

The Azalean

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Journal of the Azalea Society of America



President's Letter

J Jackson—Trade, Tennessee

With a dusting of snow on the ground and a bright, cold and sunny morning it is hard for me to think in terms of spring, but at the same time I have vivid memories of spring bulbs, early azalea blossoms, trees coming into leaf and spending time in the garden.

A question I have been pondering is, "What are the "assets" of the Azalea Society of America?"

First, a definition of asset: A useful or valuable thing, person, or quality. Synonyms: benefit, advantage, strength, attraction, resource, merit

So here is my list of the Society's assets in no particular order:

- The membership and friendships
- The "knowledge" base and learning opportunities
- The quarterly journal, *The Azalean*, and its archives, both hard copy and online
- Our Web-site
- The Azalea Research Committee
- Providing access to rare and hard-to-find cultivars and species
- Conventions and tours
- The seed exchange
- The monetary assets in the bank

Although we are a small plant society, we have much to offer people who are interested in azaleas and gardening with azaleas. Our BOD has been busy taking care of the Society business, and I am very pleased with the changes and improvements that have taken place over the last couple of years. If any member has a business item they want to have considered at the next annual BOD meeting, please get in touch with me or with our Secretary, Leslie Nanny before April 1, 2016.

The convention in Williamsburg is going to be great and I look forward to spending time with you there.

▼ This beautiful light pink deciduous azalea was grown from open-pollinated seed from the Zo Warner selections, so it is a natural hybrid of *R. arborescens* and *R. cumberlandense*. It is very fragrant and blooms in mid-June for us in Tennessee.



The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation, and appreciation of azaleas which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

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Photo J Jackson

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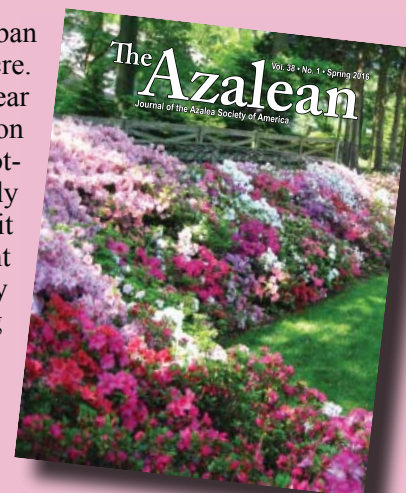
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On the Cover

The Klimavicz family live in suburban Northern Virginia on a lot of only 1/3 acre. To maximize space, most of the three-year old seedlings that are in serious contention are planted close together in their 170-foot-long backyard hillside test bed. Not only does this provide good drainage, but it also affords Joe an excellent viewpoint from which to quickly take note of any outstanding features. For those visiting the garden in late April to mid-May, it offers a breathtaking sight. There are also smaller test beds located throughout the yard. At any one time, several thousand azaleas are under evaluation. Please see the related article on page 4. Photo by Joe Klimavicz.



The Klimavicz Hybridizing Project— Magic in the Making

By Carolyn Beck—Oak Hill, Virginia

Hybridizing, in my mind, is magical process, and Joseph (Joe) Klimavicz is a real wizard when it comes to creating new azalea cultivars. This is the story of his journey through a project that has covered the last 25 years.

Evolution of a Passion

The roots of Joe's passion for azaleas run deep. It began when his parents gave him a small plot in the backyard in which to grow vegetables. Raising plants from seed and producing something for the family table gave him a great sense of satisfaction. As time went on, his interest in plants expanded. He became fascinated when his father showed him that azaleas could be grown from cuttings; this information was put to good use when he had a garden of his own and wanted to grow azaleas for his landscape.

In 1989, Joe came across a local Springfield, Virginia, newspaper article about Bob Stewart, a man in the neighborhood who collected azaleas and was hybridizing them. Joe was intrigued, contacted Bob and arranged for a visit. As they walked through the garden, looking at the huge number of cultivars that Bob had acquired, they talked about what was involved in making a cross. One of the azaleas that Joe most admired during that outing was 'Satellite', a Belgian Indian type with blooms in stunning shades of bright pink with some irregular areas of white. Joe took home a flower that Bob had given him and placed its pollen on an 'Elsie Lee' that was in bloom. The inspiration from Bob and the enjoyment derived from this impromptu venture has continued through to the present.

Another wonderful outcome of that first encounter with Bob Stewart has been a lasting friendship with much sharing of information. Joe is also thankful for the mentoring by other azalea enthusiasts like George Ring, Don Voss, Pete Vines, and Don Hyatt.

Setting Goals

The hybridizing process typically starts with the formation of objectives important to the breeder, and hopefully to the azalea community as a whole. Typically the breeder is looking for something that is unique with dynamic flowers, outstanding foliage, a pleasing plant habit, and hardiness. Besides having that "WOW! Factor," Joe considers the following traits to be desirable:

- Colors that are clear and consistent; no fading in the sun or over time
- Striking patterns such as heavy variegation, bi-colors, and prominent blotches
- Strong pedicels, which allow the flowers to hold their heads up high; no floppiness



Photo Carolyn Beck

▲ Joe Klimavicz in his backyard surrounded by azaleas he has cultivated during the past 25 years.

- Abundant bud set and bloom with most flowers opening at the same time and abscising cleanly
- Early-to-midseason bloomers to avoid the scourge of petal blight (*Ovulinia azaleae*)
- Forms that are both consistent and uncommon, like doubles with high petal counts (no petaloidy), variegation, and multiple patterned flowers on the same plant
- Long lasting bloom quality
- Heavy substance

Because an azalea is often in bloom for only a couple of weeks, it is essential that the foliage be of considerable interest to justify the plant's place in the landscape. Joe looks for the following qualities in the leaves:

- Dark green, with a glossy surface
- Fall color, especially bright red and dark burgundy
- Heavy texture



▲ Parents of 'Bob Stewart'. At left is CL-95-81 and at right is 'James Stewart'.

▼ 'Bob Stewart'



In striving for a plant that will make a statement in the garden, Joe searches for those specimens that require a minimum of care and exhibit:

- A vigorous and compact habit that requires little or no pruning to maintain an attractive shape
- The ability to tolerate diverse and adverse growing conditions, such as drought, excessive rain, a wide pH range, and poor soil
- Hardiness and heat tolerance
- Disease and insect resistance

Selecting Parents

Selecting potential parents is the second step in the hybridizing process. It is usually winter when Joe finds time to reflect on which azaleas might make the best parents. In

his mind he examines those that have the most potential for producing progeny consistent with his goals. He traditionally uses hybrids, rather than species, because they offer a more diverse gene pool, and he tends to choose parents with complex flower forms and color combinations for the same reason. From the hundreds of crosses he has made, Joe has found the following to be exceptional parents:

- 'Festive' (Glenn Dale) and 'Florence Waldman' (Roslyn) - variegated
- 'Satellite' (Belgian Indian by Klupenger) - variegated semidouble and double flowers with frilled edges
- 'Leopold Astrid' (Australia and New Zealand) - bicolor with double flowers and frilled edges
- 'James Stewart' (Stewart) and 'Komo Kulshan' (Kiusianum hybrid) - bicolors
- 'Carol Kittel' (Marshy Point) - double bicolor
- 'Elsie Lee' (Shammarello) and 'Girard's Fuchsia' (Girard) - both very hardy - plus 'Elsie Lee' produces double-flowering offspring
- 'Haru-no-Sono' (Satsuki) - a tetraploid with multiple flower patterns
- 'Maruschka' (Hachmann) - very dark red flowers and foliage, with leaves that are exceptionally shiny

Making a Cross

Just prior to the unfurling of the flowers, Joe brings the selected parent plants into the garage for the crossing process. This enclosed space offers protections from the elements, like rain and wind which can interfere with the procedure. It also minimizes the risk of having insects bring in foreign pollen. Since Joe is rarely home before dark, he needs the light in the garage to perform this intricate task.

In making a cross, Joe first removes the unopened petals and the anthers from the seed parent to prevent self-pollination. He then applies the ripe pollen to the sticky, receptive stigma of another azalea that shows promise. By repeating these steps using the same two parents, he can maximize the possibility that fertilization will take place and seed will be produced. After pollination, Joe segregates all the pollinated azaleas in one area of the yard to facilitate seed collection.

Seed Collection and Growing

Joe usually gathers the seed pods in October when the pods are almost ripe. This must be accomplished before a hard freeze that would cause the pods to open and disperse their contents, leaving nothing but useless shells. He places the pods from each female azalea in a separate, labeled, small manila envelope, and these are kept in a warm place where the pods will continue to dry. Joe harvests the seed as soon as the end of a pod starts to split. He dumps the ripened



Photo Joe Klimavicz

▲ At left is an example of a seedling transplanted into a 2" pot. At right plants are shown in an in-ground cold frame.



Photo Joe Klimavicz

▲ Parents of 'Rebecca Taffet'. At left is 'Elsie Lee' and at right is 'Satellite'.

▼ 'Rebecca Taffet'



Photo Joe Klimavicz

Pods from that plant into a tea strainer with fine holes and, using a needle-nose plier, opens the capsules. Shaking the strainer allows the seeds to drop through while the chaff remains inside the strainer. The debris is disposed of as it can become a source of fungal contamination if introduced into the planting medium.

After gathering the tiny azalea seeds together, Joe places them in a labeled glassine¹ bag, and then tightly seals it to prevent the seeds from escaping (plastic bags are not used as they allow moisture retention that encourages fungal growth). As soon as is practical, Joe sows the seed, but first he prepares a medium of 100% milled sphagnum moss far enough in advance to allow it to become evenly moist. He places this material in 6-cell packs to a depth of about 1-1/2", and then gently firms and smooths the surface. Joe sprinkles the seed thinly over the top of the medium, with no additional sphagnum on top, and then settles the seed in using a fine water mist from a spray bottle.

In each cell pack, Joe places a label to indicate the parents and the year of the cross. Eight of these cell packs are placed in a tray fitted with a clear plastic, 4" tall domed lid to maintain a high humidity environment. He then places the trays on a shelf under cool-white fluorescent lights, positioned about 8" above the soil level, and timed to be on for 16 hours per day. The ambient temperature remains fairly constant in the mid-70s. A temperature in this range is ideal, as cooler temperatures will cause delay in germination, and warmer conditions will tend to dry out the medium too quickly.

Germination usually takes place within three weeks, and Joe removes the domed lid soon after. Subsequently, frequent observation is necessary to make certain the new plants are never allowed to become dehydrated. Joe waters only when the surface looks dry, wanting to keep the moisture more concentrated at the bottom of the soil to encourage downward root growth. By lifting each tray, Joe is able to assess its weight to determine if more water is needed.

Seedlings grow rapidly, and by December are in need of thinning. Joe transfers some of these seedlings to additional cell packs, two per cell, in a medium of 50% peat moss and

50% Perlite, placing seedlings that are especially vigorous in a 2" square pot to give them additional space. In the transplant process, Joe uses a tweezer, holding each seedling only by its leaves as grasping the stem can cause damage that would result in the plant's demise.

If there is extra seed when Joe has finished this part of the process, he returns it to its manila envelope and places multiple envelopes inside a re-sealable plastic bag. Excess air is removed from the bag before placing it in the refrigerator to prevent moisture retention. Although Joe much prefers to use fresh seed, unused seed, stored like this, can last for several years.

Up-Potting

By late April, as soon as the weather starts to warm, the seedlings are ready to be transplanted into their own 4" square pot in a medium of 50% peat moss and 50% Perlite. This activity takes place in the garage to keep the tender plants from exposure to the cold. Joe places the trays of potted transplants at the front of the garage where, on pleasant days, the main door is opened to give them as much indirect sunlight as possible. As soon as the danger of a spring frost has passed, he moves these plants to an in-



▲ Parents of 'Antoinette Martin'. At left is 'Festive' and at right is 'Satellite'.

▼ 'Antoinette Martin'



▲ Parents of MV-04-39. At upper left is 'Maruscka', bottom left is 'Florence Waldman' and at right is 'Festive'.

▼ MV-04-39 to be auctioned at 2016 convention.



ground cold frame, out of direct sun; they stay there until they are ready to be up-potted the following spring.

At that time, Joe up-pots the new plants into a 3-quart pots and moves them into an area along the back fence where high shade is available. During the third season, he gives all the young azaleas that are in serious contention a home in one of the test beds.

Labeling

The importance of durable labeling cannot be overstated. If a label goes missing, the plant is of little value to a hybridizer. For this reason Joe has chosen metal tags. He makes the tags from rolls of metal sheeting and, using a tool and die set, stamps it with his breeder number. This number consists of a letter or number from each of the two parents' names, the last two numbers of the year the cross was made, and the unique seedling number. For instance, 'Mary Lou Dority' has been assigned BK-00-14. The B is for 'Betty Christopher', the K for 'Komo Kulshan', the 00 for the year 2000, and the 14 because it was the 14th seedling from the cross.

Segments of the sheeting are then cut into strips and one end is punched with a small hole. Plastic covered telephone

wire is threaded through the hole and the label is secured around the base of the seedling. These metal tags have passed the test of time, proving to be almost indestructible.

Care and Feeding

Consistent with his goal of wanting to grow low maintenance azalea forms, Joe provides his plants with little more than the basics: water, sunlight, and an acidic, organically enriched, porous soil. Pinching, fertilizing, winter protection and pest control are performed only as needed.

In order to establish a well-branched form, Joe starts pinching seedlings at a very young age and continues this practice until they are ready to be planted in one of the test beds. After that he leaves them on their own to allow them to demonstrate their inherent plant habit.

Joe has found that it is best to fertilize with restraint. Occasionally he will provide small seedlings with a ¼-strength acid type product, applied at every other watering. For these and slightly older azaleas he has found liquid Schultz® All Purpose 10-15-10 Plant Food™ to be the most satisfactory. For larger plants Miracle-Gro® Organic Choice® All Purpose Plant Food™ has proved helpful.



Photo Joe Klimavicz

▲ 'Ryleigh Paige'



Photo Joe Klimavicz

▲ 'Beautiful Beth'



Photo Joe Klimavicz

▲ 'Mary Jane Cummings'

▼ 'Mary Lou Dority'



Photo Joe Klimavicz

▲ 'Barbara Tozzi'

▼ 'Zoe Elizabeth Stoltz'



Photo Joe Klimavicz



Photo Joe Klimavicz

Disease, Insect, and Animal Pest Control

Unfortunately, fungi enjoy the same environment as azalea seedlings. One of the reasons that Joe uses sphagnum moss is that it is resistant to fungal growth. However, if bits of pod are inadvertently introduced into the medium when the seeds are planted, they can act as inoculators, creating little islands of disease. Through frequent observation, one can determine if fungi are present, some looking like gray hairs. When he observes this condition, Joe sprays the plants with a fungicide appropriate for seed rots and damping off diseases (e.g., Captan™ or Funginex®).

During the seedling stage gnats can appear out of nowhere. By hanging fly catcher strips on the seedbed shelves, Joe has been able to control these pests.

Some animals have been destructive to his azaleas. Squirrels enjoy digging in a pot's soft soil, and mice like to feed on young plants. By adding hardware cloth to both the bottom and the top of the cold frames, Joe has been able to thwart the intentions of these rodents for those azaleas that are of transplant size.

As with so many of us who grow azaleas, deer are a major problem. There is nothing more frustrating to a hybridizer than to discover one morning that all the buds for that year have been devoured. Joe has found Liquid Fence™ to be helpful.

Winter Protection

Although the cold frames are sunk into the ground and in a position protected by fencing and hedges, sometimes this is not enough protection for the azaleas during their first winter outside. If temperatures are expected to be below 10°F, a layer of row crop cover is secured over the frames to help mitigate rapid changes and/or extremes in temperature. Joe chooses row cover, rather than plastic, because this lightweight, non-woven fabric allows moisture to penetrate to the plants, permits good air exchange, and prevents unwanted increases in the cold frame temperature should the weather warm significantly.

The pots of second year seedlings are clustered together and mulch is banked around the perimeter of the group before winter cold sets in. All azaleas in the test bed are given only a layer of leaf mulch for protection.

Plant Evaluation and Data Collection

To date Joe has made 275 crosses resulting in more than 12,000 seedlings. Of this huge group, Joe has selected only 22 for naming and introduction, a testament to the rigor with which every plant is judged. All are assessed at every step in their growth, noting each one's special attributes. Every numbered selection must prove itself to have superior characteristics for it to retain a position in the garden. Joe gives the best forms additional space in the test beds to allow them to develop their inherent growth habit. This selection process can take ten years or more.

Foliage is the main focus of evaluation during the seedlings' second season; those that have unusual shapes, size, or glossy dark green color are segregated for additional scrutiny. Plant habit is assessed throughout each year, and

features like legginess, and susceptibility to disease and insect damage are duly noted. After each winter, plants are inspected for damage from the cold, and throughout the summer, each is appraised for heat tolerance and the effects of the sun.

Spring is an exciting time for hybridizers. Bob Stewart notes that "Unless you are a hybridizer and spend countless hours growing and evaluating seedlings, you cannot know the sensation of seeing a seedling bloom for the first time." Joe would heartily agree with this statement, admitting to feeling like a kid in a toy store as he searches with anticipation through his young seedlings during their coming-out party. The most remarkable of these are photographed and the images stored on the computer as part of his documentation system.

In order to assess ease of rooting, Joe asexually propagates the most promising of his azaleas. Those that do not grow well from cuttings are deemed unsuitable for further evaluation. Several clones of each cultivar that can be propagated reliably are placed in multiple test beds to determine their performance in various microclimates and soil conditions. This practice also helps ensure against the loss of a single cultivar from unforeseen circumstances, like a falling limb.

In addition to his own evaluation, Joe enjoys hearing comments from family, friends, and fellow azaleaphiles who visit the garden. During his selection process, their input is given substantial consideration.

Surprises versus Expectations

Life is full of surprises, and hybridizing is no exception. When Joe crossed CL-95-81, which has a double variegated flower, with 'James Stewart', a bicolor, he expected some great variegated doubles. No exceptional offspring of this nature were produced, but, to his surprise, an excellent semi-double form emerged with flowers in shades of moderate to dark pink with a light throat and a small dark red blotch. This fabulous find was christened 'Bob Stewart' in 2013.

'Elsie Lee'×'Satellite' also produced some unexpected results. Although the former is a reddish-purple semi-double, and the latter a bright pink and white variegated semi-double to double, 'Rebecca Taffet' is a white double with up to 16 petals and very ruffled edges. The surprise here is that white is the lowest on the color dominance list, so not to be anticipated in a cross of colorful parents. 'Ryleigh Paige' is a recent introduction that came out of the same cross. It is also a very full double, but the color is solid bright pink.

Other nice surprises include 2M-00-15, a cross of 'Ashley Ruth'×'Martha Hitchcock', which has fantastic fall leaf color. The foliage display almost equals the impact of a spectacular azalea in full bloom. J1-99-02 resulted in flowers with a 360 degree blotch; one that encompasses all the petals, rather than just the upper lobes. Although he does not consider the above worthy of introduction, they may well be used in future crosses to see if their special characteristics can be brought forward in progeny that fulfill Joe's objectives.

'Antoinette Martin' came out of 'Festive'×'Satellite'.

Both have variegated flowers and, as anticipated, some of the offspring were also variegated. But one seedling in particular could knock your socks off; the colors are so vibrant, and the patterns so pronounced that it makes a stunning statement. I think this one could actually be considered both an expectation and a surprise.

'Mary Jane Cummings' is another remarkable variegated form, having very bold shades of purple with varying amounts of white. Her parents were the white 'Brenda Marie' and a seedling from 'Festive' x 'Satellite'.

These are but a few examples of the magic that takes place in the Klimavicz garden.

Naming and Registration

Initially, Joe named his selections for family members. Once that was accomplished, he was disinclined to spend the time searching for interesting and available names for others that were ready for introduction. His wife, Brenda, came up with the neatest of solutions: allow a charitable organization to auction off the naming rights. Not only did the plant acquire a meaningful name, but a worthy cause was well supported.

Joe has been kind enough to donate the naming rights for one of his azaleas to the 2016 ARS/ASA Convention. The lucky winner of MV-04-39 will acquire several copies of the azalea as well as a certificate of registration.

Joe registers all his named hybrids with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), the International Cultivar Registration Authority (ICRA) for the genus *Rhododendron*. Detailed descriptions of his introductions can be found in various issues of the *Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*.

Challenges

When asked what his greatest challenges have been, Joe's instant response was "time and space." Working long hours and frequent travel in his professional life leave little time at home. As a result, daylight hours for the garden and hybridizing are few and far between. To compensate, Joe often performs tasks in the garage, or uses a headlamp to work in the garden after dark.

Joe and Brenda Klimavicz live in suburban Vienna, Northern Virginia on a lot of only 1/3 acre. To maximize space, most of the seedlings, once they reach three years of age, are planted close together on their 170-foot-long backyard hillside test bed. Not only does this provide good drainage, but it also affords Joe an excellent viewpoint from which to quickly take note of any outstanding features. For those visiting the garden in late April to mid-May, it offers a breathtaking sight. There are also smaller test beds located throughout the yard. At any one time, several thousand azaleas are under evaluation.

New Goals

Joe has added several new goals to the original set. He currently is breeding for a double true red, wanting one with no blue or orange tints. This is a challenging combination to achieve, as red is fairly low on the dominance list and doubles can be difficult to attain.

Variegated flowers are of particular interest to Joe. He would like to find one that has flowers with impressively different and distinct color zones that also have heavier than average texture.

He is also experimenting with a way to produce that elusive yellow evergreen azalea. To that end he is planning to cross an early blooming yellow deciduous with a later flowering evergreen. Pollen from the former will be saved inside gelatin capsules and stored in the freezer until the seed parent is receptive.



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Some of Joe's hybrids have exhibited some pretty spectacular fall foliage color. In the future, he would like to find an azalea that combines this feature with exceptional flowers.

His most recent objective is to create a double flowering yellow deciduous azalea.

About Joe

Joe Klimavicz has been gifted with seemingly boundless energy, a high curiosity quotient, and a superb memory. These talents are well-suited to the task of hybridizing, and Joe has bundled them together in a package that allows him to accomplish much more than one might envision possible.

Joe has a very generous nature. He is more than willing to share the vast amount of experiential knowledge he has accumulated over the years. Each season he offers cuttings of his named hybrids, as well as excess seed, to those who are interested. He frequently opens his garden to visitors, an opportunity not to be missed.

In the words of Bob Stewart, "Joe is an exceptional guy; a perfectionist, a great husband, and a wonderful dad."

During his tenure as president of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASA, Joe chaired the 1998 National ASA Convention. He has spoken at other conventions, and to several chapters within of the ASA, about his hybridization project.

Joe has been kind enough to donate the naming rights for one of his azaleas to the 2016 ARS/ASA Convention. The lucky winner of MV-04-39 will acquire several copies of the azalea as well as a certificate of registration.

Learn More

If you would like to learn more about Joe and his hybrids, you can go to the Northern Virginia Chapter website at <http://www.nv-asa.org>, click on 'Legacy Project' on the left menu, and then on the 'Klimavicz' tab.

The Klimavicz hybrids will be among those featured at the 2016 Convention plant sale. This event will be located

in Williamsburg, Virginia and hosted by the Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASA and the Potomac Valley, Mason-Dixon, and Middle Atlantic Chapters of the ARS. Information on the convention can be accessed at <http://www.arsasaconvention2016.org>.

Conclusion

Joe Klimavicz has produced many exceptional azalea hybrids, and continues to search for more treasures that have that magical quality that entices us to add them into our gardens. Bob Stewart's expressed wish for Joe is that "he finds what he's looking for; it's out there."

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Hyatt, Don, "Hybridizing Fever—The Quest for New Azaleas", *The Azalean*, 1997. 19 (4): 69-72.

Hyatt, Don, "The Furman Rhododendron Legacy: A Labor of Love", *Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*, Fall 2015. 69 (4): 208-215.

Notes

1. Glassine is a thin, smooth and glossy, usually transparent paper that is air-, water-, and grease-resistant, also used by philatelists.

Carolyn Beck is a retired Registered Nurse and an active member of the Northern Virginia Chapter. She and her husband, Paul, are concentrating their efforts on the chapter's Legacy Hybrids (see NV-ASA.org for more information on their Legacy Project). She is also the NV-ASA 2016 Convention plant sale chairman. The chapter is working on growing 2000 azaleas for the sale. Carolyn is one of the contributors and plans to provide about 1000 in a combination of 4"- and 3-quart pots.

New Members

Central Carolinas

K. G. Griffith
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Growing Tips:

Help! My Azaleas are Blooming in December

By George Klump—La Crescenta, California

[Editor's Note: This article is based on an answer to the ASK US feature on the ASA Web-site. Look it up. You can get a quick answer from the site's text, can e-mail your question, or get an answer in person by locating your nearest chapter and visiting and joining. With the wild weather all over the US this winter, this advice seemed particularly timely.]

Question: From a woman in Gilmer, Texas, east of Dallas, USDA Zone 8a, posted on December 25, 2015. My azaleas are blooming! What do I do? This is very unusual isn't it? I live in Gilmer, TX. I planted them 2 years ago. This is the first time they have bloomed in winter. Will I lose my plants? Will they bloom again in the spring like normal? Any advice will be appreciated.

Answer: Fret not! Leave your azaleas alone, even if they have bloomed at this time of year. Much depends upon the weather you've been having.

We have many miscellaneous hybrids of Southern Indicas here at our place in a Southern California coastal area, and they sometimes bloom at this time. They aren't supposed to, but sometimes they have minds of their own. In fact, we have spot blooming with our 'Alaska' much of the year. It hurts nothing and blooms profusely during the "regular" time it is supposed to bloom. The same thing happens with 'Phoenicia'. Just let it do its thing. The main thing is not to prune the plants now, since the new growth is where the new flowers will come out. Prune that, and you will be cutting off the flowers for the next blooming season.

We lived in Dallas for years, so I have a fair idea of your climate. Be sure you keep water in the soil around your azaleas, especially in the cold weather and when those cold winds blow. They can desiccate a plant in a hurry. A desiccated plant is a desecrated plant. So keep water around the root zone to prevent this from happening. Of course, understand I mean for the water to drain away from the root zone rather quickly. The roots may be moist but they should NOT sit in water. That can lead to root rot, which is usually fatal.

One last suggestion. I would not feed your azaleas too much. They tend not to appreciate it. In other words too much kindness in this respect can often do more damage than good. For myself just to remember the times, I feed my plants just three times annually, Easter, Fourth of July and Labor Day. If Easter comes too early and the hard freezing season is not quite over, just wait till you are past that time a tad and, then, give them the "Easter" feeding. By the way, we use cottonseed meal on our plants. It's a slow release organic fertilizer which does not burn the plants at all. It also has the happy capacity of improving the soil over time.

If the ground is wet around your plants a bit before you put it down, that helps and, then, you can water it in gently, about a cupful around the drip line of each plant.

George E. Klump is president of the Southern California Chapter, ARS/ASA, Vireya Division. He discovered azaleas as a child. An uncle was a landscape gardener who planted several azaleas at his maternal grandparent's house next door. His father and paternal grandmother loved to work with flowers. They had some 200 roses in our backyard on a "show level", though he never entered any in competition, since it was not his interest. Azaleas, fuchsias and roses (among other plants) were in their garden all year long. He always figured that he would grow azaleas and rhododendrons, when he got his own place in 1967 in Dallas. He found a way to join the ARS in 1978 after they moved to California and worked with Bill Moynier and Carl Deul in the ARS chapter. He and Carl have worked on a possible article on tetraploid azaleas and their possible inheritable properties. Almost all of the ARS chapter grew azaleas as well as rhododendrons. He has a fair number of Satsuki azaleas along with the "regulars". In 2007 (or so) that ARS chapter added the ASA part to their chapter and plan now on fixing up their demonstration garden at UCLA's horticultural school in the near future. They began the ARS garden there at least 30 years ago, but UCLA underwent some administrative and physical changes in the meantime, so they are going to refurbish the whole thing. He is also a professional musician, and is organist at his church.

Call for Northern Azalea Gardeners

John Migas is the main contact for the Lake Michigan Chapter and has led several efforts to increase the chapter's activities, as national ASA president and as chapter president. Lake Michigan hosted the May 19-22, 2005 national convention held in Holland, Michigan. They also did a local "school-house" garden, which you'll hear more about soon. April 23-May 1, 2011 Lake Michigan and Tri-State chapters jointly hosted the Evansville, Indiana convention. This past April, he and Buddy Lee presented ASA Azalea City Awards to three cities in the region—Mt. Vernon, Princeton, and Petersburg, Indiana. But John cannot do the whole chapter's work by himself. He grows azaleas and does very big landscape projects in his business. He needs help from you northern azalea lovers to get involved in the chapter again. His contact info is azaleajohn@yahoo.com.

Questions for Azalea Mavens— to Address in *The Azalean*

By Will Ferrell—Winston-Salem, North Carolina

*Editor's Note: Will also sent wonderful color photos with each of his questions, which we were not able to use in this issue. Will has made great suggestions for **The Azalean** articles. If anyone wants to tackle one of his questions, we could include his photo as an illustration. Also, if there are other topics members would like to know about, please send those ideas to theazalean@gmail.com.*

Within the ASA membership there exists a plethora of dispersed knowledge. I would like therefore to throw out some questions to members. I hope to shed some light on these questions, but also to provoke interesting future articles in *The Azalean* by those with specialized experience.

Question 1:

This has to do with Satsuki azaleas. This later-blooming, generally low-growing group has many virtues: Their often outstanding foliage, their structure that allows them to be used differently from most other azaleas, their extension of the typical azalea blooming season, and their varied and beautiful blooms all demand our attention. Yet, somehow, they largely escape most in-depth azalea discussions.

Most Satsuki azaleas are not super cold hardy, thriving generally in USDA Zones 7-9. And indeed my few Satsukis here in Zone 7—though they thrive and have beautiful foliage—do not bloom reliably every year. Yet a few cultivars are known to be hardy to -10°F. Is there anyone with broad enough knowledge to do an article for *The Azalean* on which Satsuki cultivars will do well (including bud hardiness) in Zones 6 and 7? Perhaps bringing out other interesting details concerning the large group as well?

Question 2:

How cold-hardy are the flower buds of azaleas such as 'George Lindley Taber', 'Koromo-shikibu', 'White Koromo-shikibu' (which is less bud-hardy than the lavender), 'Appleblossom', or 'Sekidera'? These azaleas that can work in the middle Zone 7 range, but don't always? These plants will live just fine, but will they bloom reliably where the winter low temperatures are below 5°F? I can tell you it is pretty frustrating to go to the trouble of rooting a 'Venus Baby' and nursing it along for 6 years with a cumulative total of half dozen blooms—and then ultimately condemning it to my compost pile.

Information of this sort would be especially useful to attendees of conventions in Southern cities, where they will tend to offer in the plant sales plants that do well for them. Conversely, in Charleston a gardener tells me that Glenn Dales tend to struggle. Yet I've heard many Robin Hill azaleas (also bred like Glenn Dales for cold hardiness) do

well in the Deep South. And I can testify that Dodd's 'Amy' (developed in southern Alabama) is bud-hardy to at least 0°F.

Are there members who have detailed knowledge along these lines who could provide this information in some form to *The Azalean*? It certainly would be useful. And particularly with reference to each year's convention offerings.

Question 3:

What is the experience of members spraying for petal blight?

For decades Bayleton® has been touted as the most effective fungicide to combat petal blight. Alas, that product is no longer readily available to hobbyists. Immunex is readily available, and claims on its label to fight petal blight; I have used it occasionally—with mixed results.

In asking quite a few ASA members about their experience in preparation for this article, I was directed to Bob Stewart as the person who had thought about this issue most systematically. (Bob is a northern Virginian hybridizer of many extraordinarily beautiful azaleas—his 'Special Friendship' is a huge favorite for me.) He recommends mixing Strike® 50 and Eagle® 20EW in the same gallon of water to spray. (Bob also suggests including two drops of dishwashing detergent to improve wetting/retention.) Strike® 50 contains 50% triadimefon, exactly like Bayleton®; Eagle® 20EW contains 19.7% Myclobutanil, which is also the active ingredient in Immunex (but at only 1.55% in Immunex!).

Bob also makes the traditional recommendation of spraying the flower bud just as color is beginning to show.

Is it only beneficial to spray flower buds that are just in that stage of barely showing color? Is it detrimental to spray fully open flowers? Both Bob and I tend to think so, but I have heard the opposite opinion.

As an aside, it is pretty interesting that I do not think I've ever seen any petal blight on Encore® Azaleas or 'August-to-Frost' in the Fall, in spite of the fact that there are surely moisture/temperature conditions in the Fall that are very similar to those in the mid-Spring. One might conjecture that it has to do with the life cycle of the fungus.

Question 4:

Can someone provide advice or guidelines for pruning mature deciduous azaleas? Left to themselves in a woodland, some deciduous azaleas will often reach for the skies, where their blooms cannot be well enjoyed by humans. If I wish to keep my *R. canescens* blooming at close to my eye level, what is the best way to proceed?

It is recommended for some shrubs (for instance, an American Beautyberry) to periodically remove the oldest

“canes” at the base. Is this a good policy for mature tall growing deciduous azaleas, perhaps especially the canes with lots of lichen (indicating vibrant growth has ceased)? Or is it better to simply cut back individual canes to a branch about a fourth or a third of its total length? I intuit that a combination of those two approaches can make sense.

But situations can vary quite a bit. Is there someone amongst our membership with significant experience pruning mature deciduous azaleas? If so, an article with good guidelines would be useful.

Question 5:

How can you tell whether a particular cultivar of azalea will hygienically shed spent blooms? I have read the offhanded comment—and it seems to agree with my observations—that flowers with distinct sepals directly at the flower base will drop their spent flowers cleanly in the absence of petal blight. Those azaleas where the flowers are attached without sepals will hang on. Kurume ‘Snow’ is the famous example here.

Very often it seems to be double flower forms that do not have these sepals. The sepals have become part of the flower and thus don’t know how to let go.

(Am I the only one who vigorously shakes his azalea plants to shed somewhat degraded blooms, to thereby leave the bush neater with the remaining pretty blooms?)

Question 6:

It is well-known that azaleas have shallow root systems. But I believe that mature azaleas do send their roots a bit deeper than elepidote rhododendrons, which seem to have a root structure of a very superficial mat or flat saucer barely below soil level. Said differently, it seems to me that azaleas will more readily grow roots a few inches down into amended clay than rhododendrons, which kind of insist on growing in something close to compost.

Native azaleas in the wild can send out a very rangy root system that makes transplanting a significant challenge. Yet my impression of pot-grown deciduous azaleas is that they have reasonably compact root systems similar to evergreen azaleas.

Can any azalea maven shed more light on any of the questions raised? Please do. Send your articles and photos to theazalean@gmail.com.

Will Ferrell joined the ASA in 2001 at the Asheville Convention and gardens near Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He recently rejoined the Vaseyi Chapter, as it is closer to him. He is also the author of *The Secrets of Sterling Shearin: The Noblest Cause, ...a story of romance and mystery interwoven with less well-known American Founding Fathers, set in the 1790s.*

Membership Chairman’s Note

By Chris Wetmore—Central Carolinas Chapter

It is no secret these days that many plant societies struggle to retain membership. This is typically due to a small handful of individuals within the chapter doing a majority of the work. If one of these members leaves the chapter things can quickly fall apart.

This month I reached out to Rick Bauer of the Northern Virginia Chapter again for some helpful ideas that will go a long way in building and retaining a healthy chapter.

Rick’s Tips:

- Collaborate with other plant societies. Have joint meetings. Invite each other to your activities.
- Engage folks at your meetings (especially guests). Most are looking for a social outlet as well as knowledge about azaleas.
- Follow up on folks who haven’t renewed their memberships. Sometimes the personal approach is all that is needed.
- Engage with the public through plant sales, advertising, and opening meetings to the public.
- Get a Facebook page. Encourage your members to “Like” it and share it.
- Affiliate with a school or garden (we don’t do this...but I think it is a good idea)
- Give away free plants, either from chapter supplies or have plant exchanges. Most of us have plants which are now self-propagating to the point that we have too many.

CORRECTION

Editorial Correction, *The Azalean*,
Winter 2015, p. 77:

In the “Legends and Legacies” article describing the ASA/ARS Convention tour of the Cosby Garden, I regretfully called the hybridizer of the Bowie Mill azaleas “Bud” Claggett when his name should have been spelled “Buck” Claggett. I repeated this error in the index to the issues for 2015 and on the ballot for best article for 2015. I sincerely regret these errors.

Barbara Stump, Editor, *The Azalean*

Chapter News

Central Carolinas Chapter

Sandy Yakob—Newly Elected President

Although we still have a bit of ice on the ground here in the Carolinas, we are getting ready for spring! This year we are streamlining our meeting dates and are planning to host a plant sale as well as our first member garden tour. We're also updating our communication methods to be able to engage our membership better and build community. Members in the chapter come from both Carolinas, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

We are looking forward to an exciting 2016! Visit our Web-site at <http://www.centralcarolinaszaleasociety.org/>

Louisiana Chapter

*Allen D. Owings, Professor and Research Coordinator
LSU AgCenter, Hammond Research Station*

October Meeting

The Louisiana Chapter held a barbeque in the Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden at the LSU AgCenter's Hammond Research Station on Saturday October 3rd. Horticulture professor Allen Owings prepared chicken, sausage and pork chops. President Peggy Cox led the meeting, with 20 members attending. Business items included a discussion of the Christmas party planned for the home of Peggy and Doc Cox in December. New officers for the coming year were discussed. The chapter has discussed with ASA national president J Jackson hosting the national ASA convention in the spring of 2017. If the national board approves, the

chapter will move forward with plans and a tentative agenda to present at the spring convention in Williamsburg.

December Meeting

On December 14, 2015, the Louisiana Chapter of the ASA held their annual Christmas Party at Peggy and Doc Cox's house in Independence. Thank you Peggy and Doc for hosting this and supplying the roast, gumbo and drinks. Members brought other casseroles, desserts, and drinks.

We also had our winter business meeting. Buddy Lee took pictures as usual of groups and individuals. Margie Jenkins and Peggy Cox presented to Allen Owings (representing the LSU AgCenter) a check for \$1,000 to be used for maintenance and improvements to the Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden at the Hammond Research Station. The donation was previously approved at the spring meeting. By the way, did you see we had a picture of the Spring 2015 crawfish boil in *The Azalean*? Our new president is Allen Owings. This will be Allen's third term as president of the Louisiana Chapter. Thank you to Peggy Cox for serving the past four years as president.

Allen mentioned he is working on making Hammond, Louisiana, an ASA Azalea City. We are hosting the 2017 National Azalea Society Convention as was approved by members at the spring meeting. Allen is working on hotel and meeting agenda items. The dates are March 30-April 2, 2017. It was decided that azalea cuttings had to be started soon. It takes thousands of cuttings to get a reasonable amount that will root well. Volunteers are needed to help cut and stick (propagate) the cuttings at various members' nurseries. After rooting they will be planted in 4" pots

- ▼ Louisiana Chapter members left to right: John Thornton, Allen Owings, Larry Brown, Flo Brown, Marjorie Dubea, Peggy Cox, Vincent Ciolino, Roy Constantin, Dale Constantin, Kay Wolfe, Louis Wolfe, Martina Ellis, Yan Chen and Doc Cox.



for sale at the convention. This is an excellent way to get experience making cuttings and to bond with other members. Allen will send an email out as soon as he finds out where and when this work is to be done. Also, some members said they could supply some larger azalea plants.

We have five new members, four from the Lafayette area: Welcome to June Faul, Cheryl Perret, Cindy Chaney Wiley, Sally LeBourgeois, and May Vidacovich. Lafayette, Louisiana, is also interested in being an ASA Azalea City and is restarting their azalea trail program. Welcome to all these new chapter members! Allen is trying to arrange an azalea meeting in Lafayette for this spring. Our spring crawfish boil will be held in May at the LSU AgCenter in Hammond.

Northern Virginia Chapter

Barry Sperling—Corresponding Secretary

After the successful plant auction and the fine lecture by Dr. Joseph Gutierrez on Bonsai, the year finished with the annual Holiday Social. Carolyn and Paul Beck again offered their house and 31 of us filled it nicely. There was more than enough food and drink for everyone and, after a lot of eating and socializing, president Rick Bauer chaired the business meeting.

Rick and Paul Beck were reelected president and treasurer, respectively, and we were happy to welcome two new officers: Barb Kirkwood as vice president and Joanne Neckel as the secretary. Susan Bauer has a full workload taking care of the older issues of *The Azalean* and their digitization and has taken on the task of getting the “Clippers” printed and mailed, which your corresponding secretary really appreciates!

Plant sales have provided sufficient funding for large donations, similar to last years: \$2200 to Green Spring Gardens for an intern to work on the White Estate, \$1000 to Green Spring for their Title I program for underprivileged children, \$1000 to the National Arboretum, and \$1000 to the Norfolk Botanical Garden (which is on the tour list for the upcoming convention).

The spring schedule looks busy with a March 20th meeting and speaker, the April 20th-24th convention partially sponsored by our chapter, the member garden tours from April 30th – May 8th, a late May tour of the Bonsai collection at the National Arboretum led by Dr. Joseph Gutierrez, and the annual cutting exchange on July 10th.

Our Web-site, created and administered by Paul Beck, has the full year’s schedule, information on the coming convention, plant photographs, and links to much more, so visit us at: www.nv-asa.org.

Texas Chapter

Mary Beth Hagood—Chapter President

Members of the Texas Chapter of the Azalea Society of America met Friday, November 20, to plant deciduous azaleas in the Nacogdoches Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden located on the corner of East Main and University.



Photo Barry Sperling

▲ Barbara Krabill, Diane Marcus and Susan Bauer share a meal during the Northern Virginia Chapter’s holiday social at the home of Paul and Carolyn Beck.

- ▼ Texas Chapter members who helped with the planting include Nancy Niehaus, Mary Beth Hagood, Don Parsons, Sherrie Randall, Harold Hall, Barbara Stump, and Master Gardener representative, Sylvia St. Andry.



Photo Nancy Niehaus

The deciduous azaleas ranged in color from orange to pink to yellow. They were grouped by color and placed in established beds to accent plants that were already there. The project was made possible by Master Gardener Sylvia St. Andry.

The entire membership of the Texas Chapter was invited to participate, but due to other obligations and the time involved in travel, those in Nacogdoches were the only ones who were able to attend.

In Remembrance—Rosalie Nachman

By Richard Bauer with significant contributions by William Bedwell and Dr. Sandra McDonald

The azalea and rhododendron communities lost a major contributor on 4 October 2015, when Rosalie Nachman passed away in Richmond, Virginia.

Rosalie was a significant force in the field of rhododendrons and azaleas. I first met her when we both spoke at the 2009 ASA Convention in Herndon. Rosalie had been invited to speak due to her vast knowledge and background in azaleas. I had a very limited background in azaleas and had been “invited” due to a scheduled speaker bowing out at the last minute because of health problems. As part of my talk, I apologized for butchering the names of several Japanese varieties of azaleas. At the end of my presentation, Rosalie came up to me and assured me I pronounced them perfectly. I’m sure she was just being gracious, but that memory stuck with me.

I later remember visiting her home and garden in Richmond during a Richmond Garden Tour sponsored by the Northern Virginia Chapter, ASA. She took us through a tour of her home, showing us beautiful artwork which she had collected during her extensive travels. I was impressed by her large kitchen which was designed with an area set up solely for creating her flower arrangements; Ikebana was a major passion of hers that combined all of her interests.

Rosalie first became interested in azaleas when seeing a white one with red stripes, while visiting Japan with her father. Rosalie had a Fine Arts degree that enhanced her keen appreciation of colors and design. Eventually she created her own magnificent garden of azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias, and many other plants, incorporating some elements of Japanese design and authentic Japanese garden lanterns that she bought in Japan. She developed amazing skill in pruning to keep so many different plants in scale over the years with no evidence of pruning. No gumdrop, or meatball, azaleas for her. She said there was no such thing as color clashes in nature and she proved it. For example, she liked mixing red and purple azaleas, which while an unusual combination for many, worked when composed by Rosalie. Bill Bedwell remembers her garden as “everything looking natural and in harmony.” Sandra McDonald recalls it “looking almost like a painting.”



Photo Dr. Sandra McDonald

▲ David Sauer and Rosalie Nachman in April 2007.

Bill told me of an evening when he, along with ASA members Debby and David Sauer, were invited to dinner by Rosalie and Larry Nachman. David and Rosalie started telling stories of growing up in Richmond and Rosalie later treated them to an entertaining and informative slide show talk on a trip she and Larry had made to India. It was an evening to remember.

Rosalie was a very giving person, freely sharing cuttings, plants and slips from her garden. One time Bill was visiting her garden during one of the meeting tours and admired one of her plants. Out of nowhere, Rosalie produced a trowel and plastic bag, dug it up, and gave it to him. When he protested she stated that the neighboring plants were sighing in relief because they now had room to spread out!

Both a founding member of the Richmond Chapter of the ASA (and later an at-large member) and a longtime member of the Middle Atlantic Chapter (MAC) of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS), Rosalie contributed much to both organizations. Bill Bedwell, also an early member of the Richmond Chapter and longtime MAC member has vivid memories of meeting with Rosalie, Nancy Sewell, and a group of ASA officials in the fall of 1981 on what would become the first joint convention of the ASA and ARS in Richmond in the spring of 1982.

Rosalie was also a contributor to *The Azalean* (articles in 1984, 1991 and 1994) and the *Journal of the American Rhododendron Society* (JARS). She was proud that one of her color photos had appeared on the cover of JARS. Don Hager named an azalea ‘Rosalie Nachman’. She served on the Boards of Directors for both MAC and the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. For her contributions, she was honored with the ARS Bronze Medal.

Rick Bauer is co-chairman, with Don Hyatt, of the ASA/ARS national convention in Williamsburg, Virginia, and environs April 20-24, 2016.

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Two Nurseries and a Garden

By Barry Sperling—Alexandria, Virginia

What's the opposite of the garden section of a big-box store which has only a few varieties of azaleas and a staff uncertain what an azalea is? It's the dedicated nursery run by enthusiasts who look on expanding their selections with plant collecting trips that are closer to a vacation than a chore. The Hanners, covered in the last issue of the ASA Northern Virginia Chapter's "The Azalea Clipper," newsletter fit that enthusiast mold exactly, and now we have two more such nurseries to tell you about: George Harding's "Copper Beech" and Mike and Debra White's "White's Nursery," which are inextricably linked.

George Harding moved to Gaithersburg, Maryland in 1931 and founded "Copper Beech" Nursery on 20 acres. He enjoyed going on collecting trips and took along his grandson, Mike White.

The Office of Public Buildings and Parks of Washington, DC, known today as the National Park Service, hired George in 1933. Later he was made their head of horticulture and often worked on the White House grounds, Jefferson Memorial, and other such venues. He worked for several presidents and was responsible for choosing the national Christmas tree in the early 1950s.

Harding retired in 1959 at the age of 55 having earned the Distinguished Service Award from the Dept. of the Interior. He took this retirement opportunity to move to Germantown, Maryland, where he continued his nursery on 80 acres.

As one of the founding members of the ASA, Harding was involved with azaleas and azalea people throughout its formative years. Harding collected over 1500 varieties of azaleas and rhododendrons and continued collecting with Mike White all through the east enjoying the company of fellow collectors and meeting others who shared his passion. This continued until his passing at 86 in 1990. Harding also received the ASA's highest award, the Distinguished Service Award in 1986.

Three plants that are immediately associated with Harding are: a Robin Hill named after him, a Kurume that George liked that he named 'Harding's Pride', and an R. K. Beattie plant that, the story goes, George named 'Oh My'.

After all the collecting experiences that he had had, Mike decided to start his own "White's Nursery," next door to George's in 1980. That has continued despite that fact that he and Debra, married 22 years now, have maintained full time jobs at the Post Office and Lockheed-Martin respectively, only retiring recently. Debra haunted area plant sales and was surprised to find that she was treated as a celebrity due to her association with Harding.

To honor George Harding's memory Mike has obtained property in Laytonsville, Maryland, to create a garden, continuing the one started in Virginia at the American Horticultural Society, and hopes to have it completed this coming spring. This will be a great destination as it matures through the years.

White's Nursery was started with a 10' x 4' cold frame,



Photo Barry Sperling

▲ Debra and Mike White and dogs in hoop house

▼ Cuttings in hoop house



Photo Barry Sperling



Photo Barry Sperling

then a 10' x 30' greenhouse and lean-tos. Now there are six greenhouses: a 22' x 48' propagating greenhouse and five 30' x 96' ones for growing and sales. These are currently augmented by six cinderblock cold frames, each 6' x 40' with four in-ground and two above-ground. They have a reliable well-water source to maintain the plants.

A trip to White's allows one to see their 250 varieties of evergreen azaleas and 50 deciduous varieties. The rhododendron collection is growing rapidly as many are collected each year and seed is grown, including that provided by the ASA and ARS seed exchanges.

White's has one of the largest collections of deciduous azaleas, and he particularly likes 'Appalachian Gold', Weston's 'Framingham', 'Country Cousins', 'Head's Up' and 'Don's Variegated'. On the evergreen side, he prefers Robin Hill 'Whitehead', Linwood 'Hardy Gardenia', Glenn Dale 'Dream', and Aromi 'Amelia Rose'.

Debra enjoys 'Nancy of Robinhill' paired with 'Hardy Gardenia'. She's fond of the Satsuki azaleas and, even later in the season, in late July she enjoys the fine fragrance of the deciduous 'Pennsylvania'.

The nursery has also been a primary outlet for the hybrids of "Buck" Clagett, who, from his home in Olney, Maryland, produced many fine plants under the "Bowie Mill" designation.

Several members of the Northern Virginia ASA made a special trip in May to enjoy a tour of the nursery and a picnic there, a highlight of the spring!

Check out their Web-site at: www.whites-nursery.com. I appreciate the time that Debra and Mike White spent providing the information above!

Barry Sperling was an intermediate and high school math teacher for 31 years and then retired, and went into industry as a programmer for 13 years, after which he really retired. He's been involved with the ASA since about 1996, serving as a VP and president in of the NVA Chapter. Currently he's the corresponding secretary publishing the "Azalea Clipper" and is list owner of the azalea email list.

▲ View of White's Nursery 2013

▼ White's Nursery crop at Friends of the National Arboretum



Photo Barry Sperling

Magnolia Plantation Alive and Well After Floods in Just Three Days

By Tom Johnson—Charleston, South Carolina

People across the country have asked how Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, America's oldest garden, fared in October, 2015, during the torrential rain and flooding that drenched South Carolina.

I have witnessed two tornadoes, but nothing prepared me for this storm that dumped more than 27 inches of rain in 24 hours. That was bad, but the "super moon" made it worse. The rain and the super moon combined to produce the highest tides ever recorded at Magnolia.

The Ashley River, which flows along Magnolia's boundary, is a tidal river. When the tide comes in, the river flows north away from Charleston. Once the tide recedes, the river flows back toward the city. The river was an important avenue of travel in early South Carolina when there were few roads and tourists. Goods were loaded on barges and, as the tide came in, passengers could make their way by river to the plantations. When the tide receded, the barges returned to Charleston.

During the storm, because the tide was so high, the Ashley River jumped its banks. The dike around Magnolia's nature preserve was breached by more than a foot of water. This meant there was nowhere for the rainwater to run off. When the tide went out, the river remained at capacity because of the inland rainwater that was flowing down river. That meant that the rainwater at Magnolia had no place to go. Magnolia's dedicated employees made the difference. If it were not for them, the gardens probably would have received massive damage.

Eight employees live at Magnolia and once the major flooding was evident they sprang into action. They donned their rain gear and went to work. Because of Magnolia's earlier history as a rice plantation the property is crisscrossed by canals and ditches. In good times, we utilize that drainage network to move water around to keep



Photo Tom Johnson

▲ The Ashley River breaches the dam.

▼ Audubon Swamp overflowing and flooding.



Photo Tom Johnson

our lakes full and attractive. During the flood that network became invaluable in controlling the floodwaters.

We quickly became aware of the tremendous amount of water, and, if we didn't respond effectively and quickly, we would not have been able to handle the situation. We decided what areas we would flood and what areas we would try to preserve. Flowerdale was installed in 1685 by Ann Fox Drayton, the first mistress on the plantation. Today that area is recognized as America's oldest garden. We decided that garden would be preserved at all cost! The gardens around the main house were planted prior to 1830 by the Rev. John Grimké Drayton and the enslaved workers. These gardens are where the first azaleas were planted outside in America, and they have camellias that we have documented were planted by the Rev. Drayton himself. That area could never be replaced. It too had to be protected at all cost!

The decision was made to flood all other areas to preserve these valuable parts of the gardens. Quickly, we began thinking "Ok, what can we fix after the storm is over?" The decision was made to flood parking lots, lawn areas, and even the more current flower beds. During the storm, employees used the backhoe to block the canals that drain the Audubon Swamp. The swamp was allowed to overflow, which flooded the entrance road through the gardens and wooded areas with more than a foot of water. The water also reached the dwellings that were once the homes of the enslaved workers, but those structures were not damaged.



Photo Tom Johnson

▲ Magnolia's Parking Lots with more than one foot of water.

▼ Water flooding Tram Road and running through gardens.



Photo Tom Johnson



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The White Bridge Pond was pushed to the limit, and the arches of the bridge were submerged. Water flowed over the lawn at the main house and to the herb garden, but it stopped before the ground floor of the house. We opened the canals to drain the ponds only when we reached the point of damaging those parts of the gardens we wanted to protect. As the tide receded, we released water into the boat pond reservoir as fast as the Ashley River would allow us to drain the grounds. We decided not to repair the breach in the dike to relieve the water pressure throughout the gardens. Once the storm was over, I noticed that the 18-foot dike had collapsed in one area and only five feet of integrity remained. We have a maintenance staff with nerves of steel!

In some of the flat areas of the gardens, our horticulturists constructed small ponds with the backhoe so water could drain off the historic plant material. Once the storm passed, they refilled and cleaned the areas.

During the storm we ordered more materials such as gravel for the walks, asphalt for the roads, rye grass, and replacement flowers. Most vendors could not ship immediately because some roads in the Charleston area were closed. We understood that, but we wanted to ensure we were first on the list when shipping resumed.

It is amazing that all of this was accomplished with eight employees in a 48-hour period. The gardens were closed for two days. The morning of the third day all areas were reopened with the exception of The Audubon Swamp Garden and the Nature Boat. The rest of the staff returned to work Monday, and by Thursday we were operating normally.

The water was a problem, but it was not our biggest headache. The national news media was telling the world that the storm closed Charleston, and that story continued to be sent out over the next couple of weeks.

In spite of the flooding and the exaggerated reporting that may have kept some visitors away from Charleston and Magnolia, the gardens fared well during this ordeal because of Magnolia's greatest asset: our dedicated staff.



Photo Tom Johnson

▲ Water draining from Magnolia back to the Ashley River as the tide goes out.

Tom Johnson is the executive director at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens near Charleston, South Carolina. He takes a very personal interest in this historic site and gardens. According to the plantation Web-site, he says: "Magnolia is one of the last large scale Romantic Gardens left in the United States. The Romantic Garden movement has its roots in the industrial revolution in Europe, and is tied directly to the empowerment of the common man. When he went to work in the factories, he wanted to design gardens that would help him forget the dreary life offered during the workday. I like to tell that the definition of a romantic garden is an "Extravagant Liar." Truly, this is what a romantic garden is designed to do, to "lie" you into forgetting the normality of everyday life. Romantic Gardens are designed to take the viewer to a place where emotion takes precedence over reason. Surprise awaits around every corner. Form, balance and symmetry are thrown to the wind and these gardens are designed to appeal directly to the soul." If you have any questions regarding the gardens, contact his Ask Tom link at camelliaman@msn.com. He is also president of the Rev. John Drayton Chapter of the ASA, and directed the 2014 ASA Convention in Charleston.



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