will only last several days. It is doubtful Mortier stored pollen. Hot-houses and orangeries, especially with the use of ovens, could keep temperatures up, break dormancy, and hasten flowering. Mortier was a baker, and, as early as 1815, he was one of only 13 gardeners in Ghent known to have a greenhouse or orangery.[9] Ice houses to store natural ice were then almost non-existent in Europe. Early in the 19th century, Europe did experience some cold winters, and waterways of the Scheldt River may have frozen. Root cellars could also be used to keep ambient temperatures down and retard bloom. Would Mortier have been so ingenious as to collect and store ice in something like a root cellar?

What Species Were Involved?

The original assumptions were that Mortier took the flame azalea (*R. calendulaceum*), the Pontic azalea, and some of the others and used the best seedlings from his initial crosses for further hybridization. They mostly assumed they were dealing with the Pontic azalea and, as far as the North American azaleas were concerned, with forms of the pinxterbloom (*R. periclymenoides*), swamp azalea (*R. viscosum*), and flame azalea. Spae, only 12 years after Mortier relinquished his last seedlings, wrote

... everyone knows the species that were originally cultivated in our collections; we are talking about *azalea viscosa, nudiflora, pontica,* and *calendulacea*. These plants, introduced among us at the end of the last century, first produced a large number of varieties which, crossed between them, in turn gave new varieties.... However, all these various varieties do not come close to what has been obtained since. It was reserved for a horticulturist from Ghent, Mr. P. Mortier, to make us produce flowers of various colors and shades all different from what we already had.

Spae and the others did not actually know what Mortier's pollen and seed plants were. Van Houtte said that Mortier "married clandestinely." Wilhelm Focke, in his book on hybrids, agreed with the four species and added, "It is unquestionable that those four species breed without appreciable loss of fertility in each ways to cross with each other." Unquestionable? The website *Trees and Shrubs Online* states, "Which American species were used is not known, but *R. calendulaceum*, *R. periclymenoides*, and *R. viscosum* were certainly among them. Some [of his hybrids] may be purely American in parentage, especially the later flowering sorts." Certainly?[10]

Looking back, unlike *Trees and Shrubs Online,* we do not know for certain what species were actually involved in Mortier's crosses. Two major issues exist with the species assumed in previous reports. (1) The North American species were poorly identified, and (2) contrary to the "unquestionable" confidence of Focke, not all American azaleas can always be crossed with each other as seed or pollen parents. Further, we are unsure when Mortier hybridized with the Pontic azalea relative to his hybridization of the flame azalea with other American azaleas.

Knowledge of deciduous azaleas was not what it is today. Many of our species reached Europe through John Bartram and others. These species were not yet well identified. The horticulturists and florists at that time thought they were dealing with three species when fourteen eastern North American species potentially could have been involved. Many unusually colored, once-named varieties of *A. nudiflora* are now considered to be *R. flammeum, R. calendulaceum, R. austrinum,* or *R. alabamense*. In addition, the pinxterbloom, the Piedmont azalea (*R. canescens*), the roseshell azalea (*R. prinophyllum*), and even the pink forms of the Florida azalea (*R. austrinum*) and Red Hills azalea (*R. colemanii*) have been confused. Thus, Mortier and his fellow plantsmen might assume a pink azalea to be the pinxterbloom that today we would consider another species, such as the Piedmont azalea, Florida azalea, or Red Hills azalea. The latter two can be pink and are tetraploid and may have been in Europe posing under other names. The diploid Oconee azalea (*R. flammeum*) and tetraploid flame azalea have been confused. The tetraploid coast azalea (*R. atlanticum*) was long mistaken for both the diploid swamp azalea

and at times the pinxterbloom. Further, early nineteenth century nurserymen had not seen the depth of colors and wide variety that do exist within North American species and their natural hybrids. Evidence also suggests they did not have the best examples of North American species to work with. Ghent nurserymen knew nothing about the genome and ploidy. All they knew is that Mortier's results were new and exciting.[11]

In his hybridizing experiments, Mortier had to overcome unknown difficulties. Not every deciduous azalea will cross with the others. We now know most deciduous azalea species have two sets of chromosomes (diploids). A few have four sets (tetraploids). Almost all species with the same number of chromosomes will cross with each other. A tetraploid species with twice the usual number of chromosomes will almost never accept pollen from a diploid species, yet a diploid species cross will accept pollen from a tetraploid species. The important catch is that resulting triploid seedlings (diploid × tetraploid = triploid) are usually sterile, presenting a dead-end for further hybridization. Only on very, very rare occasions, will a triploid be fertile. Thus Mortier, with no knowledge of ploidy and its effects on hybridization, had to use trial and error to determine which crosses would work and which resulting seedlings were useful (fertile as well as with attractive features) in subsequent crosses.

Alfred Rehder and Clement Gray Bowers considered the typical and historic hybrid form known as Mortieri (or Morterii) as a cross between the flame azalea and the pinxterbloom, with the possible inclusion of the Oconee azalea. In Bowers' opinion, it was Mortier's later crosses that involved the Pontic azalea. Walter Schmalscheidt appears to agree. The earliest record we have, the 1835 article from Charles Van Geert, suggests otherwise, though Van Geert's brief description is ambiguous.[12] That some hybrids developed by Mortier may have come from only American parents and others from intercontinental parents does not require the purely American crosses to come first. His initial Ghent Hybrids could have been between the Pontic and an American species. Other crosses could have been between only Americans. Later crosses could have involved F_n hybrids.

Our recent knowledge of the ploidy of deciduous azaleas and its effect on hybridization bring into question the early assumptions made of what species went into the making of the Ghent Hybrids. Ghent Hybrids now have been subjected to some ploidy testing. Tom Eeckhaut and a team from the Department of Plant Genetics and Breeding of the Centre of Agricultural Research in Ghent studied the ploidy of 21 Hardy Ghent Hybrids. Of those, 16 were tetraploid, and 5 were triploid. John and Sally Perkins and the team under João Loureiro at the University of Coimbra in Portugal have tested about 80 Ghent Hybrids. Most were tetraploid, a few were triploid, and only one was a diploid.[13] These are significant findings. If most of the original crosses had been made by pollen from tetraploid species such as *R. calendulaceum* or *R. luteum* onto diploid species such as *R. viscosum*, *R. flammeum*, or *R. periclymenoides*, the results would almost always be a sterile triploid and a dead end for further hybridization. This means that it is most likely that the polyploidy of the early hybrids originally occurred from tetraploid species such as *R. luteum*, *R. calendulaceum*, *R. atlanticum*, and perhaps even the pink form of *R. austrinum*. This strongly suggests what was thought to have been the swamp azalea in the mix may have been the coastal azalea, and the primary species used as both pollen and seed parent are likely to have been tetraploid. It is remotely possible, however, that Mortier created the rare fertile triploid and found the magic key.

Mortier's Results

Frans de Potter reported that Mortier created hybrids the likes of which had never been seen. Hubert Van Hulle noted that his attempts were marvelously successful: better-made flowers, later-bloomers, large palette of colors. Louis Van Houtte praised Ghent perfection and scoffed at the American trumpets which he considered only small tubular prototypes. He called Mortier the "creator of the most beautiful varieties of azaleas for the open-ground (*d'Azalées de pleine terre*)." Charles Van Geert said that the reward from the hybrids of Pontic and American plants surpassed expectations, and the result was the creation of a new and distinct group, the late-bloomers ("the *tardives*"). Mortier's new hybrids with their brilliant colors caused a sensation. Mortier sold 10 of his plants to a Gentbrugge gardener named Louis Hellebuyck for 10,000 francs. Ten thousand francs in 1833 would purchase about 2,900 grams of gold, and at recent value (Sep 2022) would be worth about $170,000. There can be no doubt his hybrid creations were at that time special. A year later, Louis Verschaffelt purchased the last

of Mortier's hybrids. Louis Verschaffelt, Frans Van Cassel, Van Acker, Louis Hellebuyck, and Louis Van Houtte continued Mortier's hybridizing efforts, choosing only the best for further crossings. Some of Verschaffelt's first hybrids were illustrated in 1846 and more in 1847. The 20 varieties illustrated were given variety names but grouped under the titles Azalea Mortieriana var. Hybridæ and Azalea Mortierianæ var. Hortenses Hybridæ.[14] In 1849, Louis Van Houtte bought 25 Mortieri varieties from Verschaffelt and 12 additional Mortieri hybrids from the widow of Louis Hellebuyck and her sons. The Frenchman Paul Robichon, in 1853, purchased the remainder of Louis Verschaffelt's nursery, which included many Ghent Hybrids. These breeders and others continued to build on Mortier's initial much sought after hybrid seedlings.[15]

So, who was this mysterious P. Mortier? In Part 2, we lift the veil to tell more about the man, his family, places he lived, and first successful deciduous azalea hybrids, the Ghent Azaleas.

End of Part 1. To be continued in the Summer 2023 edition of *The Azalean*.

Notes and References

1. Early writers had a habit and style of using initials instead of first names. The resulting ambiguity impedes those in search of accurate information. This short-sighted writing style continues to this day, even recommended in some current style manuals.

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3. Du Pre, Ellen. 1994. *De exotische planten in de botanische tuinen van liefhebbers en beroeps te Gent en omstreken, in de periode 1800-1850* [*The exotic plants in the botanical gardens of enthusiasts and professionals in Ghent and the surrounding area, in the period 1800-1850*], thesis, University of Ghent; John of Gaunt (1340-1399), Duke of Lancaster, duc d'Aquitaine, son of English king Edward III, was born in Ghent. In traditional English, the town was spelled "Gaunt." In French, the town is spelled "Gand," in Dutch/Flemish "Gend" and "Gent," and in German "Gent."

4. Société Royale d'Agriculture et de Botanique de Gand. Bestor website page: <https://www.bestor.be/wiki_nl/index.php/Soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9_royale_d%27agriculture_et_de_botanique_de_Gand>. Accessed 11 Jan 2021; Rodigas, Em[ile].1880. "Charles Van Hulthem." Revue de Belge et Étrangère [Belgium and Foreign Review] 6: 85-87; Street, Frederick. 1959. Azaleas, 50-53. London: Cassell; Society originally named Société d'Agriculture et de Botanique de Gand (French), Maatschappij voor Landbouw en Plantkunde te Gent (Dutch). In 1818, the organization was allowed to add "Royal" to its name; Van Dam-Sellier, J[oseph]. 1861. *Histoire de la Société Royale d'Agriculture et de Botanique de Gand* [*History of the Royal Society of Agriculture and Botany of Ghent*], 21, 29-30, 39, 43, 45-47. Gand: Imprimerie de I. S. Van Doosslaere; Van Geert, J[an]. 1870. *Schets van de Gentschen Bloenhandel* [*Sketch of the Ghent Flower Trade*], 9. Gent: Boek- en Steendrukkerij van E. S. Gyselynck; *Réglement De La Société D'Agriculture et De Botanique De Gand, Département De L'escaut* [*Regulations of the Agricultural and Botanical Society of Ghent, Department of the Scheldt*]. nd, ca 1829. Gand: De L'imprimerie De P. F. De Goesin-Verhaeghe. Includes individual reports of the Royal Agricultural and Botanical Society public exhibition flower shows from 1809 through 1823; *Annales de la Société Royale d'Agriculture et de Botanique de Gand* [*Annals of the Royal Society of Agriculture and Botany of Ghent*], 1: 456-8. Gand: Imp. De C. Annoot-Braeckman; Du Pre, Ellen, 48, 54-57; De Raedt, Albert & Sabine de Groote. 2000. *De Harde Gentse Azalea: Een Historisch Overzicht* [*The Hardy Ghent Azalea: An Historical Overview*]. 23-4. Gavere, Belgium: self-published. Hoogbrugge [High Bridge was the name of the bridge where Burgstraat crossed the Leive River.

5. De Raedt & de Groote, 24; *Gazette van Gend* [*Ghent Gazette*], 1806 Dec 11, p3 c1, available online from Ghent University Library: <https://lib.ugent.be/en/catalog/ser01:000366992?i=3&q=Gazette+van+Gend> as a Google book download by year, accessed 11 Aug 2022; Spae, D[ieudonné]. 1846. "Azalea Mortieriana var. Hybridae." *Annales de la Société Royale d'Agriculture et de Botanique de Gand* [*Annals of the Royal Society of Agriculture and Botany of Ghent*], 2: 325-6. Gand: Imp. De C. Annoot-Braeckman; Neill, Patrick. 1823. *Journal of a Horticultural Tour Through Some Parts of Flanders, Holland and the North of France*, 67-74. Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute; Street, 55-60; *Histoire de la Société*, 29-30; Mussche, Jean Henry. 1817. *Hortus Gandavensis*, 22. Gand: Gosein-Verhaeghe.

6. Neill, *loc. cit.*; *Histoire de la Société*, 29-30,

44. J. B. de Wulf's name has been spelled "Wolf," "Wulf," and "Wulff."
7. Street, 50-57; Lee, Frederic P. 1958. The Azalea Book, 122. Princeton NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company; *Trees and Shrubs Online.* "Rhododendron: The Hybrids/Azalea Hybrids–Deciduous / Ghent Azaleas," <https://treesandshrubsonline.org/articles/rhododendron-the-hybrids-azalea-hybrids-deciduous/>, accessed 8/13/2022 (formerly *Bean's Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles*); Bowers, Clement Gray. 1936. R*hododendrons and Azaleas, their Origins, Cultivation and Development*, 175-177. New York: The MacMillan Company; Van Geert, Charles. 1835. "Remarks on the Culture etc. of the Azalea," in *The Floricultural Cabinet and Florist's Magazine*, 1836, 4: 31-33.
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9. Potter*, loc. cit.*; An orangery or orangerie was a structure with glass roofs and walls on fashionable residences from the 17th to 19th centuries where citrus trees and other non-hardy trees and shrubs could be protected from cold. More than a greenhouse, this larger structure was a symbol of prestige and wealth.
10. Spae, *loc. cit.*; Charles Van Geert, *loc. cit*.; Van Houtte, 1858, *loc. cit*.; Van Houtte, 1861, *loc. cit*.; Van Houtte, 1873. *Flore des Serres et des Jardin de l'Europe,* 19: 152-156; Van Hulle, *loc. cit*.; Eley, Charles. 1923. *Gardening for the Twentieth Century,* 204. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.; Lee, 122 ; Street, 55; Schmalscheidt, Walter & Huisman, Tijs, translator. 2004. "The Story of Hybridization of Deciduous Azaleas in Western Europe." <https://www.rhodoland.nl/articles.en.htm>. accessed 11 Jan 2021; *Trees and Shrubs Online*, *loc. cit.*
11. Van Houtte. 1873, *loc. cit*.; Van Houtte. 1874, *loc. cit.*
12. Wilson, Ernest H. & Rehder, Alfred. 1921. *A Monograph of Azaleas*, 176-179. Publication of the Arnold Arboretum, No. 9. Cambridge, MA: The University Press. Reprinted 1977 Sakonett, RI: Theophrastus Publishers; Bowers, *loc. cit*.; Schmalscheidt, *loc. cit.*; Charles Van Geert, *loc. cit.*
13. John Perkins. 2021. personal communication; Eeckhaut, Tom G. R., Leen W. H. Leus, Albert C. de Raedt, & Erik J. Van Bockstaele. 2004. *Occurrence of Polyploidy in Rhododendron luteum Sweet, Hardy Ghent, and Rustica Hybrids. The Azalean*, 36(2): 32-38. The triploids were 'Mina Van Houtte', 'Daviesii', 'Quadricolor', 'Gloria Mundi', and 'Van Houtte Flore Pleno'.
14. Mortieriana is the name of a group of hybrids. Originally, it may have been the name of a single cultivar. It should not be italicized. These and similar old cultivar and group names followed the unfortunate early tradition of looking like Latinized botanical names. During this period, cultivar names were not always capitalized and never put in single quotes. Even with botanical names, binomial species were not put in italics, but sometimes used a different font, such as small caps, or different font size. The italics standard evolved later.
15. Potter, 35; Van Hulle, *loc. cit.*; Van Houtte. 1861, *loc. cit.*; Spae, *loc. cit.;* Morren, Charles. 1847. *Annales*. 1847, 3: 9; Van Houtte. 1873, *loc. cit*.; Charles Van Geert, *loc. cit*.; Schmalscheidt, *loc. cit*.; De Raedt & de Groote, 49-50; *Journal D'Horticulture Pratique de la Belgique* [*Journal of Practical Horticulture in Belgium*]. 1853. 224.

About the Author

Charles R. Andrews, III, lives in Cumming, Georgia, and is the 2023 ASA President. He has been studying North American azaleas in the field and the literature for over 40 years. Charlie writes and speaks on azalea topics and is currently writing a book on the history and characteristics of this complex group of plants.

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. 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 >

Azalea Society of America

Welcome New Members!

New At Large members include:
- Robert Addy, Acworth, GA
- Carlo Borsarini, Chepachet, RI
- Donna Deal, Rougemont, NC
- Elizabeth Hasenmyer, Anderson, IN
- Allen Jacobs, Carrollton, GA
- Keith and Marlo Person, Rex, GA
- Sarah Seeds, Atlanta, GA
- Robin Schilling, Atlanta, GA

The Alabamese Chapter welcomes:
- Lynne Weninegar, Huntsville, AL

The Arkansas Chapter welcomes:
- Iline Teeple, Crossville, TN
- Alan Wright, Hot Springs, AR

The Ben Morrison Chapter welcomes:
- Annette Fentress, Woodbine, MD

The Northern Virginia Chapter welcomes:
- Cinzia Dinoi, Brooklyn, NY
- Bryan and Heather Kurey, North Potomac, MD

The Rev. John Drayton Chapter welcomes:
- John Ramsdell, Adams Run, SC

The Texas Chapter welcomes:
- Carrie Tatreau, Chico, CA
- Thao Welch , Parker, CO

The Vaseyi Chapter welcomes:
- Carson A. Ellis, Asheville,NC

Membership in ASA makes a great gift!

Chapter News

Ben Morrison Chapter
Budne Reinke, President
The Chapter's spring garden tours are scheduled at Carol Segree's and Rosa and Bob McWhorter's gardens. Both are in Gambrills, Maryland:

To see azaleas, go on Wednesday April 26 from 11 am to 2 pm. This is a tentative date to be adjusted for best bloom time.

To see the rhododendrons, go on Wednesday May 10 from 11 am to 2 pm. Again, a tentative date and yes, many azalea will still be in bloom.

Drinks will be provided for both. Please bring a dish or a snack to share.

Other garden tours include Faith Bange's garden in Davidsonville, MD. It one of the most outstanding American Daylily Society display gardens in America. Tentative open house on Saturday, June 24, or other times by appointment.

Please contact Budne Reinke, President, Ben Morrison Chapter, ASA, for more details.

Alabamense Chapter
John Torbert, President
The Alabamense Chapter is working towards the 2024 Convention, which will be Tuesday, April 2 through Thursday, April 4, 2024, in Auburn, Alabama. An "Azalea 101" workshop will take place Tuesday morning. Details still to be determined, but Wednesday activities will occur in and around Davis Arboretum on the campus of Auburn University, as well as three other spectacular private gardens nearby, all featuring amazing displays of deciduous azaleas and companion plants. Thursday will be spent at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, GA, about 45 minutes from Auburn. Callaway Gardens is a world-class garden with mature displays of many rare evergreen azaleas as well as deciduous azaleas interspersed with miles of trails, ponds, and miscellaneous displays. We will also be stopping by Lazy K Farms, previously owned by our good friend Ernest Koone. We will be operating out of the recently opened Courtyard by Marriott in Auburn where rooms are reserved for $110 per night. Standby for more information.

Louisiana Chapter
Allen Owings, President
The Louisiana Chapter enjoyed a Christmas luncheon the afternoon of Sunday, December 4, 2023, at the LSU AgCenter's Hammond Research Station, Hammond, LA. A great potluck meal was enjoyed by all. We were blessed to have 18 people in attendance.

LSU AgCenter horticulturist Jason Stagg gave a Hurricane Ida update (Fall 2021) on the damage and recovery efforts of the Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden. He discussed trees lost and plants that are now missing—not only due to the hurricane but due to floods in 2016. Garden rehabilitation is beginning with effort to focus on the original intent of the garden with azaleas, natives, and Ms. Margie's favorites. There were numerous holes where pine trees fell and stumps were removed or ground need to be filled. The Chapter will work on sourcing plants over the next few months and try to aid station faculty in replanting during 2023. In addition to Margie's plants, we also seemed supportive of continuing to feature other azaleas from local breeders in this garden as well, and other non-branded introductions. The Chapter is donating $1000 to on-going Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden efforts at the station.

Jim Campbell led a discussion on specific details about the upcoming 2023 ASA/ARS meeting coming up in Georgia in April. He encouraged all members to attend.

Northern Virginia Chapter
Rick Bauer, Corresponding Secretary
The Chapter completed a busy year on 4 December with our Holiday Social/Annual Meeting at the home of Chapter President Barb Kirkwood. We had a large turnout of chapter members who enjoyed the camaraderie of fellow members and the delicious dishes available at the potluck luncheon. In the spirit of the season, we were also joined by "Santa" John Kirkwood.

During the business part of the meeting, we elected the slate of officers for 2023. All of the officers for 2022 agreed to continue in their respective roles for an additional year. 2022 was also another good year from the standpoint of fund-raising through our plant sales. The Chapter members voted to donate $1000 to the Green Springs Gardens' Title 1 program to subsidize garden programs for children in Title 1 schools (those with a

Above, Kathy Jentz and Father Christmas also known as John Kirkwood. Below, Northern Virginia Chapter President Barb Kirkwood addressed the gathering. Photos by Rick Bauer.

high degree of low-income students), $2000 to the ASA general fund, and $300 to Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Springfield, VA, which kindly lets us use their facilities for our meetings.

Finally, we donated $2000 to Jenkins Arboretum in Devon, PA. We have worked with Jenkins for several years and assisted them in creating a Holly Springs Legacy Garden, which was dedicated in May 2022. We plan to continue this collaboration. Chapter member Mike White of White's Nursery in Germantown, MD, generously donated 123 Satsuki and 3 Kurume azaleas to Jenkins which will allow them to extend their bloom season.

The Chapter was also happy to welcome new members Bryan and Heather Kurey of North Potomac, MD. Our first meeting for 2023 will be held at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church on March 26.

Texas Chapter

Sherrie Randall, Secretary

The Chapter held their fall meeting on the campus of the Stephen F. Austin (SFA) University's Pineywoods Native Plant Center. Members were pleased to welcome our newest member, Nery Voss from Chandler, Texas. Ways to increase our membership was one of the meetings planned topics of discussion. Additionally, the Chapter plans to reach out to the Texas Forest Country chapter for potential joint activities and membership.

In our spring meeting, President David Creech had suggested the Chapter sell blueberry plants, along with azaleas, during the Texas Blueberry Festival held in Nacogdoches on the second Saturday in June. After further discussion, members agreed this could be a good money maker. Sherrie Randall offered to host this sale as her blueberry farm is included in the festival activities.

Upcoming events: azalea plantings in the SFA gardens in the near future and a 2023 Spring trip to the Norton Museum and gardens. Both dates to be determined.

The Chapter's slate of officers for 2023 was presented, and approved, with the current officers agreeing to serve another year: President David Creech, Vice President Barbara Stump, Treasurer Donna Vandermolen, and Secretary Sherrie Randall.

Above from left to right, at a recent Texas Chapter's gathering, Treasurer Donna Vandermolen, Don Parsons, President David Creech, new member Nery Voss, Clara Coziar, and Vice President Barbara Stump. Photo by Sherrie Randall.

Morrison's Evaluation of 24 Satsuki Hybrids Including 'Shinnyo-no-tsuki'

By William C. Miller III—Bethesda, Maryland

Being interested in azaleas and living in the Washington Metropolitan area, one pretty quickly learns about Benjamin Yoe Morrison. Second acting director and first director of the US National Arboretum, he was the principal individual associated with the federal government's largest azalea development program, the 454 Glenn Dale Azaleas. Rather than take time here to review his life story, I will refer you to the previously published article "The Search for the Real Benjamin Yoe Morrison"[1] and move on to make the point that Morrison had a keen eye for detail, a sharp wit, a penchant for organizational orderliness, a landscape architect's extensive experience with plant material in general, and an understanding of the horticulture industry.

Fig. 1. Ben Morrison at the Back Acres, just north of Pass Christian, Mississippi, studying his azaleas. Slide obtained from the late George Harding. Photo credit: unknown.

Morrison was a major player in the horticultural community during the various stages of his career... over and above his employment by the US Department of Agriculture. For example, his personal efforts on behalf of the American Horticultural Society (AHS) were extensive and included serving as the editor of their journal for many years. Still, Morrison's "attachment" to the National Arboretum and the Plant Introduction Station at Glenn Dale (aka Bell Station) continued well into his retirement to the "Back Acres" property just north of Pass Christian, Mississippi where he continued his azalea breeding and made his home with his friend, Ivan Anderson (Fig.1). Morrison was a serious correspondent, and a lot of his correspondence survived him. Some of these letters were in his professional capacity as a USDA employee where they were subsequently discovered in old, long forgotten federal file cabinets at Glenn Dale... and some of them were personal exchanges with friends and acquaintances (e.g., Dr. John Creech, Mrs. Frances Patteson-Knight, Mrs. Corinne Murrah, and Mr. Hugh Caldwell, all long deceased). Morrison had a reputation for being a little "direct," but all of his letters were thoughtful, to the point, and fully addressing the issues at hand. All of them gave insight into his personality and character.

In retirement, Ben Morrison was a "cooperator" with the Glenn Dale Station (GDS). He was one of the favored individuals around the country who received distributions of plant material for evaluation. After a sufficient interval, it was the practice of GDS to request information on the cooperator's experience with the plants. This mechanism provided valuable feedback on the quality of the distributed material, and it served to launch the new germplasm around the country and out into the trade. In May of 1962, Dr. Joseph J. Higgins (Fig. 3), a plant physiologist at GDS, issued a request that the cooperators complete a supplied evaluation form (a checklist) on the 24 Satsuki Hybrids (which included 'Shinnyo-no-tsuki, Fig. 4) that the cooperators received in 1958 and 1959. Specifically, Dr. Higgins wanted to know "whether these plants had been injured by winter conditions and their desirability as a nursery trade plant."[2] Most of the cooperators did precisely as they were instructed by "checking the appropriate column." Like several of the cooperators, however, Morrison opted to write a detailed letter. While he reported that the plants successfully overwintered, he felt that the check list approach didn't adequately enable him to express his feelings.

Morrison knew the Satsuki well. At the Back Acres, he had years of experience with one of the largest personal collections of Satsuki in the South. It was Morrison's Satsuki descriptions that F. P. Lee used in *The Azalea Book* published by AHS in 1958. While he really liked the Satsuki for

Route 1 Box 24,
Pass Christian,Miss.,
23 May 1962

Dr. Hoseph J. Higgins,
Glenn Dale, Maryland

Dear Dr. Higgins:

The sort of answer that I feel you should have from here, is not the kind that can be tabulated in columns. Sorry.

First of all, let me say, that I am biased in favor of these azaleas most of them satsukis.

There has been no winter injury here on any save:

226146 - Miyuno no suki, which came to me as large plants, and showed bark splitting the first winter. The wounds all healed and there has been none since.

There have been some loss of flower buds, but it follows no pattern and I cannot rightfully put it against any one of them. My own feeling(no proof) is that our changeable winter climate just caught some buds full of sap, and that was that.

Our worst damage came this winter, for all azaleas in soft growth, on March 5, when we had a 30 for one night only. Nearly all soft growth was killed back. Recovery has been excellent, and the worst cases were some of my own imports not represented in your collection. I have lost only two kinds completely,Hito-maru, killed this spring, and Seito-no-tsuki, last year, cause uncertain, probably my lack of skill. Neither of these came from Glenn Dale.

Now, for the trade. I should say NO!!!!!!!

Usually the trade, taken in its general sense will not bother with plants that do not respond to rather routine treatments. IF you have a specialty nurseryman, who is willing to do all the extra things needed to handle these plants, fine; if he has a clientele that is filled with collectors. I have no data to suggest that geography has anything to do with this. Years ago, Fruitlands, Augusta, Georgia, wrote me that the satsukis would not sell as they bloomed when roses were in flower and no one wanted azaleas with roses. (I did not then know that the South, in general is as ignorant of what azaleas can be and are, as it still is.)

The problems are several as to practice. No trouble with cuttings in most cases. But the specialty nurseryman must either, tag all broches that are sports or grow on all propagations until they have flowered. This has an immediate relation to production costs. For example. My plant of Kaho, is sharply divided into two sections one with pure white flowers and the other with pure rose pink, no stripes of other sports.

2-Higgins: May 23 1962

The problem of sports is real. I think now, that it is safe to say, that any striped flower may produce several types of sports, self white, self color of stripe or nearly that, white ground, flushed and sometimes striped with darker color, but margined with white, and usually with a dark blotch on the upper most lobe or lobes. More rarely, white with a colored margin. I have one old plant, name lost, that has been pure white for some ten years; This year, it gave whites with pink stripes and one flower of the type described above, colored with white margin. Why did it wait? I have no idea.

You probably are as aware as I am, that the nursery trade as a whole is no longer interested in anything but foolproof items each for his area. These azaleas are certainly not foolproof!

If you want a comment, look at the few surviving in trade of the fine list we imported to PEI in 1938,39, many of which will still hold their own with these new things. The only place where they can be had, is to order what you want propagated from Gladsay Gardens in Richmond, Va. Hohman does not have all; Tingle does not have all. So it goes.

The things are fine. I am devoted to them all, but I do not recommend them for "the trade." Sorry.

Cordially yours,

B. Y. Morrison

PS. I do not have P.I. 226143 Soga: may I?

Fig. 2. Ben Morrison's response to a request from Dr. Joseph P. Higgins for feedback on 24 Satsuki Hybrids that had been distributed from the Plant Introduction Station in Glenn Dale in 1958 and 1959. Obtained from the files at Glenn Dale. Photo credit: William C. Miller III.

Fig. 3. Dr. Joseph John Higgins, a plant physiologist at the U.S. Plant Introduction Station at Glenn Dale, Maryland, who studied climate effects on plant growth. Photo courtesy of and taken by Diane Lewis.

their high degree of flower variability, he couldn't recommend them for the trade as a purely practical matter. He understood that the trade generally didn't favor plants that required extra or "special handling." Propagators unable or unwilling to invest the time and effort to grow plants to sufficient size to be able to cull out sports would result in mislabeled plants or plants inconsistent with the official description. He knew full well that the ensuing confusion would only snowball, would be a disservice to the buying public, and might never be resolved. Figure 2 is Morrison's original letter from the files at Glenn Dale.[3]

Notes and References

1. Miller III, W.C. 1992. "The Search for the Real Benjamin Yoe Morrison." *The Azalean*, 14(3), pp 59-61.
2. Quotation from Dr. Joseph P. Higgins May 3, 1962 letter to the select group of cooperators, including Ben Morrison, who had been given the task to evaluate 24 Satsuki Hybrids. Dr. Higgins was a botanist at the Plant Introduction Station at Glenn Dale. His interest was climate effects on plant growth. A 1950 botany graduate at the University of Maryland, he subsequently earned a master's degree in plant physiology in 1951, and a Ph.D. in agronomy in 1969.
3. I'm thankful that Morrison typed many of his letters given that his penmanship was as bad as mine. His typewriter was a very old, manual typewriter. When he made a small typing mistake, he typed over it several times with the correction. When he needed to insert a Bell Number or Plant Introduction Number to specifically identify a plant or some detail that he didn't have conveniently at hand, he left a space where he could pencil in the information later.

Fig. 4. 'Shinnyo-no-tsuki', my current favorite Satsuki Hybrid, and one of 24 Satsuki Hybrids that was distributed by the USDA to cooperators in 1958 and 1959. See the article in the Fall 2022 issue of *The Azalean* for more about 'Shinnyo-no-tsuki'. Photo credit: William C. Miller III.

About the Author:
William C. Miller III is a recipient of the Brookside Gardens Chapter's Frederic P. Lee Commendation (1988) and is twice the recipient of the ASA's Distinguished Service Award (1995 and 2002). He was chairman of the ASA's Glenn Dale Preservation Project, and co-chairman of Dick West's Ten Oaks Glenn Dale Project. He is past president of the Brookside Gardens Chapter, a former vice president of the ASA, a past member of the ASA Board of Directors, past co-chairman of the ASA's Membership Committee, past chairman of the ASA's Public Information Committee, the longest serving member of the ASA's Editorial Advisory Board, and a frequent contributor to *The Azalean*.

Azalea Society of America

LEGACY PROJECT OVERVIEW

A large number of hybridizers, including members of the Azalea Society of America, have developed beautiful hybrid varieties of azaleas. Many of these varieties have not been introduced to commercial markets and have not been widely distributed.

An overview to the Legacy Project itself, which describes the project and the suggested actions to be taken, and artifacts to be created or acquired, is available at https://www.azaleas.org/legacy-project/ in the attachments section. Also available is a PowerPoint™ presentation on the overall Legacy Project.

In Memoriam: Joseph Embrey Schild, Jr.

Joseph Embrey Schild, Jr., 84, of Hixson, TN, went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, December 4, 2022, in a local hospital.

Joe loved the Lord and his family. He was born in Chattanooga, TN, on August 29, 1938.

He was retired from the Chattanooga Paper Board and was heavily involved in the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the Rhododendron Society and the Azalea Society of America (ASA).

He was an avid grower, propagator, and breeder of azaleas. In particular, he was an avid native azalea enthusiast.

He joined the ASA in 1991 as an At-Large member. He served as ASA Vice President from 1999–2000 and ASA President from 2001–2002. He wrote 27 articles that were published in *The Azalean* over a number of years.

In 2007, ASA presented him with a Distinguished Service Award. Here is the description from that award announcement in the Fall 2007 *Azalean* by Allen Owings

"A Distinguished Service Award was also presented to nurseryman, hybridizer, highly respected lecturer and author Joseph E. Schild, Jr.

"Schild's lifetime of outstanding achievements merited the special award. Through his countless presentations to plant enthusiast groups and his plant explorations of the Appalachian gorges,plateaus and mountaintops, new selections, seed, and desirable natural hybrids have been introduced widely into azalea cultivation. He has ensured a broader appreciation and knowledge of the value of these living jewels among our membership and supporters. He provided an extensive exposure to and knowledge of the uniqueness and value of native azaleas and their interspecific hybrids.

▲ Joe Schild, Jr.

"As part of his azalea education mission, Schild has been a dedicated supporter of the Azalea Society of America, authoring many articles for the journal. His leadership to develop the new Azalea City official accreditation for communities across the nation is a superb example of his dedication. In addition, establishing and organizing the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society shows his great devotion toward ericaceous plants.

"Schild's missionary work continues to include a project to establish as complete a collection of the Glenn Dale azaleas as may be possible for a public display garden at Reflection Riding Arboretum in Chattanooga, TN.

"ASA members have benefited from his inexhaustible support and work on behalf of the society. This special recognition acknowledges his tireless work of promoting azaleas, particularly our native azaleas found in the southeastern United States."

Joe was preceded in death by his parents, Joseph E. Schild, Sr. and Leona Jordan Schild.

Survivors include his wife of 60 years, Lashon Schild, sons, Joseph E. (Patricia) Schild, III and Roderick (Michele) Schild, daughter, Sydonna (Lebron) Cambron, sister, Judy (James) Steinmann, grandson, Tristan (Amber) Sharp, and several nieces, nephews and extended family.

Arrangements are by Legacy Funeral Home & Cremation Center, 8911 Dallas Hollow Road, Soddy-Daisy, TN. You can share your memories, stories, and photos at legacyfuneralhome.com.

"Azalea Spring"—a Poem by Byron Kay Giles

By William C. Miller III — Bethesda, Maryland

While ankle-deep in a clean up effort in my home office, I happened upon a physical file that I had not visited in many years. As I thumbed through the items, I noticed a golden-colored piece of parchment computer paper. The color made it really stand out from the other pieces of paper in the file. It was a poem in four stanzas entitled "Azalea Spring." The poet was identified as Byron K. Giles and it was dated May 4, 1996. A box in the lower left corner of the paper indicated that the poem was written exclusively for the Oconee Chapter of the Azalea Society of America.

I didn't remember receiving the poem. My copy was in pristine condition and it had never been folded or mutilated which certainly suggests that it didn't come via the US mail. My working theory is that it was distributed at one of the ASA National Meetings. I don't remember meeting anyone by the name of Byron K. Giles, but I now had an excuse to pause my office clean up effort.

Letting my fingers do the walking through the internet, I found an obituary that revealed that Byron Kay Giles was born on March 3, 1942, and passed away on April 26, 2019. The obit was not extensive but it revealed that he lived in Conyers, Georgia... or what I call... Jim Thornton country. For those who might not know about Jim Thornton, Jim was one of the driving forces behind the Pennington Chapter and the driving force behind the Oconee Chapter on the local level, and he served as vice president and later president of the ASA. Knowing Jim as I did, my impression is that he knew everyone in Conyers and that he had probably tried to get them to join the Oconee Chapter at least once.

To my great surprise, I found no evidence that Byron Giles was ever a member of the ASA. I checked the online ASA membership records, and I went through my collection of ASA membership rosters. His name did not appear. Finally, in the hope that someone online might have more information, I posted a request for information on the ASA mail list. There was no reply.

It's a nice poem that should be shared... and it rhymes.

"Azalea Spring"

By Byron K. Giles, May 4, 1996

The shrub forever grows, in winter evergreen,
As cold north winds blow, I think of Azalea Spring.
Soon the winter's cold, will bow to warmer days,
And soon the budding shrub, will earn its glory praise.

The passage of winter's cold, comes greening of the fig,
The blooming of the Jonquil, new leaves upon the twig.
A deciduous Oconee shrub does thrive, within the Georgia clay,
With blossoms beyond beauty, that will brighten your darkest day.

The miracles of spring, surrounds the months of April-May,
Azaleas blooming everywhere, a gift from God's bouquet.
From the brightest reds... pink, purple, and white,
They brighten up our days, like the stars and moon at night.

The countryside now painted, with God's beauty in the wild,
The shrub with all its glory, fresh as a newborn child.
With early dew upon their leaves, the morning sun will bring,
The beauty of the season, behold.... Azalea Spring!

About the Author:
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Recognizing Generous ASA Members

By Paul A. Beck, Treasurer

I would like to recognize and thank the following members who made donations during 2022 totaling $2,810 to the Operating Fund and $2,765 to the Azalea Research Fund of the Azalea Society of America. My apologies if I missed anyone.

Operating Fund

$5 to $49
Carlson, Barbara & Larry
Carpenter, Debora
Ciolino, Vincent
Gutierrez, Dr. Joseph
Harding, Douglas
Mayton, Cathy
McDavit, William & Mary
Miller, Joe & Kardak, Halit
Mohr, Richard & Ginny
Nuccio, Tom
Pairo, Ellen-Jane & Bill
Ritch, Francine
Ryan, Kevin & Angelia
Scott, Gabrielle F. & William H.

$50 to $99
Bange, Faith
Burd, Ginger & Sam
Harding, Douglas
Hargroves, Nancy & Herbert
Kilvert, Dr. Alan

$100 to $499
Stump, Barbara
Jones, Bill

$2,000 and over
Northern Virginia Chapter ASA

Azalea Research Fund

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Brown, Stanley
Ciolino, Vincent
Harding, Douglas
Vogel, Margaret

$50 to $99
Burd, Ginger & Sam

$100 to $499
Greer, Nancy

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Dolan Gardens (Frances Jones)

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