

2020 Update on the ASA's Legacy Project

Richard Bauer—Yorktown, VA

During the 2019 Azalea Society of America convention in Summerville, SC, we visited Magnolia Plantation. During lunch at the plantation, Ernest Koone III, owner of Lazy K Nursery in Pine Mountain, Georgia, spoke to the attendees on the topic “Where Have All the Azaleas Gone?” He stated that of all the azaleas found in Fred Galle’s book, *Azaleas*, only 10 percent can be found in commerce.¹

At the local level, the members of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASA (NVA) recognized this problem several years ago. NVA counts several azalea hybridizers as members. These members have produced beautiful hybrids which, except for a few varieties at a few retail nurseries, had never made it into the commercial market. For many years the chapter propagated and promoted the hybrids produced by these members through plant sales, auctions, and informational presentations. For example, a presentation on the Stewart Azaleas and the Holly Springs Azaleas was given at the 2009 ASA convention in Herndon, VA, and the hybrids were featured in the convention plant sale. The chapter also entered into a collaborative effort with the Norfolk Botanical Garden to expand their collection of Glenn Dale Azaleas. In January of 2014, the chapter formalized these efforts in an initiative called the Legacy Project. This project provided a formal framework for the promotion of specific azalea hybrid groups, but also provided ideas for activities which can be undertaken to promote azaleas in general. These were all documented in published guidelines that were available on the chapter website.

The project initially encompassed the hybrids of chapter members Sandra McDonald (McDonald Hybrids), Bob Stewart (Stewart Hybrids), Joe Klimavicz (Klimavicz Hybrids) and Pete Vines (Holly Springs Hybrids). After several years of actively promoting these hybrids through the chapter’s Legacy Project, in March of 2017, the Board of Directors of the ASA voted to make the Legacy Project a society level sponsored activity.

Since the initiative was started with four hybrid groups, it has grown to 19 groups. While originally sponsored by Northern Virginia Chapter members, it now includes sponsorship by members in seven ASA chapters and members of the Rhododendron, Camellia, and Magnolia Group of the Royal Horticulture Society in England. The project also was migrated from its original location on the NVA website to the ASA website. The current ASA members leading the efforts to obtain and propagate the various hybrid groups are listed in Table 1.

The newest addition to the Legacy Project is the Schroeder Hybrids. The Schroeder Azaleas were developed starting in 1973 by Dr. H. Roland Schroeder, Jr. These hybrids were developed in Evansville, Indiana, and are cold hardy. (See Photo 1.) The Legacy Lead is former ASA President John Migas. John has 25 of the 43 registered Schroeder Hybrids and is working with Beverly Knight to identify sources of additional varieties, to identify unmarked plants through comparison with photographs, and to digitize the Schroeder records they were able to locate.

The Northern Virginia Chapter continues to be a major participant in the project. To that end, they have contributed varieties of Glenn Dale and McDonald Azaleas to the Norfolk Botanical Garden and Klimavicz Azaleas to Jenkins Arboretum in Devin, PA. They also contributed Stewart and

▼ Table 1

Hybrid Group	Legacy Lead	Hybrid Group	Legacy Lead
Aromi	Sherrie Randall	Marshy Point	Donald Hyatt
Beasley	John Simmons	McDonald	Rick Bauer
Bowie Mill	Robert Thau	Ring	David Meadows
Carla	Jeff Kuehny	Schroeder	John Migas
Glenn Dale	Ronnie Palmer	Sommerville	Ronnie Palmer
Harris	Robert Thau	Stewart	Carolyn Beck
Holly Springs	David Nanney	Strickland	Kevin McCorkle
Huang	Ronnie Palmer	Varnadoe	Kevin McCorkle
Klimavicz	Carolyn Beck	Vineland	Nick Yarmoshuk
Linwood Hardy	Ronnie Palmer	Wilson 50	Pam Hayward

Klimavicz Azaleas to Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute in Hudson, North Carolina. The chapter is augmenting their propagation program of Legacy Hybrids through the assistance of Mike White of White's Nursery in Germantown, MD.

A major initiative is the development of a Klimavicz Legacy Garden at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens in Vienna, VA. The chapter entered into a memorandum of agreement with the garden and, in March of 2019, chapter members planted 103 Klimavicz Azaleas around the gazebo in the Azalea Woods area. Members have participated in monthly workdays, taking care of the existing plants and preparing additional areas for future Klimavicz varieties. (See Photo 2.) There are also plans to institute a Legacy Garden of Bob Stewart's azaleas in the future. Besides the beauty of the hybrids developed by Joe Klimavicz and Bob Stewart, the fact that both hybridizers are from the local area is an added feature.

Presentations on the Legacy Project have been given to a number of different plant groups besides the ASA, including garden clubs and chapters of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS). Many of our ASA members are also members of the ARS. This has facilitated collaborations between chapters of both societies. The promotion of the Vineland

Azaleas is supported by the Niagara Chapter of the ARS. They have a complete collection of the Vineland Azaleas at the Vineland Research and InNOVation Centre in Lincoln, Ontario. They are collaborating with Blue Sky Nursery in Beamsville, Ontario, to propagate select Vineland Azaleas for sale to the public.

The Potomac Valley Chapter of the ARS and the Ben Morrison Chapter of the ASA are planning on developing a Marshy Point Legacy Garden at Historic London Town and Gardens in Edgewater, MD. They donated a bench to the garden in honor of former ASA member Gray Carter and included Marshy Point Hybrids in landscaping the area around the bench. This was the genesis of the idea to expand the collection. Marshy Point Hybrids are also part of NVA's propagation program. At the start of the Legacy Project, none of the Marshy Point Hybrids were registered with the Royal Horticultural Society. Efforts are currently underway by Don Hyatt and Carolyn Beck to gather appropriate documentation and to register these beautiful varieties. (See Photo 3.) Don Hyatt has written an article on the Marshy Point Azaleas which is in this issue of *The Azalean*.

Attendees at the 2015 ASA National Convention in Nacogdoches, TX, visited the Gayla M. Mize Azalea Garden on the campus of the Stephen F. Austin University.



Photo Carolyn Beck

▲ Photo 1—Schroeder Azalea 'Mrs. Mildred Kinder'.



Photo Carolyn Beck

▲ Photo 2—Mike White and other NVA Chapter members plant Klimavicz Azaleas at Meadowlark Gardens.

▼ Photo 3—Marshy Point Hybrid "Annapolis."



Photo Carolyn Beck



Photo Carolyn Beck

▼ Photo 4—Aromi Azalea 'Amelia Rose'.

The garden currently has 27 named Aromi deciduous and 2 evergreen varieties. Sherrie Randall, the Aromi Legacy Lead, and the Texas Chapter are working with the garden to expand their collection of Aromi Azaleas. They are currently actively propagating Aromi varieties. In addition, Maarten van der Giessen has provided several unnamed Aromi evergreen varieties which will be added to the garden's collection. (See Photo 4.)

Ernest Koone, our speaker at Magnolia Plantation, is a strong supporter of the Legacy Project. He worked with Lockerly Arboretum in Milledgeville, GA, to create a Legacy Garden starting with Georgia native azaleas and Sommerville Azaleas. Ernest plans to add Strickland and Varnadoe Azaleas in the future. An article on the garden and Lockerly Arboretum is in the Winter 2019 issue of *The Azalean*.² Ernest has also given collections of azaleas, including Legacy varieties, to the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens, the Delaware Botanic Garden, and to Masee Lane Gardens.

The newly formed Arkansas Chapter is also getting into the act. Ronnie Palmer, chapter president, is the Legacy Lead for the Glenn Dale, Linwood Hardy, and Sommerville Azaleas. He grows these varieties and others such as Holly Springs Azaleas at his Azalea Hill Nursery in White Hall, AR. He has generously donated plants for sale at society conventions and other plant sales. They are also looking into establishing a Legacy Garden in the northwest Arkansas area. Ronnie also has a number of Holly Springs, Stewart, Glenn Dale, Bowie Mill and McDonalds Hybrids available for sale at his Azalea Hill Nursery. (See Photo 5.)

Ronnie is also the Legacy Lead for Huang Azaleas. The Huang azaleas originated in China and were introduced to this country by Dr. George Drake. All the varieties were numbered, not named, which was considered to be a negative in marketing them. Ronnie took on the project of formally naming the Huang azaleas. He worked with the various experts on Huang Azaleas and with Michael Mills, the Registrar of the ARS, to get approval for the ASA to control naming rights on the Huang Azaleas. The first Huang Azaleas to be named were in honor of Dr. Drake, his wife Mary Ann, and their son David. All were instrumental in the

introduction and propagation of the Huang Azaleas in the United States. (See Photo 6.)

The Texas Forest Country Chapter is also a recently formed chapter and is heavily involved in beautifying Jasper, TX, with azaleas. Through their efforts, the city of Jasper was recognized as an "Azalea City" in 2018. Chapter President Robert Thau is known as "Mr. Azalea" in Jasper. He is the Legacy Lead on Bowie Mill and Harris Azaleas, but has also amassed a large number of azaleas, including other Legacy varieties in his garden. He frequently gives tours of his garden to garden clubs and other interested individuals. Robert also actively propagates Legacy and other azalea varieties which he generously contributes to plant sales and to visitors to his garden. (See Photo 7.) He has also given many talks on azaleas to local groups. His efforts have not only promoted azaleas, but also has encouraged membership in the society. As of this writing, his chapter has 28 members, largely due to his efforts in promoting azaleas.

Society members are encouraged to start their own private Legacy Gardens. Pick a given hybrid group and start collecting varieties. Many varieties of Legacy Hybrids are available at ASA convention plant sales, and we hope to make



Photo Ronnie Palmer

▲ Photo 6—Huang Azalea Hu 2-5-61 to be named 'David Drake'. This 20-year-old plant was dug, with permission, from the Auburn University Research Station at Camp Hill, AL.

▼ Photo 5—Azalea Hill Garden and Nursery.



Photo Ronnie Palmer

▼ Photo 7—Susan Bauer and Robert Thau inspect his garden in Jasper, TX, in 2017.



Photo Carolyn Beck

this an ongoing feature of future sales. ASA conventions are the main forum for bringing together members of the society in one location and are the ideal place for Legacy teams to provide plants to society members. Legacy teams are encouraged to coordinate with convention organizers to provide copies of Legacy hybrids for plant sales.

In addition to providing a means of promoting azaleas, the Legacy Project can provide an excellent framework for, or a component of, a chapter's program and activities. It taps into a range of skill sets, not just horticulture. Society members and chapters are encouraged to consider sponsoring Legacy Hybrids groups...especially those that may be associated with the chapter or the geographic area they serve.

References and Resources

¹ Stump, Barbara. Summer 2019. "2019 National Convention Report." *The Azalean*. 41(2): 52.

² Pollard, Jennifer. Winter 2019. "Lockerly Arboretum." *The Azalean*. 41(4): 86.

For more information, go to the Legacy page on the ASA website: <https://www.azaleas.org/legacy-project/>.

Richard (Rick) Bauer is in his second term as ASA President. Rick was part of the team which developed the Legacy Project in the Northern Virginia Chapter. He was also part of the team which digitized *The Azalean* and was co-chair of the 2016 Joint ASA/ARS Convention in Williamsburg, VA. He is a member and past president of the Northern Virginia Chapter and a former ASA director. He promotes the ASA and the Legacy Project to groups throughout the US and Canada.



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Reflections on Harry Weiskittel and the Marshy Point Azaleas

Donald W. Hyatt—McLean, Virginia

The Azalea Society of America and the American Rhododendron Society lost a good friend when Harry Weiskittel passed away on May 5, 2019. He was 77. Harry had been suffering with Alzheimer's disease for several years, so we had not seen him around and he was no longer hybridizing azaleas. We will miss him, but we can be grateful for the wonderful legacy of spectacular azalea hybrids he left for us, the Marshy Point Azaleas.¹ (See Photo 1.)

What seemed ironic is that during the week prior to his death, I had been thinking about Harry almost every day. I had been working with Carolyn Beck to gather data on his Marshy Point Hybrids so that we could officially register them. As I took photos, recorded measurements, and struggled with the Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart trying to match flower colors against their color chips, my mind would wander back to Harry and a tapestry of events, conversations, and good times we shared in the ARS and ASA over many decades.

For many years, Harry ran one of the largest azalea wholesale nurseries in the region, but that was not his original career. He had enlisted in the Army after college and served as a counterintelligence officer based in Berlin from 1966 to 1969. When he returned from that tour of duty, he earned a law degree. Eventually, what started as a hobby raising azalea seedlings on his ping pong table evolved into a major wholesale nursery operation.

▼ Photo 1—Harry Weiskittel in one of his hoop houses with one of his double white azaleas.



Photo Donald Hyatt