

THE AZALEA

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



Mr. Lionel and His Azaleas *Page 4*

Pine Bark and Azaleas *Page 8*

Cultural Notes *Page 12*



Post Office Box 34536
West Bethesda, Maryland
20827-0536

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Two of my 'Willie Belle Mayo' hybrids from the Pericat Group sport single orange flowers with a red blotch, having five unwavy, non-overlapping petals about three inches in overall diameter. Foliage looks to be identical to the real plant. Anyone growing or being familiar with 'Willie Belle Mayo' can tell that the description I have just given of the sport is completely foreign looking to the real flower itself. My question concerns the propagation of this sport. Was it ever registered, and if so, what was it named?

In retrospect, I have never gotten an answer (in **THE AZALEAN** or otherwise) relative to the question I asked about whether or not the 'Gyokushin' plants I have are actually 'Joga'. Not even one of our numerous gurus wishes to take a stand?

Bill McDavit, Azalea Sunset
674 Sunset Lanes Blvd., SW
Sunset Beach, NC 28468

The following letter was received by former member Ed Rothe, and is reprinted here by permission of Ed Rothe and Jim Inskip.

...I am researching the "Ghent" Azaleas so any help you can give us would be most welcome.

Your article on the "Ghents" at Glenn Dale [**THE AZALEAN** 1989, p. 6, ed] is most interesting as I believe that there are not many collections in the USA that are documented. Do you think we could obtain a copy of your inventories and also a copy of the two early inventories that you mention in your article?

Would you like a copy of the color descriptions of the unidentified Ghents, then at least next Spring you might like to take a trip to match them up?

Has anybody in your group ever taken slides (35mm) photographs of these Ghents and Rusticas? Can you tell me which seven Rusticas were in the original collection?

I am sorry that I ask you so many questions but it is always so exciting when you discover someone else that is interested in azaleas. I am also very keen on American native species so again if you can recommend anybody that collects seed from wild sources I would love to know.

I look forward to hearing from you and if you think that Bill Miller or Bob Hobbs could also be of assistance, please feel free to pass this on.

Jim Inskip
9, Beech Close Court
Cobham, Surrey KT11 2HA
England

*On the Cover: Exbury 'Bright Straw'
Photographer: Don Hyatt*

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 Subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

OFFICERS FOR 1996-1997

President	Stephen S. Brainerd
Vice-President	James O. Thornton
Secretary	William B. McIntosh
Treasurer	Robert Stelloh
Immediate Past-President	L. Malcolm Clark

DIRECTORS

Terms Expiring in 1998	Terms Expiring in 1997
Robert Lee	Rosalie Nachman
Dr. Charles Owen	Fred Minch
Stephen Schroeder	Arthur Vance

Chapter presidents serve as ex-officio directors.

CHAPTERS

Brookside Gardens (chartered August 1979) Diane Gregg, <i>President</i>
Richmond, Virginia (chartered August 1979) Deanie McCluan, <i>President</i>
Ben Morrison (chartered May 1980) Niki Baker, <i>President</i>
Northern Virginia (chartered May 1980) Joe Klimavicz, <i>President</i>
Louisiana (chartered June 1981) Bob Miravalle, <i>President</i>
Tri-State (chartered October 1981) Greg Wedding, <i>President</i>
Dallas Chapter (chartered May 1989) Virginia Salter, <i>President</i>
Oconee Chapter (chartered November 1991) Earl Hester, <i>President</i>

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual contribution of \$25.00; life membership for an individual is \$500.00. Members receive **THE AZALEAN** and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society including those of the chapter with which the member affiliates. For information and a membership application, write to the Membership Committee, Azalea Society of America, P. O. Box 34536, West Bethesda, MD 20827-0536.

THE AZALEAN
*Journal of the Azalea Society
of America, Inc.*

Editor

Robert W. Hobbs, Ph.D.

Associate Editor

Belinda L. Hobbs

Assistant Editor

George S. Switzer, Ph.D.

Advisory Editorial Board

Donald H. Voss

Jane Newman

Advertising

Niki Baker

THE AZALEAN (ISSN-1085-5343) is published during March, June, September, and December by the Azalea Society of America, Inc., P. O. Box 34536, West Bethesda, MD 20827-0536.

Additional copies of the current and back issues can be obtained from Azalean Back Issues, 5710 Azalea Drive, Rowlett, TX 75088 (PHONE: (214) 475-3401). Volumes 1 through 4 published from 1979 through 1982 consist of 15 issues at \$2.50 per issue. The price for each issue beginning with 1983, Volumes 5 through 18, is \$3.50.

Opinions and views expressed in THE AZALEAN are those of the contributors or the Editor, not necessarily those of the Society, and are presented to foster a wider appreciation and knowledge of azaleas. Advertisements are presented as a service to our readers and do not imply endorsement by the Azalea Society of America. Advertising and other contributions to THE AZALEAN are used exclusively to help defray the costs of publishing THE AZALEAN.

Address all editorial and business correspondence to:

The Editor, THE AZALEAN
737 Walnut Avenue,
North Beach, MD 20714-9644

Printing of THE AZALEAN by:
Hour Printer
Silver Spring, MD

Table of Contents

VOLUME 19 NUMBER 1 MARCH 1997

- 2 **Letters to the Editor**
Bill McDavit
Jim Inskip
- 4 **Mr. Lionel and His Azaleas**
Jacquelyn A. Kuehn
- 8 **Pine Bark and Azaleas**
Larry Brown
- 10 **In Praise of EZcart**
Robert Stelloh
- 11 **Watering From Your Deck**
Robert Stelloh
- 12 **New Books**
- 12 **Cultural Notes**
Sources for Species Azaleas
Feeding Azaleas
Transplanting Azaleas
Wanted-Information on hybridizers and hybrids
- 14 **In Memory: Glenn Taylor**
Bryant Jenkins
- 15 **Society News**
Brookside Gardens Chapter
Louisiana Chapter
Dallas Chapter
Northern Virginia Chapter
Oconee Chapter
Report on the Glenn Dale Preservation Project
William C. Miller III
- 17 **New Members**
- 17 **Azalea Calendar**
- 18 **Azalea Mart**

MR. LIONEL AND HIS AZALEAS

Jacquelyn A. Kuehn

Lucernemines, PA

The history of the modern deciduous azalea can be traced back to around 1825, when a baker in Belgium originated the Ghent strain, made by crosses involving *R. luteum*, and four American azaleas: *viscosum* (the Swamp Azalea), *periclymenoides* (the Pinxterbloom), *calendulaceum* (the Flame Azalea) and the bright red *speciosum* (1) [*R. Speciosum* is an illegitimate name; the plant usually so identified is *R. flammum*, ed.]. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw a rapid increase in plant-hunting expeditions. Reginald Farrer and Robert Fortune made early forays into the Asian wilds. Frank Kingdon-Ward, Joseph Rock, and George Forrest followed, sending back such plant treasures as seeds of new Asian rhododendron species. In 1855 Anthony Waterer, Sr. imported a quantity of Ghent azaleas to his nursery at Knap Hill, south of London. Here he began an intensive breeding program to improve the race, using the so-called mollis hybrids to add size, *calendulaceum* and *occidentale* for large flowers and scent, and *arborescens* as well for scent. "The resulting Knap Hill azaleas seemed to have everything—size, scent, glorious autumn tints and a scheme of flower colors ranging from flame, orange-red, pinks and yellows to pale cream and white with gold or orange blotches" (2). The stage had been set for the development of the finest azaleas.

In 1919, Mr. Lionel de Rothschild bought the Exbury estate, near Southampton, England. Initially, the garden covered only four to five acres, but in 1922, he began to expand the gardens to accommodate the many plants arriving from plant hunters around the world. He immediately set a small army of 150 gardeners to double digging, a task which lasted them for the next 30 years. "The ground is so stony that it really shouldn't grow anything but weeds," Paul Martin told me when I visited the Gardens in June 1996. Paul has been Head Gardener at Exbury Gardens since June 1995. "The lads had to use forks because no spade could penetrate that ground. They double-dug all the way to Gilbury Lane, and thought they were finished. But Mr. Lionel—as he was and still is always referred to by his staff—just built a bridge and the gardeners kept on digging on the other side."

Mr. Lionel joined other contemporary plant enthusiasts in sponsoring many plant expeditions, particularly those of George Forrest and Frank Kingdon-Ward. Exbury originally became known for its extensive plant collection; not until after World War II did it become famous for rhododendrons.

"I think he didn't go on plant expeditions himself," smiled Mr. Martin, "because he had to show his face at the bank now and again."

Cotoneasters, daffodils, nerines, and cymbidiums are among the myriad of plants that benefited from Rothschild's work. One of the most breathtaking sights at the time of my visit to Exbury was an exquisite *Wisteria sinensis*, which draped itself in glorious abandon over a sturdy pillared arbor at one end of the Rose Garden. Its lavender panicles hung nearly to the ground, heavy with rich fragrance.

"He was totally fascinated with all plants, I think; if it grew, he wanted to improve it. So, true to his nature," Mr. Martin told us, "Mr. Lionel probably selected this variety of wisteria. We don't really know for sure, though. It was

planted sometime in the twenties or thirties."

Mr. Lionel de Rothschild created an immense, two-acre rock garden to suit the desires of alpine rhododendrons. *R. leucaspis*, the scarlet *R. sperabile* var. *weihsiense*, and the pygmy *R. campylogynum* all thrived in the open situation of the rockery. Honey fungus destroyed many of the rockery's fine, selected plants, including one hundred plants of *R. russatum* and many from the Sanguineum sub-series. What survived was ultimately wiped out by the deprivations of World War II, and the rockery remained a jungle until it was reclaimed in the late seventies by Mr. Edmund de Rothschild, with Douglas Harris as head gardener. Even since then, some of the fine species have now grown too big and are covering up some spectacular rockwork.

When Mr. Lionel recognized that the work being done with azaleas at Knap Hill Nurseries (3) was necessary to his own, he purchased control of their collection. In 1920, he received, among a batch of azaleas from Knap Hill, 'George Reynolds', "an outstanding azalea in soft yellow and pink with a wavy-petalled flower that sometimes measured six inches across"(3). By crossing this fine plant with some of Waterer's unnamed orange seedlings, he arrived at the brilliant 'Hotspur', which ushered in a new epoch for azaleas.

In 1937 the Exbury azaleas were "introduced to the gardening public at the Chelsea Show—a new strain developed via the azalea 'George Reynolds' from the already good Knaphill [sic] azaleas and selected and re-selected until every seedling could be relied upon to give a perfect flower. Hardy and vigorous, with a wide colour range, wonderful scent and fine autumn tints, the Exbury strain has the last word in hybrid deciduous azaleas" (4). George Reynolds, incidentally, was the gardener at Gunnersbury Park, a house just west of London belonging to Lionel's father, Leopold de Rothschild.

"In the International Rhododendron Register the Exburys are included in the Knap Hill group, since the same blood (of nine species) flows in both, but Lionel de Rothschild, by ruthless selection and the infusion of new blood, created a very superior strain, with special characteristics of its own" (5).

Mr. Lionel's eagerness to try every possible avenue to a beautiful plant took him into diverse areas. He wrote frequently about his work, and founded and served as president of the Rhododendron Association, which, unfortunately, no longer exists. In the 1934 Year Book of the Rhododendron Association, Mr. Lionel wrote about the intriguing possibilities of, for example, crossing elepidote and lepidote rhododendrons. He then described his own attempts at making Azaleodendron crosses:

Crossed together, deciduous with deciduous azaleas and evergreen with evergreen, they have produced some of the most glowing flowers which beautify our gardens, but mated with other series, the results are few and far between, very often difficult to grow or to propagate and in every case a mule. Though difficult they are very beautiful, and 'Broughtonii Aureum', 'Glory of Littleworth', 'Dr. Masters', 'Gallop Light' and the very old hybrid 'odoratum' always attract admiration in the garden. Bean [W. J. Bean, Curator of Kew Gardens], who has done much to help me, suggested one day that I should try and make some more Azaleodendron crosses. I am always ready to listen to him and, having just flowered one which was raised by Lowinsky [Thomas Lowinsky] (6) and which, though a bad grower, is very beautiful, was fired with enthusiasm to try. For two years running I crossed any hybrid rhododendron I had

in flower of any value with four different types of azalea—*lutea*, the old *pontica* (the old *ponticum*), 'Floradora' (a *mollis-sinensis* hybrid), 'George Reynolds' (a yellow large-flowered azalea raised by Anthony Waterer, which has produced some of my best azalea hybrids) and one of Koster's *occidentalis* hybrids, I forget which. I also crossed the azaleas with pollen from the rhododendrons and I must have made fifty to sixty crosses each year. From all those crosses I only got one pod of seed and that contained mostly chaff, and I think I only raised three Azaleodendrons from all that labour, and those three have not yet flowered. I have tried to cross 'Broughtonii Aureum' time and time again and have never seen a vestige of a seed pod upon it (7).

On Exbury—as on all of Europe—World War II took a heavy toll. Mr. Lionel de Rothschild died in 1942, just before Exbury House was requisitioned by the Royal Navy and commissioned first as HMS *Mastodon*, and later as HMS *Hawk*, which name was eventually given to one of Exbury's finest rhododendrons. The fields in front of the House and to the side of the Gardens were covered by 1500 men in nissen huts. A bare, skeleton staff remained to care for the garden and greenhouses, of which only the cymbidium house was allowed to continue.

Gone were the exotic plants in the tropical houses. Gone were the tender and sweet-scented species in the rhododendron house. Gone were tens of thousands of orchids, among them being quantities of seedlings that had excelled all others in existence, being the fruits of Lionel's most mature and experienced breeding. The houses of all those treasures became invaded by the plebeian tomato and cucumber to help feed a hard-pressed nation...on the resound-

ing bare boards of Exbury House... "there began in great secrecy the Royal Navy's initial preparations and trials for the Normandy invasion...on the water and banks of the Beaulieu River strange and prophetic forms began to assemble where once the ships of Nelson's age had been launched" (8).

During the war years—a time of unavoidable neglect for the gardens—many plants were lost, or at least lost track of. In 1946, after having served in the Royal Artillery, Lionel's eldest son, Edmund, returned to supervise Exbury's return to life.

The main repository for all the knowledge about the Rhodos and Azaleas was Lionel's wife, Marie Louise. ...it was she who taught and passed on all the knowledge to Peter Barber and Mr. Eddy, as [Edmund] is known. The third person who contributed so much to the revival of the Gardens was Freddie Wyniatt. Freddie had worked at Exbury before the war before being drafted. He had been captured by the Germans and made to work in some sort of mine, either salt or coal. On his demobilisation he came back to Exbury and asked for a job. He was created Head Gardener. He really had the first-hand knowledge and was responsible for the continuation of the breeding programme (9).

Today, botanists work at identifying the species in one section of the garden at a time, and many varieties previously thought lost have been re-discovered. Fifteen thousand plants have been tagged and recorded on computer, involving 7,000 varieties or types covering approximately 24 genera of shrub or tree. Sixty to seventy percent of these plants are rhododendrons.

Surprises lurk in the Witcher's Wood, an area of the Gardens named after a family of charcoal burners that

once lived there. Witcher's Wood is the place to rummage if you are an expert with time to spare. Here is the location where unselected seedlings and the rejects from plant expeditions were stashed. Many seedlings which were reportedly lost or purposely destroyed by Mr. Lionel were, in fact, just tucked into the welcoming ground of Witcher's Wood, where they grew quietly, awaiting rediscovery.



A brilliant segment of Exbury's Spring show

The Exbury register in the back of Peter Barber's excellent book lists the many cultivars that have received the RHS's highest awards over the years. The awards of merit are, of course, decided only on show days; sometimes those are not the peak bloom days for a plant. But that is when the committee sits, so that is when the judgments are determined. Oftentimes a breeder is sure that, if the committee had only met a day earlier or later, his variety would surely have won!

For azaleas, the maximum season of bloom is May 1-June 1 during normal years. When I arrived at Exbury on June 10, 1996, I was in time to receive the glorious impact of the spring

show, just barely past its prime, for the spring had been so wet and cold that everything was considerably delayed; the normal bloom season of rhododendrons at Exbury is considerably longer, beginning in February and continuing through July.

Although Exbury's name was very familiar to me in connection with azaleas from years of reading, I did not find a great many varieties offered in our catalogs, except from the specialized rhododendron nurseries. In preparation for my visit to Exbury, I asked William C. Miller III about the reasons for that, and he replied:

Given that deciduous azaleas, in general, are more difficult to propagate than evergreen azaleas; that the hybrid groups in question are imports; and that both of the above contribute to a price differential in favor of evergreen azaleas, I would imagine that market forces favor the production and availability of evergreen azaleas. Further, evergreen azaleas have received a great deal of attention over the years in the form of R & D programs, both government sponsored (the Beltsville and Glenn Dale hybrids) and privately sponsored (Gable, Girard, and Harris). While the yellows and oranges are exquisite, incomparable, and not to be found in the evergreen sphere, there is very little that is attractive about the typical leggy, deciduous azalea during the rest of the year that would warrant committing the space and paying a premium. ...There are also other options. In some cases, the desire for a yellow azalea can be satisfied with some of the American native azaleas over which there seems to be a renaissance of interest. ...Then there are the breeders that have developed their own. There is Girard in Geneva, Ohio which has its own line of deciduous azaleas, [and the] Arnesons in Canby, Oregon [among others]. It is possible that

there are comparatively few Exbury and Knap Hill cultivars available today in the US market because there were never many available to begin with, and newer and better cultivars have subsequently been developed here (10).

After considering the above comments from William C. Miller III, Mr. Nicholas de Rothschild responded:

The reason for the lack of Exbury Azaleas in the US is quite prosaic. We sold quite a few into the Oregon/Washington State area in the early 60s, where I believe they still flourish. However the Department of Agriculture put a stop to the trade by imposing heavy soil restrictions and quarantine regulations. The Solent range of azaleas—named for the Solent, the body of water separating the Isle of Wight from the mainland—are, in my view, on a par with the best new States-side hybrids. It was the introduction of these that ended the supremacy of the older Exburys. We have, this year, for the first time, managed to get a few of them to replicate in tissue culture, though the lab has yet to get them to root out of the culture. They come fairly easily from cuttings, and our Nurseries have been concentrating on producing several hundred each year. But, as you say, their deciduous nature often predicates against their sale when competing against the more compact evergreens. However, pruning does create a tighter format. It was Fred [Wyniatt, Head Gardener at Exbury for many years] who placed much greater importance on azaleas within the plantings, especially the evergreens, and the feel that one gets in the gardens today was started by him. It was also through him that Exbury acquired the Solent strain of deciduous azaleas which had been bred by George Hyde at his nursery near Ferndown in

Dorset. There are around 150 of these and they were bought by Exbury in about 1959-60... At the time I think that the aim was to infuse new blood into the breeding, but the Solents proved to be so good that they are hard to beat. Their other great advantage is how good they are in full sun. We always thought that they were like the other azaleas and had them in dappled shade, until the hurricane removed all their top cover. The following year and every year subsequent to that they have flowered better in full sun! We also tried to trim them back and found that they responded most positively to hard pruning. They are not at all straggly now (9).

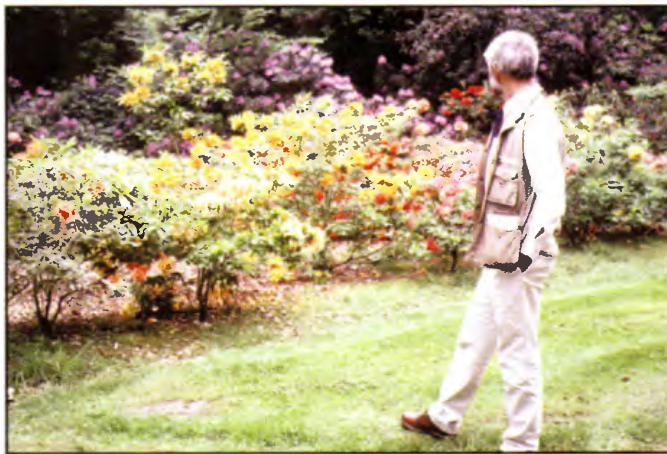
The 1987 hurricane referred to by Mr. Nicholas wreaked tremendous havoc at Exbury, as it did at Kew and many other large British gardens.

The hurricane had no name as it came as a bit of a surprise. The weatherman on the early evening news said 'a lady from Jersey has just rung me up and told me that a hurricane is on the way, I can assure you that we have no knowledge of this, so do not worry!' Boy, did he have to eat his words! ...the hurricane-force winds... ripped ashore later that evening. There was no time to give it a name, let alone warn anyone of its arrival. Exbury lost 750 mature oaks and other trees in the space of an hour. The second hurricane force storm came in 1990, this time in February, when we lost a further 400-500 trees; this time it was the turn of the Scots Pine to take the brunt of the wind. The trees were not necessarily old!

What we did find was that the oaks were very shallow-rooted. We had always assumed that all oaks had a deep tap root. We found that the ones that came down had really rather small root structures for the size of tree. (This is not to say that in different soil conditions they would [not] have more root')(10).

Paul Martin adds, "It really was a great blessing, however, and did what should have been done years earlier. ...overgrown trees and shrubs were torn out, and forced a necessary renewal of the gardens. Our plan is to continue this renewal over the next 15 to 20 years.

"At this point, we are concentrating primarily on rhododendrons, having taken back the breeding work under our own auspices. The long-range plan calls for us to begin similarly extensive work again with azaleas in



Exbury's Head Gardener Paul Martin

three to four years.

"The pH here is 4.5-5, which is very acidic. We do nothing to change that, because the plants are so big anyway, and seem to thrive on it. Initially, the soil was bulked up with humus, and the plants have been fed with a general fertilizer thereafter. Now, because of the size of the grounds, we sometimes resort to chemical weeding. We

have also hauled out load after load of invasive ivy, which was chopped and returned as mulch."

"The gardens remain very much a family concern," Mr. Martin said. "Today, Edmund's sons, Nicholas and Lionel, are taking an active interest in the work of Exbury. Recently, Mr. Nicholas has begun planting up a path along the top of the rock garden. The entire work is owned and run by a charitable foundation known as 'The Trust'; all profits go back into the gardens. The family are in it because they love it."

Lionel de Rothschild described himself as "a banker by hobby, a gardener by profession" (11). A clear picture of the man and his passionate, yet very generous attitude toward gardening emerges from the following story, extracted from an article on Knap Hill azaleas in *Rhododendron Year Book 1985/6* by G. Donald Waterer:

It was decided to resume the hybridization and selection of the Knap Hill azaleas, but in 1935 a devastating frost on 17 May destroyed the flowers of every azalea in the open ground. With his usual generosity Lionel de Rothschild invited the Knap Hill Nursery to make crosses at Exbury using azaleas which he had acquired from the second Anthony Waterer, Exbury having suffered no harm from the frost. These crosses were made at Exbury by Frank Knight. Further crosses were made at Knap Hill before the outbreak of war in 1939 (12).

"A nice story, I think," summed up Mr. Lionel de Rothschild, grandson of Exbury's founder. A very nice story with wonderful gardens, exquisite azaleas, and priceless contributions to the gardens of the world.

Thank you, Mr. Lionel.

REFERENCES

- (1) C. E. Lucas Phillips and Peter N. Barber, *The Rothschild Rhododendrons*,

first published by Cassell, reprinted by Exbury Gardens, 1987, p. 35. This book is an invaluable source of information on Mr. Lionel de Rothschild's life and work, Exbury, and highly practical rhododendron culture. The book is a well-produced, hard-cover edition of 138 pages including 20 fine black-and-white illustrations, plus 65 full-page color plates of plants in bloom. Peter Barber had served as a major in the army with Edmund de Rothschild, and later become Managing Director of Exbury Gardens.

- (2) Berrisford, Judith. *Rhododendrons and Azaleas*. London: Faber and Faber, 1964, p. 45.
- (3) Berrisford, *ibid*.
- (4) Berrisford, *Op. Cit.*, p. 46.
- (5) Phillips and Barber, *Op. Cit.*, p. 35.
- (6) In 1926 (Mr. Lionel) acquired most of the collection of Thomas Lowinsky, one of the leading amateurs of the day and a RHS gold medallist, whose fine garden at Tittenhurst, Sunninghill, was celebrated also for some of the rarer forms of conifer, such as the curious pendulous cedars and the very odd weeping wellingtonias, or 'ghost trees'." Phillips and Barber, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.
- (7) *Year Book of the Rhododendron Association*, 1934: pp. 113-114.
- (8) Phillips and Barber, *Op. Cit.*, p. 20.
- (9) Communiqué from Mr. Nicholas de Rothschild, 9 October 1996.
- (10) Letter from William C. Miller III, 12 May 1996.
- (11) Exbury Gardens, [Christina Dykes and Charles Orr-Ewing, produced by Exbury Gardens.] "An Introduction."
- (12) Communiqué from Mr. Lionel de Rothschild, 10 June 1996.

Jaacquelyn Kuehn writes from her home in western Pennsylvania, where she is eagerly anticipating the first blossoming of her young deciduous azaleas this spring. She is currently the editor-in-chief of Pomona, journal of the North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX).

Photographs by the author

Jacquelyn A. Kuehn Box 29 Lucernemines, PA 15754 PHONE: (412) 479-0266 First North American Rights ☐

PINE BARK AND AZALEAS

Larry Brown

Hammond, Louisiana

Use of pine bark in container culture of azaleas

As anyone who has grown ornamental plants in containers in the southeastern United States knows, milled pine bark is a great ingredient for a growth medium. Its qualities include good drainage and heat release, acidity, lack of toxicity, and very slow decomposition rate. And anywhere that pine trees are harvested in quantity it has the additional advantage of wide availability and low cost.

The pine bark that I will be referring to throughout this article is described as being run once through a hammermill and at least six months old. This results in a range of particle sizes that is considerably coarser than bark that is usually sold as potting medium for greenhouse plants or houseplants. The coarser bark is considered a necessity for growing healthy plants in containers in full sun in the South. If you are growing azaleas under less severe conditions, a finer bark may be more desirable.

Azaleas can grow very well in 100% pine bark. However, one drawback to such use is the low water holding capacity of pure bark. Another property, which can be either a plus or a minus, is its light weight. For shipping, light weight is desirable, but plants in pure bark are easily blown over,

Plants grown in 100% bark or very coarse bark may also have difficulty in becoming established when planted out, especially into heavy soils. The roots can easily dry out before they grow beyond the original container volume, even if the surrounding soil is moist enough. Addition of up to 10% sand to the container medium helps overcome these problems.

Several years ago I compared the growth of various plants in media containing pine bark, 10% sand, and Canadian peat in percentages ranging from 0 to 90%. The results of these tests are shown in Table 1 (1).

Results obtained in two separate tests in consecutive years are shown as "Test I" and "Test II".

PEAT	PERCENTAGES		FRESH WEIGHT (g.)	
	PINE BARK	SAND	TEST I	TEST II
0	90	10	33	63
5	85	10	52	73
10	80	10	55	84
20	70	10	55	84
40	50	10	68	92
90	0	10	76	100

Under the conditions of these tests, growth and quality of azaleas increased with each increase in peat percentage. Since cost also increases with increasing peat, use of 10% peat was probably a good compromise between best growth and lowest cost. If cost is not a major consideration, use more peat.

I must hasten to add that another characteristic of pine bark is its inertness. Its decomposition rate is so slow that it makes negligible amounts of essential nutrients available to the plant. These elements (nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, iron, manganese, copper, zinc, boron, and molybdenum) must all be added either by incorporation in the growth medium, application on the surface, dissolved in the irrigation water, or a combination of these methods. There is an almost infinite number of fertilizer combinations that can be satisfactory.

Use of pine bark in landscape planting

Pine bark is widely used as a mulching material and is very effective because of the same properties that make it a good container medium ingredient. If weed control is a primary reason for mulching, only very large bark particles should be used; otherwise weeds can grow right in the mulch.

Compared to other organic materials, bark is considered a relatively poor material to incorporate into a landscape soil. Except for very fine particles, bark acts somewhat like an equal amount of gravel when mixed with a mineral soil.

Theoretically, a bark and soil mixture would have to be at least 80% bark (and therefore not more than 20% soil) to be a medium that provides better aeration than the soil alone. This is because the large pore spaces (i.e., the spaces that are filled with air after irrigation water drains away) are no more than 25% of the total volume of bark. If all of these large pore spaces are filled with soil, aeration is poor.

The research that I will use to suggest how pine bark might be used for azalea planting was not done with azaleas as the test plant. Blueberry (*Vaccinium ashei*) was used instead. It may seem like quite a leap to compare blueberries and azaleas, but actually they are closely related, both belonging to the heath family (*Ericaceae*). Both have a fine and slow-developing root system and their cultural requirements are quite similar.

My hypothesis for this work was based on the previous explanation that bark is not considered to be a good material for incorporation, but is a good medium by itself. In a preliminary test, holes 15" in diameter and six inches deep were dug in a fine sandy loam field soil with a low organic matter content. Blueberry plants from three-quart containers were planted in these holes with one and one-half gallons of bark placed as shown in Table 2. Additional explanation may be needed for the placement in treatments three and four: the bark was placed in a layer extending from the root ball of the plant to the sides of the hole.

A year after planting, the plants were rated for quality of top growth. Then they were carefully dug and root development beyond the original rootball was evaluated. The average ratings are shown in Table 2. (Unpublished data, Hammond Research Station.)

These ratings tend to indicate that the layered bark (including that on the surface) improved top growth the first year after planting and that the layers one inch and three inches deep greatly improved root growth during that first year. The hypothesis that roots would grow throughout the bark layers much faster than into the surrounding soil was borne out.

After this preliminary test, a larger planting was made using the same basic treatments plus one with incorporated peat. In this study, the planting holes

were 18" in diameter and three gallons of bark per plant were used for treatments two through five. Peat was used at one and one-half gallons per plant in order for the cost of the materials to be more nearly equal.

TABLE 2
Effects of pine bark on growth of blueberry plants in the field

TREATMENT	TOP RATING ¹	ROOT RATING ²
(1) No bark	1.6	0.8
(2) Bark on surface (mulch)	3.5	2.4
(3) Bark layer 1" below surface	3.4	4.6
(4) Bark layer 3" below surface	3.6	4.2
(5) Bark mixed with soil	2.3	1.8

¹ Rated on a scale of 0 - 10: 0 = dead, 10 = excellent quality

² Rated on a scale of 0 - 10: 0 = roots not extending beyond original pot medium, 10 = roots extending to extremities of planting hole.

The only records taken in this test were yield of berries, which generally appeared to reflect plant size. The first year yield was highest with bark layered three inches deep and lowest with both incorporated materials. The second year yields followed a similar pattern except that incorporated peat was alone as the poorest treatment. Heavy production began the third year and all treatments utilizing pine bark (including incorporated bark) yielded much more than incorporated peat, which was only slightly better than the control treatment with no additive.

Well, that seems to refute what I said earlier about bark not being a good material for incorporation. Perhaps tests that so indicated were of too short a duration and, perhaps, during the second year of my test, bark began to act like organic matter should and

provided some soil improvement or even nutrient availability to the plant.

If this were a scientific article I would have to look up references for the statements I have made and would have to indicate the statistical probability that the figures shown could have occurred by chance, and I certainly couldn't extrapolate from blueberries to azaleas. So be advised that this is not a scientific paper and is intended only to stimulate your own experimentation. The fact is that no other situation is exactly like yours, so even the most exacting conclusions of research may not apply without modification.

Reference:

(1) Progress Report, Jan. 1983-Dec. 1984. Hammond Research Station, LA Agr. Exp. Sta. pp.32-37.

William L. "Larry" Brown is retired after 34 years as Associate Professor of Horticulture, Hammond Research Station, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, 21549 Old Covington Highway, Hammond, LA 70403. His favorite projects involved forcing of azalea pot plants without cold, production of tree forms by grafting, and breeding of summer and fall flowering azaleas. □

In Praise of the EZcart

Robert Stelloh

Hendersonville, NC

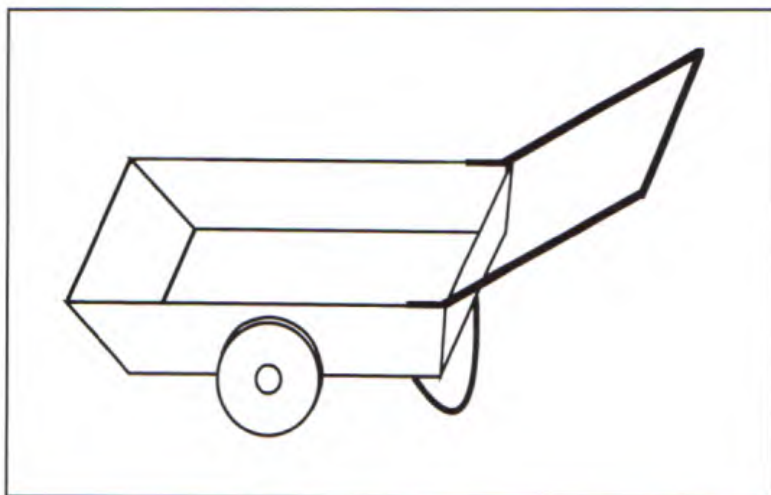
One day last year, the other volunteers working on the George Harding Memorial Azalea Garden were surprised and amused when Milt Lerner brought a new garden cart to the work site. It was called an "EZcart," and it looked more like something a child might use at the beach than a serious gardening tool. After trying it, mostly to humor him, within a few weeks we each had one, and at least one person bought several of them.

The EZcart is just under two feet wide by just over two feet long by seven inches high. Three sides slope very slightly outward, and the front slopes forward at a 45° angle. It is made of a thin, hard and very strong plastic, probably fiberglass. The handle is the same size as the cart, made of 3/4-inch pipe, and bends up to be two feet off the ground when the cart is at rest. The two black plastic wheels are one foot in diameter, so the bottom of the cart is only five inches from the ground and the top is one foot from the ground. The cart rests on a pipe skid at the rear. The sketch shows the overall shape of the cart and the arrangement of its parts.

As an engineer, I admired the attention to detail that is apparent in the design of the EZcart, from the shallow form-fitting packaging it comes in, to the use of thumb screws instead of ordinary nuts and bolts throughout that permit assembly without tools. As a gardener, I admire the strength and utility of the EZcart. While it has a stated capacity of about 100 pounds, my wife and I have carried at least twice that much in the course of using it as a ball cart for some balled and burlapped Japanese maples we moved. With a very heavy load it bends and squeaks somewhat and it pulls better than it pushes over soft or uneven surfaces, but it doesn't break.

The biggest plants I ordinarily move are "1-man trees" (about 75-pound root balls), and the rootballs of these Japanese maples ranged from 150 to 300 pounds—while I could roll them, or drag them with great difficulty, I definitely couldn't lift them. We had no problem moving them with the EZcart, however. For each one, we dug a flat ramp the width of the cart from ground level to slightly below the bottom of the root ball, tipped the tree back, ran the sloping front of the cart under the root ball, tipped the tree onto the cart, and dragged it off to its new home. One person can do all of this, although it is much easier with one person handling the tree and one person handling the cart. Then, after digging a hole for the tree, we dug a similar ramp for the cart, and reversed the process to ease the ball out of the cart into the hole, without ever lifting the tree, and with no trauma to the root ball from dropping it. It should work similarly for stones which are too heavy to lift, yet too small for heavy equipment.

We have also used the EZcart with great success for ordinary wheelbarrow or garden cart tasks, such as moving small plants, leaves, garden trash, dirt, gravel, stones, mulch, firewood, tree trunks and tools. While it won't hold as much as a wheelbarrow or a large garden cart, being so close to the ground makes it much easier to shovel into or to lift heavy things into. When it comes to unloading, it is about as easy to tip a load out as with a wheelbarrow, and much easier than with a large garden cart. In short, the EZcart is a great addition to your arsenal of garden tools, and it costs around \$25.00 from Home Depot, Lowes, Sears, etc. □



Watering From Your Deck

Robert Stelloh

Hendersonville, NC

Our deck overlooks a steep, densely planted slope that goes down to a tiny creek, with a matching slope up on the other side of the creek. The outside corners of the deck railing seemed like good places for sprinklers to water these slopes, since the height increases their reach. After using portable sprinklers on top of the railings for a while, I decided to install permanent sprinklers.

The design goals for the sprinklers were to not use any of the railing space, to be somewhat hidden, to cover as large an area as possible using a RainBird or other impact sprinkler, and to be able to easily attach and detach the hose. The approach I took was to use a piece of pipe as the sprinkler base, and to attach the pipe to the corner post of the deck such that the sprinkler head was just below the railing.

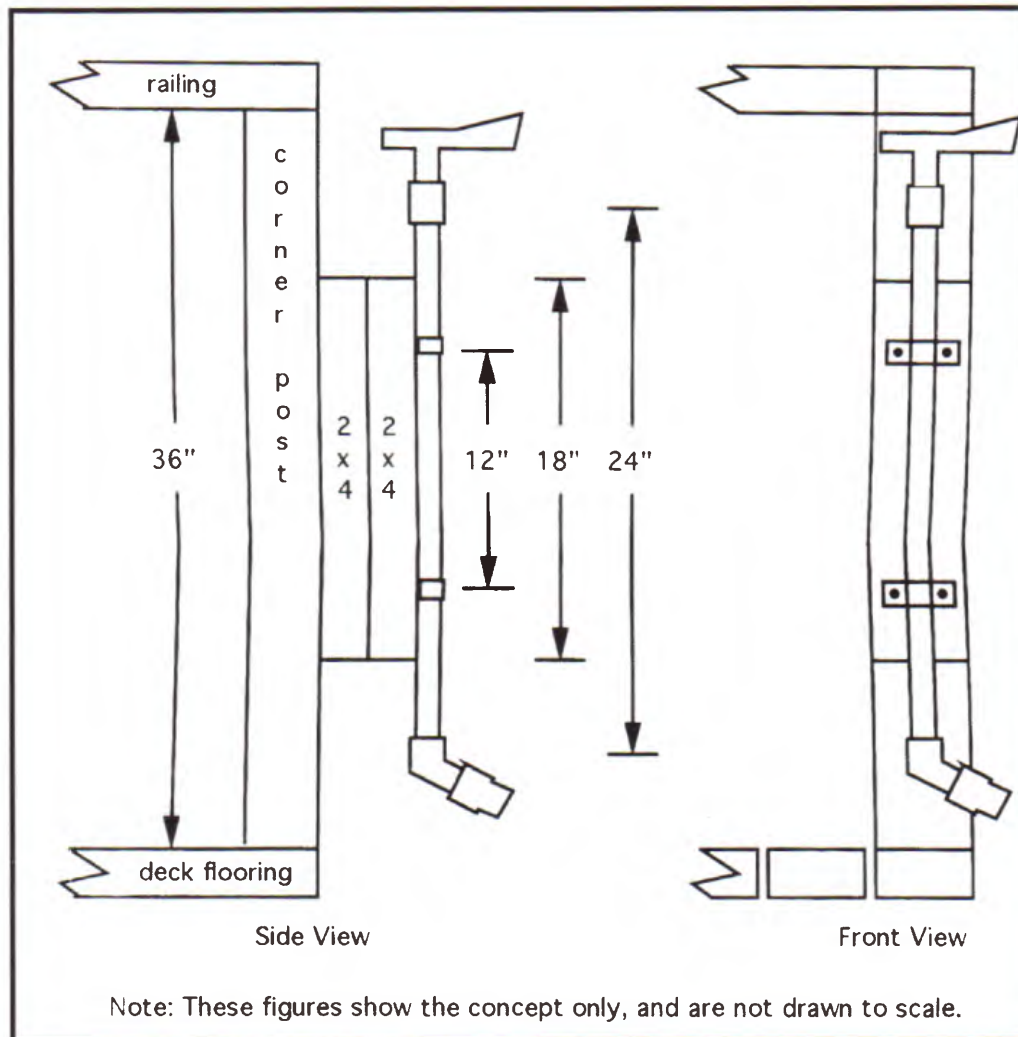
I screwed the sprinkler head into a pipe nipple on one end of a short length of 1/2-inch pipe, and put a hose connection on the other end. The details of

the hose connection can vary, depending on what is available at the hardware store. I used a 45° elbow and a brass fitting with a female pipe thread on one end and a female hose thread on the other end. The 45° elbow is a nice touch that makes the hose slightly easier to attach. To keep the sprinkler head from hitting the post as it rotated, I nailed two lengths of 2x4 lumber that were shorter than the piece of pipe to the corner post of the deck, and nailed the pipe to the outside piece of 2x4 with pipe straps.

How the parts were assembled is shown in the figure. Each piece of the assembly was more or less centered on the other. The dimensions are not at all critical. The dimensions shown were based on the one piece of pipe that I had on hand. I chose two pieces of 2x4 instead of a piece of 4x4 since the 2x4 pieces were easier to nail to the corner post. Shorter pieces of 2x4, say 12 inches, and a shorter piece of pipe, say 18 inches, would let the hose connection be higher off the floor of the deck and thus easier to use. Also, a 90° elbow would be as good or better than the 45° elbow I used.

As attached, the sprinkler covers an arc extending about 250° from the deck. Attaching the pipe off center toward the outside edge of the deck would increase that arc slightly. If you don't mind the sprinkler head being in full view above the railing, it could cover any part of a full circle, and the pipe could be attached directly to the deck corner post rather than using pieces of 2x4 to set it off the post.

Bob and Denise Stelloh recently sold their house and garden in Darnestown, MD (some of you may remember having had lunch there as part of the 1988 ASA Convention hosted by the Brookside Gardens Chapter) and moved to a different hillside property in Hendersonville, NC.



CULTURAL NOTES

The Oconee Chapter has provided this list of sources of species azaleas:

SPECIES AZALEA SOURCES

A Sandy Rhododendron
41610 SE Coalman Road
Sandy, Oregon 97055
PHONE: (800) 688-4960

Bovees Nursery*
1737 SW Coronado, Dept. R
Portland, Oregon 97219
PHONE: (800) 435-9250

Eastern Plant Specialities
P. O. Box 226
Georgetown, Maine 04548
PHONE: (207) 371-2888

Girard Nurseries*
P. O. Box 428
Geneva, Ohio 44041
PHONE: (216) 466-2881

Greer Gardens*
1280 Goodpasture Island Road
Eugene, Oregon 97401-1794
PHONE: (541) 686-8266

Hammond's Acres
25911 70th Avenue, NE
Arlington, Washington 98223
PHONE: (360) 435-9206

Huffman's Native Plants
P. O. Box 39
Otto, North Carolina 28763
PHONE: (704) 524-7446

Kellygreen Rhododendron
Nursery
6924 Highway 38
Drain, Oregon 97435
PHONE: (800) 477-5676

[Southern Plants*
P. O. Box 232
Semmes, AL 36575, ed.]

[Sources marked with (*) advertise in THE AZALEAN ed.]

Rhododendron Species Foundation
P. O. Box 3798
Federal Way, Washington 98063
PHONE: (206) 838-4646

Roslyn Nursery*
211 Burrs Lane
Dix Hills, New York 11746
PHONE: (516) 643-9347

Schild Azalea Gardens
1705 Longview Street
Hixson, Tennessee 37343-1738
PHONE: (615) 842-9686

Transplant Nursery*
1586 Parkertown Road
Lavonia, Georgia 30553
PHONE: (706) 356-8947

Van Veen Nursery
P. O. box 86424
Portland, Oregon 97286-0424
PHONE: (503) 777-1734

Whitney Gardens
P. O. Box F
Brinnon, Washington 98320
PHONE: (360) 796-4411

Woodlanders*
1128 Colleton Avenue
Aiken, South Carolina 29801
PHONE: (803) 648-7522

[Boxlee*
6106 Hillmeade Road
Glenn Dale, MD
PHONE: (301) 352-8757, ed.]

WANTED

Information of Hybrids and Hybridizers

Jim Thornton would like to compile a list of hybridizers and their hybrids. His objective is not to duplicate lists of hybridizers and hybrids that have already been published, but to supplement the existing information. So if you have information on hybridizers and hybrids that are not published (in Galle's book, for example) please call him or write to him.

Jim Thornton
884 June Drive/Conyers, GA
(770) 483-1593

New Books of Interest To Readers of THE AZALEAN

The Genus Rhododendron

David Chamberlain
Roger Hyam
George Argent
Gillian Fairweather
Kerry S. Walter
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
Inverleith Row
Edinburgh EH3 5LR, U.K.

International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants

P. Trehane and Members of the
Editorial Committee
1995, International Association for
Plant Taxonomy (Europe)
acting for and on behalf of the
International Commission for the
Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants
Quarterjack Publishing
Wimborne, U.K.

Monograph 20 Revised

William C. Miller III
Richard T. West
The Azalea Works
7613 Quintana Court
Bethesda, MD 20817

[See ad on page 18 for details]

CULTURAL NOTES

Recommendations by Arthur and Anita Frazer

Reprinted by permission of Anita Frazer. Anita and her late husband, Dr. Arthur Frazer, operated Columbia Nursery near Mount Vernon, Virginia, and published the following information in their newsletter "AZALEAS" in Spring 1969 and Spring 1970.

Feeding Azaleas

It is not essential to fertilize azaleas, especially older plants, if they are growing well and appear vigorous. However, they respond well to a light application of fertilizer.

We feed all our azaleas once a year, because we are naturally interested in promoting strong, vigorous, well formed plants for our customers.

We fertilize in early spring—the earlier the better, because we want to stimulate that first flush of growth that usually begins early in April. This is usually before blossom time. However, don't assume that this promotes this year's blossoms. They were formed and developed in mid-summer and early fall last year—and the vigor of bloom depends primarily upon favorable conditions then (and the severity of the winter) rather than upon anything you do this spring.

If the urgency of other chores delayed your schedule, you can fertilize anytime up to the first of June. Avoid fertilizing later for reasons fully explained in the section on winter damage. [See September 1996 issue of **THE AZALEAN**, ed.]

Use only an acid type fertilizer because azaleas do not tolerate alkaline soil conditions. They are especially sensitive to nitrate of soda such as is used in the ordinary garden type 5-10-5 or lawn type 10-6-4 fertilizers. We use a combination of ammonium sulphate (20-0-0) and superphosphate (0-20-0). But where you have only a limited number of azaleas, hollies, camellias, conifers and other acid-loving evergreens, it is more practical to buy a ready mix such as "Holly-Tone" or "Rhodo-Azalea Food".

In any event use no more than one-half measuring cup per large plant and one-fourth cup on a small to medium size plant. Sprinkle it under the plant in a circle from the stem outward, six inches radius for small plants, up to 12 inches radius for large plants. Do not attempt to scratch in the fertilizer. You will inevitably damage the delicate hair roots which lie just beneath the surface.

For the uncompromising "organic" gardener, the Urea-Form fertilizers, especially "Uramite," are good sources of organic slow-acting nitrogen, but care must be taken to avoid over-fertilizing. Cottonseed meal is excellent—but very expensive, and should be supplemented with raw rock phosphate. Do not use bone meal on azaleas.

(We confess to being oriented toward the benefits of organic gardening, and we religiously plow all sorts of organic material—leaves, sawdust, grass clippings, etc.—back into our nursery and garden. We are delighted with the obvious results of such soil conditioning. But we do not use organic fertilizers. First, economic considerations prohibit. Second, our experiments a few years back convinced us that it wasn't worthwhile. We still use bone meal on our bulbs, tubers and peonies—but there we draw the line.)

Transplanting Your Azaleas

Many of our customers and friends inquire about the feasibility and technique for transplanting their azaleas that have outgrown their space—and become overcrowded. This is a very common situation especially where young small azaleas were originally planted close together for immediate effect.

In our travels we see many, many examples of overcrowded azaleas, other shrubs—and even trees, for the above reason. We have a few such bad examples which we inherited with our own property—and we are gradually thinning them out. Azaleas, other shrubs and trees must get adequate light and air to thrive, and to develop their natural shapely beauty.

(Understand we are not opposed to planting small young azaleas and other shrubs closer together to avoid a sparse looking landscape. In fact we recommend such procedure. A three-to five-year-old azalea is usually less than one-fourth its mature size, and would admittedly look puny for three to four years if set three to four feet from another small plant. So we always suggest what we believe is an ideal solution. When buying young small azaleas plan to set them out on 18-to-24 inch centers, measuring from the main stem of one plant to the other. Then in about three to four years lift out every other azalea and start a new planting with the ones being moved. In that fashion you get the benefit of immediate landscape effect—plus a group of azaleas with which to landscape another area.)

Depending on whether you are striving for mass effect, or for individual specimens, mature azaleas should be located between three and five feet apart (measuring stem to stem). We prefer the mass effect of several azaleas of the same variety in one group—usually on three- or four-foot centers. But remember that a wide spreading azalea (several of this type)

or an especially vigorous grower may thrive best — and look better — on a five-foot center.

Although judicious pruning is occasionally desirable—see earlier discussion—heavy regular pruning to correct overcrowding is definitely the wrong solution. Ditto for heavy shearing to keep azaleas within bounds, or to keep them below window sill levels. Transplant them instead.

Azaleas because of their compact root structure, may be transplanted any time of the year with complete safety. The best time is early fall, the next best is during the spring.

Be very careful not to plant the rootball too deep. This is a very frequent, but understandable mistake. Azaleas are surface rooted and will sulk, and possibly die, if the small network of fine surface roots are more than an inch or so below the soil surface. Replant so that the top of the root-ball is level with the surrounding soil. Better yet, when you transplant carefully check, your fingers to see if the accumulation of surface soil has buried the surface roots too deep. They should be no more than one to two inches below the surface. If more, gently remove the excess soil to the proper level.

In digging cut a circle clear around the rootball, with the spade pointed straight down. DO not undercut. For a medium size plant a 15- to 20-inch circle is adequate; for large plants, about two feet. After cutting the circle—the full depth of the spade, use the spade as a lever to break the rootball loose from the soil. Be careful—do not break the rootball, or you'll produce transplant shock.

After transplanting mulch heavily—two to three inches with sawdust, tan bark, leaves, peat moss, or other mulch. And water conscientiously. □

IN MEMORY

GLENN TAYLOR

Glenn Taylor, 1911-1997. The Northern Virginia Chapter has lost one of its founding members in the recent death of Glenn Taylor.

Early in 1980, Glenn and Art Vance, who were in the Chrysanthemum Society together, learned of an offer by Frank White to supply cuttings of all the Robin Hill and Linwood azaleas to anyone who would agree to grow the complete collection of these azaleas. Both Glenn and Art were fond of azaleas and decided to form the azalea chapter, starting by growing these azaleas. The chapter was chartered in May of 1980 with 12 charter (founding) members.

During his long membership in the Society, Glenn served as national treasurer of the Azalea Society of America for approximately 11 years. He also served as president of the Northern Virginia Chapter for two elected terms, and a third term (reluctantly) when no one else volunteered. As Convention Committee Chairman, he successfully managed the preparation for the hosting of the national convention in May of 1990 by the Northern Virginia Chapter.

Glenn thoroughly enjoyed propagating and growing many varieties of azaleas as they came along. Although he was not too interested in hybridizing, his efforts in this direction did produce one beautiful plant that he appropriately named 'Marj T' for his wife. All those in attendance at the convention in 1990 received a potted plant of 'Marj T' to take home. He represented the chapter at many cultural meetings by giving demonstrations on rooting azaleas.

Glenn enjoyed meeting people, and he attended all but the last two national conventions. He and his wife, Marj, worked as a team to further the cause of the Azalea Society. He could always be counted upon to do more than his share of the chapter work, but due to health reasons, he was not able to be active these last two years. Glenn and Marj were married for 64 years.

At the 1996 Annual Meeting and Convention in 1996, it was announced that Glenn and Marjorie Taylor were to receive the honor of being awarded the Society's Distinguished Service Award (*THE AZALEAN*, June 1996, p. 38).

Glenn Taylor's notable contributions are a great credit to the Azalea Society of America, and, in particular, the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Society. *Contributed by Frances Louer.*

BRYANT EDWARD JENKINS

The many friends of Margie Jenkins were saddened by the death of her husband, Bryant. Bryant died at home January 2, 1997, following a prolonged battle with lung cancer. He was 70 years old. Margie and Bryant had been married 50 years. Together with their children they established Jenkins Farm and Nursery which wholesales azaleas and other plants throughout the southern states. In 1992, the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen gave Margie and Bryant their Nurseryman of the year award. Bryant was also recognized as an outstanding forester in Louisiana and was a leader in the Louisiana Forestry Association. *Contributed by Robert Miravalle.* □

SOCIETY NEWS

BROOKSIDE GARDENS CHAPTER

Dianne Gregg, *President*

At the December meeting speaker David Vismara, Director of Brookside Gardens, outlined the exciting new plans for the new Education and Visitors Center being built and to be completed by the Fall of 1997. He also described the new programs and exhibits to be staged, such as a Light Show, and a special butterfly exhibit.

Vice President Mary Rutley awarded the 1996 Frederic P. Lee Commendation posthumously to Richard (Dick) T. West. Among his many accomplishments, he and Bill Miller wrote "The Glenn Dale Azaleas Revised" based on B. Y. Morrison's Monograph. He will certainly be missed by all of us. The award citation reads:

THE FREDERIC P. LEE COMMENDATION FOR DISTINGUISHED CONTRIBUTION TO FURTHERING THE KNOWLEDGE OF AND APPRECIATION OF AZALEAS IS AWARDED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE BROOKSIDE GARDENS CHAPTER OF THE AZALEA SOCIETY OF AMERICA TO

RICHARD T. WEST

IN RECOGNITION OF YOUR OUTSTANDING PARTICIPATION IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BROOKSIDE GARDENS CHAPTER IN ADVANCING THE PROPAGATION, CARE, AND GENERAL APPRECIATION OF AZALEAS.

PRESENTED WITH DEEP GRATITUDE DURING THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BROOKSIDE GARDENS CHAPTER, IN THE COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY, THE STATE OF MARYLAND, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, ON THIS SECOND DAY OF DECEMBER, NINETEEN HUNDRED NINETY-SIX.

FREDERIC P. LEE COMMITTEE

The next meeting of the Brookside Gardens Chapter was held February 2, 1997 at the Davis Library in Bethesda at 7:30PM. The program, entitled "Selection and Culture of Azaleas and Rhododendrons", was given by speaker Ed Reiley, author of "Success with Azaleas and Rhododendrons". Mr. Reiley owns a nursery in Woodsboro, MD (near Frederick). The meeting was particularly well attended.

The new officers for 1997 are as follows:

President: Dianne Gregg
Vice President: Mary Rutley
Secretary: Jean Cox
Treasurer: Dorothy Murphree

DALLAS CHAPTER

Virginia Salter, *President*

The Dallas Chapter held its first meeting of 1997 on February 18, at Northaven Gardens. Past Chapter President Peggy Kirkland will give a slide presentation on her trip to England. This past fall our chapter was busy winterizing our hoop house to protect our cuttings, which will be sold during "Dallas Blooms" at the Dallas Arboretum. The chapter will also have a display table set up one weekend during this event.

LOUISIANA CHAPTER

Robert Miravalle, *President*

At the December 1996 Chapter Meeting the following were elected:

President: Robert J. Miravalle
Vice President: Vincent Ciolino
Secretary: W. Larry Brown
Treasurer: William Bode

Robert "Buddy" Lee, Society Director and Chapter Member discussed his use of the species *oldhamii* in breeding summer blooming evergreen azaleas. Flowerwood Nurseries of Alabama evaluated Lee's hybrids, named several and will begin merchandising them in 1997.

The next meeting on March 2 will feature Larry Rogers, Director of the Louisiana State University Agricultural Experiment Station (LSUAES). Dr. Rogers will discuss current and further plans for ornamental research in the LSUAES with emphasis on azalea investigation.

On March 22 the chapter will exhibit azaleas and sponsor an azalea sale at the Hammond Spring Festival. A few years ago the chapter planned an azalea exhibit garden at the Hammond Railroad Station. This year's exhibit and sale will be centered around this garden.

Roy Constantin has our chapter web site up and running with color pictures of fall blooming azaleas and a narrative including chapter and society information and membership

application. The site can be addressed at two locations:

<http://www.I-55.com/plantweb/azaleasociety/>

<http://www.lan.org/>

These sites were donated to us by the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen whom we would like to generously thank.

OCONEE CHAPTER

Ruth Bryan, *Secretary*

The Oconee Chapter of the Azalea Society met at the First Baptist Church, November 10, 1996. Twenty-three, including new member Al Penland, were in attendance.

Our president, Earl Hester, called the members to order and turned the proceedings over to Ralph Bullard, our program chairman. He talked about evergreen azaleas and showed beautiful slides of them. Afterwards, Ralph asked those present to participate in a survey of favorite groups of azaleas and good doers in the Atlanta area. The group was given 25 major evergreen hybrid groups grown in the Atlanta area and was asked to select five. Attendees were to list their most favored first, followed by their second favorite, third, fourth and fifth. Nineteen ballots were submitted.

The top favorite hybrid group was the Kurume followed by the Robin Hills, then the Glenn Dales. The second choice showed the Glenn Dales followed by the Kurumes then the Satsuki. There appears to be a strong Club preference for these four groups.

The survey was not intended to be scientific, but a fun mixer for the Oconee chapter.

When each hybrid group was weighed equally, the Glenn Dales and Satsuki were at the top of the list followed in descending order by the Kurume, Harris, Robin Hill, Back Acre, Southern Indica, Carla, and Kehr. The Gables, Hersheys, Pericat and Nuccio followed with each receiving the same number of votes.

From our little poll, we believe that the six hybrid groups not receiving a single vote indicates a general lack of familiarity with these groups. It also appears that our trading and cutting parties should focus on getting these groups into greater appreciation.

The second part of the Oconee poll was to list 50 "Good Doer" azaleas for the Atlanta area. This survey will need to be redesigned because not enough time was allowed for the balloting. Only one person was able to list all 50! Several others managed to list from 42-44 varieties.

The most notable aspect of this exercise was the interaction among individuals and groups. There was much light-hearted conversation, discussion and consultation between groups and individuals. Summed up—everyone had a good time.

So what were the results? For brevity, we list only the top 25. 'George Lindley Taber' ranked number one, followed by 'Coral Bells', then 'Ben Morrison'. 'Glory' placed fourth. 'Ambrosia', 'Fashion', 'Glacier', 'Sunglow' and 'Wakaebisu' each received the same number of votes. 'Corsage', 'Elsie Lee', 'Hampton Beauty', 'Miss Susie' and 'Zulu' placed next in line. 'Fascination', 'Formosa', 'Hershey's Red', 'Hinode Giri', Margaret Douglas', 'Midnight Flair', 'Orange Cup', 'Refrain', 'Sherwood Red', 'Trouper', and 'Vittata Fortunei' [*Vittatum*, ed.] each received the next in line. We will talk about the hybrid groups, where each variety is classified at our next meeting.

Northern Virginia Chapter

Joe Klimavicz, *President*

The December 1996 meeting took place on December 8, 1996 in the library at Green Spring Gardens Park, with Jean Cox as the featured speaker. She had made trips to Scotland in 1984 and 1989, and she took many slides of plants and scenes of interest to all azalea and rhododendron lovers. It was a very colorful presentation.

Election of officers for the upcoming year took place. Elected were

Joe Klimavicz for President, Dan Kraybill for Vice President, Alfred Stober for Secretary and John Krogmann for Treasurer.

A plant exchange took place, and excellent refreshments were available. Attendance was disappointingly low, with only 14 members present.

At the February 23, meeting Barbara Bullock, Curator of the Azalea Collection at the U.S. Arboretum. She will speak on "The Morrison Garden at the U.S. Arboretum, the Hillside Garden, and the Cultural Care and propagation of Azaleas", with accompanying slides.

Glenn Dale Preservation Project
1997

William C. Miller III

The ASA's National Project at the Glenn Dale station is entering its 15th year. Ironically, the untimely death of Dick West in October coincides with what is likely to be the beginning of a period of uncertainty for our project at the historic plant introduction station at Glenn Dale, Maryland.

In mid-November, Dr. Bruce Parlman (the location leader at Glenn Dale and our long-time friend and supportive colleague) and his staff were transferred to another USDA facility at Beltsville, Maryland. While Dr. Parlman's move did not come as a surprise, as it had been anticipated for a number of years, the only personnel remaining at Glenn Dale are a handful of National Arboretum staff. With the significant reduction in the number of people and the program at Glenn Dale, I can foresee a situation where the station, established in 1920 by P. H. Dorsett, could be shut down, though that is just my speculation.

Perhaps the most tangible result of the ASA's project at Glenn Dale has been the publication of the revision of Monograph 20, Ben Morrison's account of the development of the Glenn Dale Hybrids. A long-term goal of Dick West and more than three years in preparation, the final manuscript was completed the week before his death. As such, it is dedicated to his memory.

NEW MEMBERS

AT-LARGE MEMBERS

Arnold Chaney
30544 Terrace View Lane
Valley Center, CA 92082
PHONE: (619) 749-5282

Walton K. Brainerd
523 Grovesnor Court
Sacramento, CA 95864
PHONE: (619) 483-0965

W. Robert Hickman
871 Schoolhouse Lane
Dover, DE 19904
PHONE: (302) 734-4833

Franklin B. Pelurie
250 Dutch Ridge Row
Glendenin, WV 25045
PHONE: (304) 968-3793

Jake & Dorothy Van Duynhoven
17 Woodside Drive
Warwick, NY 10990
PHONE: (914) 986-4731

BEN MORRISON CHAPTER

Pamela Baldwin
2515 Lower Marlboro Road
Owings, MD 20736
PHONE: (301) 855-4722

Mrs. Joan L. Sweeney
1177 Stagecoach Circle
Lusby, MD 20657-3624

BROOKSIDE GARDENS CHAPTER

Mrs. Walter E. Brown
9120 Aldershot Drive
Bethesda, MD 20817
PHONE: (301) 469-9628

LOUISIANA CHAPTER

Covington Library
310 W. 21st Avenue
Covington, LA 70433

Dr. Sandra Robbins
14440 Highway 1077
Folsom, LA 70437
PHONE: (504) 796-5655

OCONEE CHAPTER

Raymond & Karen Rhoads
405 Finley Cove Road
Hendersonville, NC 28739
PHONE: (704) 698-1559

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA CHAPTER

John & Elizabeth Richardson
2067 Logan Street
Bon Air, VA 23235
PHONE: (804) 272-7855

Chapter Achievement

Following is a list of Chapter membership numbers as of February 3, 1997:

Members	Renewed	
	Yes	No
Ben Morrison	26	4
Brookside Gardens	90	31
Dallas	37	19
Louisiana	30	7
Northern Virginia	50	16
Oconee	59	28
Richmond Virginia	32	11
Tri-State	20	1

Azalea Calendar

1997

- April 7 Brookside Gardens Chapter Meeting at Davis Library at 7:30PM
- April 15 Deadline for receiving material for the June issue of **THE AZALEAN**
- April 17-19 Annual Convention and Annual Business Meeting, sponsored by Oconee Chapter, Atlanta, Georgia
- April 20 Northern Virginia Chapter Meeting at Green Spring Gardens Park
- April 26 Azalea Festival at the National Arboretum
- April 27 Northern Virginia Chapter Meeting at the Library at Green Spring Gardens Park at 1:30PM
- May 2-4 Landon Azalea Garden Festival, Bethesda, MD
- June 1 Louisiana Chapter Meeting at the LSU Hammond Experiment Station at 2:00PM
- June 2 Brookside Gardens Chapter Meeting at Davis Library at 7:30PM
- July 13 Northern Virginia Chapter Meeting at Green Spring Gardens Park
- July 15 Deadline for receiving material for the September issue of **THE AZALEAN**
- August 17 Northern Virginia Chapter Meeting at Green Spring Gardens Park
- September 7 Louisiana Chapter Meeting at the LSU Hammond Experiment Station at 2:00PM
- October 15 Deadline for receiving material for the December issue of **THE AZALEAN**
- October 19 Northern Virginia Chapter Meeting at Green Spring Gardens Park
- November 30 Louisiana Chapter Meeting at the LSU Hammond Experiment Station at 2:00PM
- December 7 Northern Virginia Chapter Meeting at Green Spring Gardens Park