

THE **A** *zalea*
Journal of the Azalea Society of America



**Focus on Native
Azaleas**

**New Azalea Species
Discovered in South Carolina**

Propagating Natives

Fire on the Mountain

'Millie Mac' Misbehaves



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President's Letter

William F. Bode — Covington, Louisiana

Most of us, particularly this writer, are sick to death of the Y2K bit, so let us mention it no more. With the conclusion of an outstanding convention, excuse my prideful phrase please, was that the end of the Society's year 1999-2000 or the beginning of 2000-2001? I prefer to take the premise that it marked the end of 1999-2000. At this point I must point out to all of you that the convention was **not an act of nature that just appeared** and was ready to feed, transport, educate, and even entertain the members present. So, to Robert (Buddy) and Dixie Lee, to Maarten van der Giessen, to Jerry Ladner, to James Campbell and to all those who worked so hard on putting the convention on, the Society extends its gratitude for tasks so well done. In addition, we sincerely thank Middleton Place and Carolina Nurseries for their warm hospitality, luncheons, and financial support.

That being said about the event that ended our year, there were other outstanding accomplishments during the year:

1. The development and continued growth of our Internet outreach programs, including the Society's website.

2. The new editor of THE AZALEAN, Barbara Stump, who is firmly in control after only one year, and who continues to move forward.
3. More contacts are being made with large growers, propagators, and universities regarding both proprietary and scientific matters.

We are growing—maybe not in numbers—but certainly in influence.

All of the above is good and forward-looking, and the convention was a lot of fun and educational. The business meeting left a lot to be desired, for which I take responsibility. In an attempt to remedy this, I will present a plan that I hope will facilitate "doing the Society's business" to the board of directors at the August teleconference meeting.

In the coming year, WE must do all we can as individuals to stop the downward slide of membership. I emphasize again that YOU have the greatest selling tool—a smile and a handshake. When coupled with the enthusiasm and knowledge I saw at the convention in Charleston, I know we will succeed.

On the Cover:

New species azalea, *Rhododendron eastmanii*, classified and documented by Dr. Kathleen Kron and Mike Creel. Creel says of the natives: "I think you folks ought to think more about our natives. There is greater potential in color, fragrance, duration of show, heat and cold tolerance, drought resistance, no need for spraying, little need for fertilization and better foliage, since most pests are dropped in the fall with the leaves and don't overwinter. I pick off a few cutworms and walking sticks on the first balmy spring nights, and that's about it."

Photo and text by: Mike Creel, News Section Chief, SC Department of Natural Resources, Columbia, South Carolina.

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*).

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New Azalea Species Discovered in South Carolina

[Article compiled from information from Mike Creel and the cited publication, Ed.]

With the publication, in late 1999, of the description of *Rhododendron eastmanii* by Dr. Kathleen Kron and Mike Creel in the Missouri Botanical Garden's NOVON, a completely new azalea species was added to the annals of azalea knowledge. The abstract of this article states:

A new species of deciduous azalea, *Rhododendron eastmanii*, has been discovered in South Carolina, U.S.A. This azalea can be distinguished from the other members of *Rhododendron* sect. *Pentanthera* by its distinctive morphology, flowering time, and fragrance. It is presently known only from Orangeburg and Richland Counties in South Carolina.

The common name of the species is May White. It prefers near-neutral soils, blooms in mid-May with leaves fully expanded, has extreme fragrance that carries quite a distance — equaling or exceeding that of tea olive — more intense than other east coast species, but is not stoloniferous.

The Alabama Azalea, *R. alabamense*, appears to be the same color — white with a yellow blotch — but blooms much earlier and before the leaves are fully expanded or with the expanding leaves. It is usually stoloniferous and has a sweet moderate fragrance. It seems to have no preference for neutral or circumneutral (near-neutral) soils.

Before the discovery and describing of *R. eastmanii* (from Richland and Orangeburg Counties), any white azalea with yellow blotch in South Carolina was identified “mistakenly” as *R. alabamense*. This might be the case on near-neutral sites and soils in other states, Tennessee for example. Mike Creel does not believe there are any Alabama azaleas indigenous to South Carolina, but rather, that those mistakenly called Alabama azaleas in Newberry, Fairfield, Calhoun, Hampton, Dorchester and Berkeley Counties are in reality the lime-loving May White. A study is underway in South Carolina of plant species of federal concern in calcareous and chert formations of the South Carolina coastal plain. *R. eastmanii* is one of the nine target species that state botanists are seeking. A number of new sites seem to offer great potential for the new azalea species having established populations there.

Creel provided this easy-to-use identification scheme for recognizing May Whites in the field: Bloom time (mid-May), state of leaf emergence (fully expanded), soil pH (circumneutral), fragrance (extreme), and habit (non-stoloniferous), are the best immediate determinants. However, if you are working with herbarium specimens some additional technical indicators are needed.

Kron and Creel are co-authoring an article to appear in a forthcoming *Journal*

American Rhododendron Society on this new azalea species. Again from the NOVON article, there is a reference to a strategy to protect such limited populations, since one of the two known sites of occurrence is threatened by urban development: “To discourage inappropriate collection by azalea enthusiasts, Mike Creel is developing a collection of rooted cuttings and select seedlings that will be introduced to the public through nurseries in the near future.” When this happy day arrives, THE AZALEAN will announce the particulars.

Why is the azalea's species epithet *eastmanii*? Because South Carolina highway engineer Charles Eastman noticed the first of the two populations when out working on a new right-of-way for Highway 20. The azalea's typical peak bloom time is around May 10, the new South Carolina state holiday of Confederate Memorial Day.

Further Reading

Kron, Kathleen A. and Mike Creel, 1999. “A New Species of Deciduous Azalea (*Rhododendron* section *Pentanthera*; Ericaceae) from South Carolina. NOVON: *A Journal of Botanical Nomenclature*. 9(3): 377-380. [This article contains detailed botanical drawings to aid in precise identification. The journal is published by the Missouri Botanical Garden, Ed.]

Azalea Calendar

July 9: Annual cutting exchange, Northern Virginia Chapter. Contact: Frances Louer, 703-754-2824 or louerp@gte.net.

July 9: Annual cutting exchange and picnic, Ben Morrison Chapter. Contact: Joe Miller, 301-862-4936 or pscsm@olg.com.

August 27: Annual plant auction, Northern Virginia Chapter. Contact: Frances Louer, 703-754-2824 or louerp@gte.net.

September 7-9: 3rd International Symposium on Japanese Gardens at the Montreal Botanical Garden, organized in cooperation with the International Association of Japanese Gardens, Inc., the Garden Society of Japan, and the Japanese Garden and Pavilion Foundation. The Montreal Botanical Garden is the site of a 10-year-old Japanese garden created by Ken Nakajima. Worldwide experts will be speaking. Contacts: Marie-Andree Camirand, 514-872-0607 (for brochure and to register), or go to website: www.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin/en/japonais/symposium.htm.

Propagating Native Azaleas

Earl A. Sommerville — Marietta, Georgia

[This article is an adaptation of a similar article by Sommerville that was published in the Journal American Rhododendron Society. Used by permission, Ed.]

Over the past 30 years, I have sought to develop a reliable process for propagating native azaleas. For the first 20 of those years, my efforts met with little or no success. The next five years showed marked improvement, and for the last five years I have been consistently rooting at a rate of 80 percent. After much trial and effort, I have learned that some plants simply will not root. Ironically, these are usually the very best plants. Although this may seem frustrating, do not give up. For instance, I dug a "horizontal *R. calendulaceum*" in 1963, and for 28 years it refused to root. After all that time, last year it produced two plants, and those two plants yielded four more this very year.

North Georgia contains a variety of native azalea species that have crossed naturally through the years, called natural hybrid or inter-species hybrid azaleas. This natural crossing may serve to aid the propagating process. While I have been successful in propagating particular plants in all species, I have also found individual plants that will not root in each of the species with which I have worked. For years I have been told that you can't root native azaleas, but I have been quite pleased with the results. The following sections provide the detailed methodology that I have developed over the years for propagating native azaleas.

Propagating Bench

The bench measures four feet wide, eight feet long, and 12 inches deep. On the bottom of the bench is a layer of 1/4-inch hardware cloth topped by a 3/4-inch water pipe. Next is three inches of large pine bark, a heating cable or hot water pipe to maintain 85°F, and three inches of small pine bark. All of this bark is for drainage. The pots sit in the bark.

Lighting

Four daylight tubes, eight feet in length, are positioned two feet above the propagating bench. These tubes are controlled by a 24-hour clock with one-hour trips to turn on at 7:00 p.m., off at 11:00 p.m.

Primary Mist System

The primary mist system consists of a filter, solenoid valves, and a 24-hour clock with 15-minute trips that controls a six-minute clock with one-second trips. Flora Mist brand nozzles are used in conjunction with baffle wire and placed 18 inches above the bench. The mist head spacing is not to exceed three-feet-six inches, and the operating pressure on these heads should be set to 60 psi. This system should be operated from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for two seconds every two minutes, or for one second every one minute. By the first of July, the primary mist system is phased out to allow the secondary mist system to take over.

Secondary Mist System

I use a Mist-A-Matic brand system to operate around the clock. Although this system is built to operate 24 hours a day, in actuality it operates from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., or as needed.

Pots

Use tree seedling pots measuring 3" x 3" x 5 1/2", with an "almost open" bottom.

Medium

The medium consists of two parts pine bark screened through a 1/4-inch screen, one part peat moss, and one part Perlite. It should be subjected to the mist for a period of seven days before it is ready to accommodate the cuttings.

Hormones

The recommended hormones are Hormodin #3 and Roots, a liquid gel (Canadian product). Failure to use a hormone in the propagation process slightly lowers the success rate percentage, but if the cutting sends out roots, it will break into new growth sooner without the added hormone.

Fertilizer

The fertilizer of choice is Peters 21-7-7 distributed in a Gewa injector with a 1-100 mixing valve. Issue the fertilizer at a

ratio of two pounds per gallon (derived from Gewa Constant Feeding Chart for a seven- to ten-day feeding program). If watering by hand, mix one teaspoon of fertilizer per gallon. Plants should be fertilized beginning on June 15th and every ten days thereafter. Moreover, make sure never to fertilize plants that are in winter dormancy.

Greenhouse

The greenhouse should receive a full measure of sunlight from 8:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and no shade should be provided for the propagating bench. The temperature rises to a full 100 degrees Fahrenheit in the greenhouse while the medium temperature approaches 85 degrees F. under the mist. Experience has proven that providing this atmosphere to the cuttings increases the likelihood of success.

Taking Cuttings from the Garden

I generally take cuttings from the 21st of April to the 5th of May, but never after May 10th. The cuttings should be taken very early in the season while they are extremely soft from a plant that has been well watered and fertilized with a well-balanced mix the previous year. The plants also need to be in a stage of active growth. After taking the cuttings, put them in a plastic bag and place them in a refrigerator for 12 to 48 hours. It is very important that water not be added to the plastic bag prior to refrigeration.

Cuttings from the Mountain

If the cuttings are allowed to wilt, they will not root. Therefore, the cuttings should be taken early in the morning, placed in an airtight plastic bag with a wet paper towel, and if at all possible, stored in a cooler with ice. The cooler will greatly increase the probability of successful propagation. I have even converted a backpack into a small cooler for this very purpose.

continued on page 30

The Cutting

After removing the cutting from the refrigerator, remove the tip and all but four leaves. Next, cut off one-half of each of the remaining four leaves, and dip the cutting into a Malathion-Captan mix before placing it into the medium. By July, the cutting will begin to show new growth, and by the first of October, it will have grown an additional six to eight inches in length. In the middle of October, move the rooted cuttings to a cold frame covered with white polyethylene for the winter season.

Potting Up

Wait until the following spring to pot up the rooted cuttings.

Conclusion

Conventional wisdom discourages the possibility of rooting native azaleas, but the formula I have developed after years of trial and effort has consistently provided a respectable level of success. While each of the steps involved in the process is important, there are three areas that require the most attention: the timing of taking the cuttings, using the refrigerator, and fertilizing properly. Giving these three steps the utmost attention to detail will greatly increase the your chances of success.

References

- McDonald, Dr. Sandra. Summer 1992. "Native Azaleas of Georgia." *Journal American Rhododendron Society*. 46 (3): 146-149.
- Sommerville, Earl A. Summer 1998. "Propagating Native Azaleas." *Journal American Rhododendron Society*. 52 (3): 126-127.

Earl A. Sommerville has been a member of ASA since the early 1980s and of ARS since 1966. He says he started collecting native azaleas in 1960, and in the late 1980s, "The creeks got too wide, the hills too steep, the water too cold, so after that, all a person can do is talk about collecting plants. Most all of my crosses were made by the bees, and they do a very good job."

Consult his website for many images of natives:

www.mindspring.com/~earlsommerville/home.htm

Fire on the Mountains

J. E. Schild, Jr. — Hixson, Tennessee

[Two trips into the mountains form the basis for this record of plant exploration for native azaleas, Ed.]

As the spring of 1999 approached, there was an expectation that bordered upon total and delirious excitement rising within my spirit. The year was a celebration of 30 years into plant exploring and, in particular, azalea chasing in the southeastern United States.

It was in 1969 that my friend and mentor Clifton Gann introduced me to those jewels of nature, the native species azaleas and rhododendron. I was hooked. I was so intrigued by those marvelous shrubs that Clifton and I traveled perhaps a thousand miles or so to see and experience azaleas in the wild, in their native habitat, and in all their beauty and glory. It was Clifton who taught me to recognize the species and propagate them from seed and cuttings. In a few years, my own home landscape was becoming filled with native azaleas. To some, it is a malady or weakness to be so engrossed by a plant; but, in my case, I prefer to call it a sublime fascination.

Early Season Hunting

My fascination on April 17, 1999, had me rolling from bed before five in the morning. This was to be the first field trip of the season, and I did not want to be late for my appointment with nature on the Cumberland Plateau, a 40-minute drive from my home in Hixson, Tennessee. I had my daypack loaded with plant tags, bright ribbons, a notebook, extra rolls of film, and my cameras.

The early morning air was chilly for mid-April. With my truck loaded and my usual mug of coffee in hand, I departed for Dunlap, Tennessee, on State Route 111 where it joins SR-8 and the long road to the plateau top. At the Hardee's Restaurant, Burton Johnston joined me.

For early flowering azaleas, one must think pink and white, for they are the predominant colors of *Rhododendron canescens*, *R. periclymenoides*, *R. alabamense*, and *R. prinophyllum*. In early May to early June, one may find *R. arborescens*, *R.*

cumberlandense, *R. calendulaceum*, and large numbers of interspecific and intraspecific hybrids.

In my home gardens, the earliest were past prime bloom, and I was searching for near peak flowering on the Cumberland, often two weeks behind my garden plants. In a mile or so, before SR-8 turns off at the Skyline Coal Company mines, I started noting a few random pink and white flowering shrubs and knew we were right on schedule.

One mile beyond the turnoff, we stopped and started exploring the woodland edges where sun exposure gives the azaleas a boost in flower bud production. There were some seductive pink-flowering Pinxterbloom (*R. periclymenoides*) and Piedmont (*R. canescens*) azaleas. One group of five plants, all looking alike, had dark pink margins on the lobes, while the leaves had almost fully emerged.

A few yards away, 10- and 12-foot shrubs of pure white flowers drew my attention. A sweet fragrance pulled me close, and I saw plant characteristics I could use to identify Pinxterbloom. Back in the understory were a number of shrubs with scattered bloom, but these were a delicious dark rose pink with reddish filaments twice as long as the flower tubes.

Burton and I made many stops at prime locations we had previously identified. To our surprise, we found large numbers of shrubs in various states of bud and flower. Some plants were still in tight bud with others in soft or full flowering.

It was no surprise to us that we found many shrubs of mixed genes between species, for this is the same area that confused Henry Skinner in 1951, on his extensive search for native azaleas. Burton and I saw this mixture of natural hybrids, and I must say the result is quite delightful.

Within an hour of search and study, I burned two rolls of slide film at 36 exposures each and was working on my third when I noted very nice pink flowers with yellow blotching, on a low growing shrub. A close study could not determine a specific species, but something between the Alabama (*R. alabamense*) and Piedmont azaleas was my best guess.

We tagged and flagged many superb shrubs, though often not directly on the subject shrub. Experience has taught me that a flagged plant will quickly be dug and removed, and thus the gene pool is lost to us all. While in the area, we stopped a few minutes at my acreage tract on SR-8, where in 1993, a number of mature shrubs were lifted out and donated to Reflection Riding Arboretum and Botanical Garden. Now, around the open holes we had left were numbers of new shrubs about two feet tall, each replacing the removed shrubs.

Burton and I turned back to Dunlap where we parted, he to Signal Mountain and I to Hixson. As I drove back to my Middle Valley home, I felt delightful warmth in my body as I recalled the day's adventure. Perhaps now one will understand the title of this article, for the fire is not literal, but figurative. It's a compunction or compulsion to search for and locate exquisite azaleas in the wild. Clifton Gann told me many years ago, "It becomes a fire in the belly that only the search will quench."

As I pulled into my drive and parked, I knew I must wait for June and July to continue my search on Wayah, Gregory, and Copper Balds in North Carolina and up in the deep gorge of the North Chickamauga Creek. The question in my mind was, how could I stand to wait? The answer was simple: work in my garden and nursery would fill the time.

Late Season Hunting

June 20 came and I was again heading out for the mountains. Burton and Betty Johnston joined me on this journey to Wayah Bald. At Cleveland, Tennessee, I turned the truck eastward onto US-64. This highway takes us through the Ocoee River Gorge and on to Murphy, North Carolina, where I was pleased to see Vernon Carpenter had arrived before us

and made the first day of a two-day adventure. We traveled to Andrews and took the short cut to the Nantahala and the approach road to Wayah.

The indicator shrubs near Nantahala Lake were in good bloom and this gave me a feeling for what we would be seeing at higher elevations. I navigated the slow winding road until we reached Wayah Gap, and I made the right turn to Wayah Crest for a short stop to rest and check out the few azaleas in that area. Ronald and Nancy Hooper arrived a few minutes later, and we warmly greeted them.

Burton and I were saddened to note the slow decline of a beautiful *Cornus alternifolia*, the Alternate-Leaf Dogwood, we had watched for years. Around the area were many fine *Kalmia* in good bloom and a few orange Flame Azaleas (*R. calendulaceum*). After 10 or so minutes, we decided to drive on to the top of Wayah.

My normal method is to drive slowly to the top, then, on the way back down, to make frequent stops. For the next mile to the top, we were greeted by bright colors from clear yellow to deep red. Orange was the predominant color, with many shades between yellow and orange of *R. calendulaceum*. There were so many excellent examples in bright flower, I stopped frequently. The rest followed into the woodland edges to have a close-up experience with a beautiful azalea.

One such shrub brought us all to a gravel-skidding stop, and we all stood around an exquisite 10-foot shrub with large trusses of bright reddish-orange flowers, and in each, one or two bright yellow blooms. The color effect was stunning, and we all were quickly jockeying for position to take photographs. What was normally a 15-minute drive turned into an hour. By the time we arrived at the parking area, James and Judy Dennis, from Knoxville, were pacing with a little irritation and anxiety over our late arrival. I apologized and explained how we were delayed by the excellent azaleas. Judy just nodded with a little understanding.

The year 1997 was a very bad year for flowering on Wayah. However, 1998 was the best in 30 years, and 1999 was a sure second best. In 30 years, I missed only one journey to Wayah, and I still found a sense of wonder as I looked at this mountain and its fiery azaleas. This area is close to where I made my first trip here with Clifton Gann in 1969, and I had to chuckle, then smile as I recalled his reaction to my wide-eyed wonder.

In 30 years' time, the mountain and her plant life have changed much. Many of the azaleas from which Clifton and I took cuttings are no longer there. When the road, new parking, and picnic areas were rebuilt, many shrubs were dug and removed to various universities and arboreta. The exquisite red Flame Azaleas on Wine Springs Bald on the west side of the road that Clifton and I walked around in the early 70s have been slowly choked out by the invasive brambles. The *R. arborescens* var. *richardsonii* located around the stone tower on Wayah were in some cases over head-high now, while in 1969 I had walked a path through them and noted a bronze survey marker with elevation stamped into it.

This day, our group of azalea nuts strolled the mountaintop savoring the cool air, the views, the azaleas, and mountain laurel, and most of all, the good time together. After a good lunch, we started the slow, intermittent drive down with a side adventure to Wine Springs Bald to see the azaleas and delightful blueberries. These latter plants have fine violet-pink new foliage and would make excellent shrubs for the home landscape.

The clear-cuts on the Forest Service Road 711 were calling, so we drove on after seeing the last azaleas on Wayah. Winding FS-711 is a 17-mile journey that ends at the turnoff to Burningtown Gap. At several locations, there are clear-cuts where the timber was removed in 1997, which has increased the growth and visibility of the azaleas. The large area covering approximately 15 acres was on fire with Flame Azalea. Bright burnt-orange colors were mixed with clear, bright yellows. To one side, an apricot cluster of blooms caught my eyes. Other shrubs had the appearance of the Cumberland

Azalea with smaller flowers and tubes, thinner texture of the lobes, and the slightly crinkled look to the dark green leaves.

As I strolled through the area, I couldn't help thinking a number of these shrubs were interspecifics, for the colors were so varied in shade. The sound of camera shutters clicking was all about as we all took photographs. Burton and I took cuttings, bagged them, and placed those treasures in ice coolers for rooting in two days.

By the time we pulled back onto FS-711, it was nearly time to head for our motel in Andrews, where several of us enjoyed the evening by sitting in rocking chairs on the wide front verandah. It was peaceful looking out to the Snowbird Mountains, and a sweater felt good in the cool air. Fun conversation about our day on the mountains filled the evening with frequent digressions about what we might find on Copper Bald the next day.

Later, I slept fitfully, for I was somewhat anxious about leading our group up Copper and finding we were too early or too late. Nature has a way of playing games with my field trip schedules as happened in 1996, when the peak bloom was almost three weeks later than normal.

After checking out, we started our drive to Burningtown Gap and the trailhead to Copper Bald. As we passed the intersection with FS-711, I saw several bright red Flame Azaleas on the high bank to the left. Further up the road, we turned onto a narrow gravel road that eventually led up to a parking area and the trailhead. We arrived on the dot, 30 minutes from the motel.

To our delight, there was a cooling breeze that made the heat of late June bearable. I inspected my daypack one last time to assure myself of having everything I needed, then pulled out my trusty hickory walking stick Burton gave me several years ago. For this mile-and-a-half hike, Burton led this party on a section of the Appalachian Trail. I often refer to this group in jest as the Geezer Troop, for all but the Hoopers are 60-plusers. If I'm wrong, please forgive me.

By the time we reached the Cold Springs Shelter, all were ready for a rest stop and to settle down for a quick snack and some bottled water. The near-by spring is listed as "potable" on the trail maps, but without purification tablets I wouldn't drink it.

About a quarter mile up the trail, we started seeing azaleas in bloom. I noted many shrubs in tight bud and I began to worry that we were too early. As we made a turn in the trail, we were greeted with a bright flush of red and orange on the lower trailside, and then an eight-foot shrub overhanging the trail was adorned in bright pink. We had arrived at the cluster of natural hybrids and all about were beautiful azaleas in many shades of pink, white, orange, and red. Most of the pink-flowered shrubs were on the up-slope to our right with their feet hidden by dense fern growth.

As if a hand grenade had been thrown into our midst, everyone dispersed, each pushing through the fern and shrubs to get "up close and personal" with the azaleas. Edward Collins of Hendersonville, North Carolina, is making an in-depth study of this azalea population and has promised an article to be published in the future. For me, it is a truly stunning population of shrubs that needs further study, and, from my conversations with Ed, we agree that nature ran wild with the pollen between several species. There is ample evidence that *R. calendulaceum*, *R. arborescens*, *R. viscosum*, and *R. cumberlandense* were much involved.

After exploring the area for about two or three hours, our party reluctantly headed down the trail with a stop at the shelter to eat lunch. I do not recall who brought up the subject of ice cream, but we decided to return home by a somewhat different route. This change would take us to Robinsville for the ice cream, then 51 miles over the Snowbird Mountains on the Cherhala Skyline Parkway to Tellico Plains, Tennessee. This drive is a truly stunning passage. We found many azaleas in full bloom on the mountain and due to the curving nature of the road, found it necessary to pull off several times to keep lunch down! The highest point appeared to be a bald at 5,300

feet. The views were magnificent with deep gorges far below.

At Tellico Plains, the Hoopers and Dennises headed north to Knoxville, and the Johnstons and I turned southwestward to Chattanooga and home. The long drive home gave me time to think about our two-day adventure. I thought about the past 30 years, and how many times I had led folks into the wild to experience our native azaleas in good bloom.

Now in January, as I write this article and work on the year 2000 field trips, I'm of a firm belief that some of my greatest joys in nature are those moments when I see a newcomer's face light up at seeing thousands of azaleas in full flower. It is during those moments when the fire on the mountains is really felt. It is heart-warming and so very fulfilling to introduce people to one of my life's loves, and I will continue to do it until I can no longer walk. Come walk with me and feel the fire.

Further Reading

Skinner, Henry T. 1955, "In Search of Native Azaleas." *Morris Arboretum Bulletin*. January: 8.

Joe Schild has been involved in the nursery business for 30 years, and operated his own business since 1988. He is currently the vice president of the Azalea Society of America, a member of the Tennessee Nursery and Landscape Association (TNLA), and just retired as the Landscape Manager for Reflection Riding Arboretum & Botanic Gardens in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He presents programs on azaleas, rhododendrons, and native plants to garden groups, other ASA chapters, and TNLA training groups. He was founding president of the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the ARS, and currently serves as its vice president and program chairman.



'Millie Mac' Misbehaves

Donald H. Voss — Vienna, Virginia

One of the surprises in my garden during the spring of 1999 was an aberrant inflorescence on *Rhododendron* 'Millie Mac'. The winter had been mild and, after a temperature rise to 71° F. on March 9, freezing nighttime temperatures (as low as 17°F.) occurred March 11-16. I attribute the strange performance of several plants to that weather sequence.

The normal flower coloration of 'Millie Mac' (Photo 1.) is yellow axially along each lobe, with white margins on the lateral edges. On the aberrant inflorescence (Photo 2.), the lobes are white, except for the yellow blotch on the upper lobe. The two pictured inflorescences were on two forks of a single branch.



Photo 1. *Rhododendron* hybrid 'Millie Mac' in typical coloration.
Photo by Donald H. Voss

Galle identified 'Millie Mac' as a "... selection of wild *austrinum*" from Escambia County, Alabama. Did the abnormal inflorescence on my plant provide a useful clue to the lineage of 'Millie Mac'? To explore this possibility, I sent the slides and, later, a branch with leaves, capsules, and a flower to Dr. Kathleen Kron, author of the "Edinburgh Revision" of *Rhododendron* section *Pentanthera*. Portions of Dr. Kron's replies are extracted below, with her permission:

"From the photos I would say that *R. austrinum* is a good likelihood for a parent (at least)...both *R. austrinum* and *R. canescens* occur in Escambia Co., Alabama and surrounding

counties (in Florida panhandle as well). From the color variation and the fact that the leaf is apparently out, I would hazard a guess of *R. austrinum* x *R. canescens* (July 26, 1999)."

"I have looked at the branchlet, fruits, and seeds of the sample you sent me. I am quite sure that your specimen of 'Millie Mac' has *R. austrinum* in its parentage. There are a few glandular hairs on the petioles and along the very lowermost margin of the leaf. The twigs are very densely covered with multicellular gland-headed hairs, and the cross-walls of the testa [seed-coat] cells are not tapered. These characteristics indicate *R. austrinum* as a parent. However, the extent of the glandular hairs along the margin of the leaves is very short in this plant—shorter than expected for "pure" *R. austrinum*.

"As for the other parent, it is a bit more difficult to be sure, but I would say that it is probably *R. canescens*. Characters

that support this are the dense unicellular hairs on the twigs and leaves; the weakly glandular or non-glandular multicellular hairs on the fruit; and the dense covering of unicellular hairs on the vegetative bud scales. There are populations of other species, such as *R. viscosum*, that would also have these characters, but when flowering time is taken into consideration, along with geography, it seems most likely that *R. canescens* is the other parent (September 14, 1999)."

The tentative identification of 'Millie Mac' as *R. (austrinum* x *canescens)* suggests the origin of the white margining of the petal lobes. The corolla lobes of *R. austrinum* are normally a solid color in the yellow to reddish orange range, while those of *R. canescens* are pink to white.

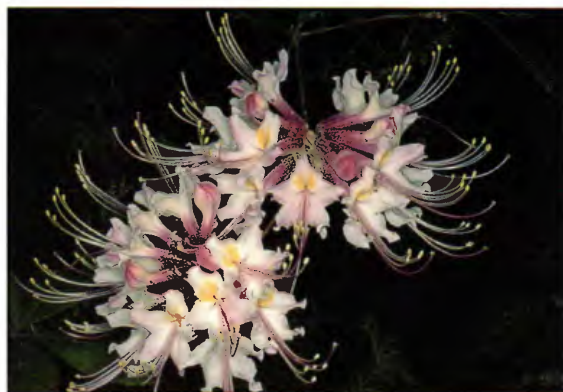


Photo 2. Aberrant inflorescence of *R. 'Millie Mac'* on same branch as flower in Photo 1.
Photo by Donald H. Voss

As to the aberrant inflorescence on my 'Millie Mac', the one thing that can be said with certitude is: "Azaleas sometimes produce sports." Was the sport a result of the March freeze, the neighbor's stereo, or sunspots? Perhaps time will tell. My 'Satrap' has a branch on which all of the flowers have been solid red for the past five seasons. One year in the mid-1970s, my 'Fawn' had solid purplish pink flowers but has had the normal margined flowers ever since.

The sporting branch on my 'Millie Mac' was tagged to be watched. If the color pattern of the corollas on that branch returned to normal, I would consider it a vote for a "sequence of abnormal weather conditions" hypothesis for explaining the sport observed in 1999. Unhappily, perhaps because of the severe drought during 1999, neither of the tagged branchlets set bud. Perhaps next year ...

Donald H. Voss is a frequent contributor to THE AZALEAN. He is an expert on the azaleas of Robert Gartrell, the Robin Hill hybrids, and a former chairman of the Society's board of directors and keeper of the Society's database. An economist by training, he now volunteers at the herbarium of the U.S. National Arboretum.

New Ways With Wild Azaleas

Mike Creel — Lexington, South Carolina

Deciduous azaleas at large, American natives in particular, have acquired a negative reputation across this country as being less showy due to their bare winter branches, more difficult to propagate than typical evergreen azaleas, and slower to come into flower than their cousins from China and Japan. Methods used to multiply desirable natives have included planting seeds of known and unknown parentage, division of the stoloniferous species, simple layering, stool layering, air layering, root cuttings, softwood cuttings and most recently, tissue culture. But the production of deciduous natives by every means has been greatly outdistanced by evergreen azaleas grown from hardwood cuttings.

There are few, if any, regions across America where the beauty of local wild azaleas cannot be found. But far too many native stands have been destroyed in dormancy when clearing land for a home site, when maintaining a public roadside, or by admiring passers-by with distant admiration but a lack of ethics and often a brown thumb. Many natives will thrive outside their usual range if properly sited in the correct microclimate: I have 14 of the 16 species established in my woodlands in central South Carolina, with the other two coming along.

The four easiest species to propagate, along with their cultivars, are Pinxterflower (*R. periclymenoides*), Coast azalea (*R. atlanticum*), Alabama azalea (*R. alabamense*) and Swamp azalea (*R. viscosum*), which includes the Hammocksweet, formerly *R. serrulatum*, *R. coryii*, and *R. oblongifolium*. Beyond this, keen plantspeople are finding stoloniferous forms of a number of non-spreading species like *R. flammeum*, *R. arborescens*, *R. calendulaceum* and others. I have been attempting hybridization of *R. atlanticum* with *R. calendulaceum* and *R. flammeum* by proximity planting to produce stoloniferous yellow and orange offspring. Results so far from this breeding are one vivid tricolor I call Rainbow Flame, spreading habit unknown. Sister hybrids are seasons ahead.

A great majority of wild-dug azaleas die after replanting from a loss of roots.

So I recommend gardeners to rely on nursery-grown plants. Smaller plants adapt better than large ones. It is easy to find source nurseries on the Internet by searching specifically for the species or cultivar.

Perhaps the greatest need is for improved propagation techniques that can be shared gardener-to-gardener and possibly adapted to larger scale production. For native azaleas to become a mainstay of our gardens much work remains to be done to educate people and encourage greater appreciation of America's 16 species, their selected cultivars, various color forms, and desirable hybrids. Work remains to be done to learn to properly site and plant such azaleas. Most accepted propagation methods keep plants too wet, but quick drainage is critical. I have found that old tree stump holes — with rotted bark tilled in and left a few months — make prime planting sites, particularly in clay soils.

While a novice compared to many, I have experienced success in my ways with wild azaleas by trying often unorthodox propagation techniques, most using hardwood cuttings without the aid of a greenhouse or automated mist system. The real secret to rooting these natives seems to be to provide perfect drainage through choice of potting media and container and to incorporate soil mycorrhizae into the media for both cuttings and seedlings. Prevent heat buildup among cuttings while affording sunlight. And most importantly, be patient while nature works its magic! Remember that tree limbs in the Northwest and tropical rainforests have rooted after falling from heights and being impaled in the forest floor.

Propagation Without a Greenhouse

I do all my propagation "sans greenhouse," using plastic drink bottles when it's warm outside and a Plexiglas-covered pit as added protection for leafy cuttings when it's cold. Pots are always located under high shade, afforded by longleaf pines in my case. My rooting dome is a 2-liter clear soft drink bottle with labels removed and cap left on. It is just a bit smaller in diameter than a standard 1-gallon plastic pot and fits nicely

inside the rim. Cut it in half or three-fourths the height for taller cuttings, and use the top half pressed down into the media. Be careful in cutting the bottle. First make a slot with a knife, then cut around with heavy scissors.

Once the cuttings are securely rooted in the pot (about late summer), you should remove the cap — but not the clear dome — and let the cuttings become adjusted to drier air outside the dome for at least two weeks before removal. Continue once-a-week watering if no rains come. The dome *sans* cap protects the cuttings but allows ventilation. This year I left the uncapped domes over some cuttings during the winter in some late-rooted pots that were stuck in July. The domes kept our 6-inch snow off the dormant cuttings but allowed snow and ice to melt and enter the pot between dome and pot edge.

Media Plus Mycorrhizae

Be sure to always test your potting mix after filling a plastic pot: water it heavily and make sure it drains quickly, leaving no puddles to percolate through. The medium I use is actually labeled soil conditioner — just finely-milled composted pine bark with some accidental sand in it. It can be amended slightly by adding one-third or one-fourth (by volume) of a good non-soil medium like BACCTO Growers Mix.

Sometimes when I am trying to explain my native azalea propagation methods, it seems to parallel "cold fusion," an experiment no one has been able to duplicate. But my methods do work, if you follow the procedures closely and don't substitute any part, particularly the "well-draining" growing media and addition of mycorrhizal bacteria. When you take native azalea cuttings or plant seeds, remember to collect some leaf litter and humus from the source plant for mycorrhizae inoculation. Steep the material in water for about 15 minutes and sprinkle over the planted pot or crumble about a tablespoonful over the pot and water in. For seedlings, I cover the pot with a cap of fine mesh hardware cloth and place outside in late fall, without the clear dome.

Dormant Cutting Method

If you have any difficult-to-root native azaleas, you might try rooting them while they are dormant in late winter or early spring — before the leaves begin to emerge or in the summer after leaves mature.

- 1) Use a tested and proven well-drained medium that will retain its perfect drainage after repeated natural and sprinkler watering. (I use a finely-milled composted pine bark.) Inoculate the medium after planting with soil mycorrhizae by making a solution of one gallon of water mixed with one cup (minimum) of leaf litter and humus from beneath the source native azalea.
- 2) Place the dome-covered pots outdoors in a location with filtered sun or half shade (so heat won't build up to a killing level) that will get weekly watering by rains or a sprinkler.
- 3) Use last year's most vigorous shoots (with flower buds removed) — not brittle, twiggy growth that had flowers or seeds on it last season. Make 3- to 4-inch cuttings with just leaf buds (remove flower buds if present) of last year's strongest woody growth. Make a fresh angled cut at the base of the cutting and an inch-long scrape down the side of the cutting to the base.
- 4) Patiently observe the pots to assure they don't lose their domes, get too hot with the changing sun location, or get knocked over by squirrels or the neighbor's dog. (Press the domes securely down into the medium.) Water can enter the pot between the dome and the pot rim, which is important as I think that direct overhead watering kills as many plants as does over-watering that results in a constantly soggy medium. In areas colder than midlands South Carolina, it might be wise to place pots in a 2- to 3-foot-deep pit in the ground covered with Plexiglas.

When collecting cuttings, be prepared with several freezer-strength Ziploc bags, a labeling pen that writes well on plastic bags, a small pair of pruners, a bottle of well water (nonchlorinated), some brown paper towels (as found in commercial bathrooms with no air dryer). I recommend using some smaller sandwich bags in which to stow a little leaf litter and humus (placed inside the appropriate cutting bag).

Heel Cuttings

Taking heel cuttings is another of my methods for hard-to-root native azaleas. What I call a heel cutting takes longer to reach blooming size, but it is often the only alternative to acquire and establish a highly desirable form from the field when it is showing its colors, without harming the original plant. It has also worked for upper stem cuttings at bloom time, but is slow. Sometimes I will put immature heel cuttings that have leafed out into my ground pit before frost in the fall for winter protection.

Heel cuttings can be taken in spring, summer, or fall. Spring gives you the advantage of the upcoming warm growing season and being able to see cultivars in bloom. This method is for non-stoloniferous, non-seeding clones, such as some selections of *R. flammeum*. **Don't collect cuttings from protected areas without first getting permission.**

On a desirable cultivar, find the lowermost small stem with a base that touches the ground or is underneath the ground or moist leaf mold. A color or texture change should be noticeable where the bark touches the ground. Make a shallow cut between the mother plant and the stem taking care to get as much of the ground contact stem as possible. Take care not to disturb the mother plant or damage critical roots. Take just one cutting. Place the cutting promptly in a plastic Ziploc bag with a moist paper towel and tag or mark the bag as to color and form of cultivar and date. Transfer this information to a permanent tag for the pot.

Plant the cuttings as soon as possible or refrigerate for couple of days. I plant cuttings in well-draining pots of mixed half peat moss and half dark sandy loam or in a mixture three-fourths to two-thirds composted finely-milled pine bark with BACCTO Grower's mix. Remove all leaves. Cut back the top two-thirds of stem. Leave only one inch or less above ground. Do not cover. I keep the pots outside near the north wall of my house, a shady well-drained site. Keep the pots moist, but not soggy. If water appears to stand and not drain through promptly, repot. Leaf buds should start to appear along the bare stem in three weeks or so.

I think that removal of all leaves from the heel cutting lessens the stress of supporting these vestigial parts while roots

are forming. It also forces bud formation and break. I believe that this cutting has an advantage over upper stem cuttings in that the stem has a "pre-rooting zone" and can get with the business of growing roots rather than transforming stem tissue to callus and then to root. It is surprising how such a small cutting with no leaves and little stem will grow a plant.

Using patience and rooting media with good drainage, I have now been able to root native azaleas virtually year-round without the aid of a greenhouse. The pit I use is less than three feet deep and in high shade under pines. From the constant ground temperature the pit stays warm enough to keep *Impatiens* in bloom all winter in the South Carolina midlands.

A Unique Event?

Finally, I must mention yet another rooting technique that has resulted in one living example, an azalea I tagged "Leaf Rooter." This two-and-a-half-foot azalea — not blooming yet — was grown by rooting a leaf pulled from a native azalea and placed in a closed, clear container filled with long-fiber sphagnum moss. Roots grew from both the leaf veins and base of the leaf petiole, and miraculously a stem emerged from the leaf base. The "leaf rooter" premiered.

I do not know whether a hidden bud was attached to the leaf I pulled off the original stem or whether the new stem grew from undifferentiated tissue in the petiole. I repeated the experiment with leaves (cut in half at an angle) from native azaleas, *Clethra*, and *Stewartia*. Each leaf grew a large, vigorous callus at the petiole base, but I got in too much of a hurry, repotted the leaves outside in the wrong media, and lost the whole lot. The experiment bears repeating. The next time I will also intentionally leave a bud and short stem section at the leaf base, as well as use just the leaves, cut in half of course, to prevent too much water loss.

Conclusion

My techniques may not be appropriate for "mass" production, but they are effective, particularly in rooting start point material of unique wild varieties without harming the mother plants. Further refinement of the techniques could have wider application than backyard

continued on page 41

Focus on Native Azaleas

Here are some samples of hundreds of the color forms and ranges possible in the landscape when using deciduous native azaleas.



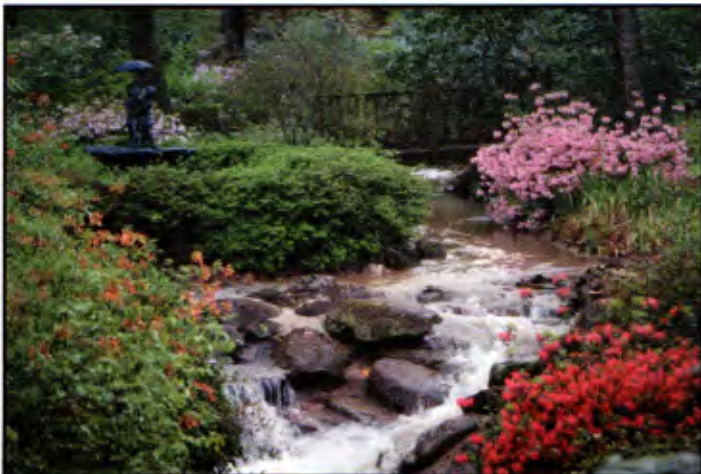
Wonderful colors result when a native species — Oconee Azalea — crosses with an Exbury hybrid: *Rhododendron flammeum* x 'Marion Merriman'.
(Photo by Earl Sommerville)

Brilliant scarlet of *R. prunifolium*, the Plum Leaf Azalea, loved by hummingbirds
(Photo by Earl Sommerville)



Mature native azaleas act as major landscape focal points due to their bright color and size in Earl Sommerville's home garden.

(Photos by Earl Sommerville)





A new *R. flammeum* seedling, *R. 'Sarah Creel'*, propagated from wild seed by Mike Creel. Named for his daughter, this has little to no fragrance and blooms with the earlier *R. flammeum* plants.
 (Photo by Mike Creel)

When you want white to tone down all the fire from other native azaleas, try *R. atlanticum*, which has the further benefit of wonderful fragrance.
 (Photo by Earl Sommerville)



Another example of *R. flammeum* crossed with an Exbury hybrid.
 (Photo by Earl Sommerville)

A two-species cross, *R. calendulaceum* x *R. flammeum*.
 (Photo by Earl Sommerville)



Further Reading on Deciduous Azaleas

References in back copies of THE AZALEAN — a wealth of information, arranged chronologically:

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- Prince, Martha. 1983. "Our Native Azaleas." 5(3): 37-39. [Line drawings accompany each species.]
- Skinner, Henry. 1986. "In Search of Native Azaleas – Part 1." 8(1): 11-17. [A reprint of the *Morris Arboretum Bulletin*. 6:3-10. Part of the "Azalea Classic Series."]
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- Schild, J.E. 2000. "Azaleas of Reflection Riding Arboretum and Botanical Garden." 22(1): 13-14, 20.

[Back copies may be ordered from Col. Murray Sheffield, 334-567-4974. See price list on Table of Contents page, this issue. You can view an extensive discussion on the azaleas@azaleas.org email discussion forum about care and culture of deciduous azaleas by consulting the archives feature. As a refresher on how to do this, please see Going to the Archives sidebar, Ed.]

Going to the Archives

To see the archives, use your browser to go to <http://www.azaleas.org> and choose Archives from the sidebar menu or click it at the bottom of the page. This goes to the archives page, which has links for each month as well as a search facility.

To see the e-mails by date and thread (topic), click the link for the month of interest. That shows a page of e-mail subjects, authors and dates, ordered by date and subject. If an e-mail is a reply to another e-mail with the same subject, it is shown under the original regardless of date. This makes it easier to follow a "thread" of e-mails on the same subject. Sometimes, however, an author will change the subject line slightly; you'll have to look around to be sure you've seen all the e-mail on the same or almost the same subject.

Navigating within Archives: Clicking an e-mail in this list shows its complete text and any attachments. Clicking your browser's Back button then returns to the index list.

Search Tips: If you know a word or phrase that is apt to be in the e-mails you are interested in, you can do a search for that word or phrase. Type it into the search box and click Search. That shows a list of all the e-mails containing your search text, ordered by the number of matches for each. This search feature has a long Help page which explains different ways to find just those e-mails you are interested in—no more and no less.

You may also review the archives via e-mail. To get started, send an empty e-mail to azaleas-index.1_500@azaleas.org to get a list of the first 500 e-mail subjects, authors and dates in the archive. When you see one that looks interesting, note its number, such as 287. To get it, send an empty e-mail to azaleas-get.287@azaleas.org. Or, to get all the messages with that same subject, send an empty e-mail to azaleas-thread.287@azaleas.org. If you know you want to look at the entire thread, or keep it for future reference, that's much faster than visiting the archives, since the archives only show one e-mail at a time.

For example, there is a current thread on growing deciduous azaleas under the subject Growing Deciduous Azaleas.

Azalea Gardens

Ames-Haskell Collection at the National Gallery of Art

A very special collection of azaleas now resides at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., due to a generous donation by Mr. Allen C. Haskell of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Many of the plants from the Ames-Haskell Collection are from the original Kurume azalea collection brought into the United States by John S. Ames of North Easton, Massachusetts. Mr. Ames obtained a small group of Kurumes from the Yokohama Nursery Company in 1916, with the assistance of the famous plant explorer Ernest ("Chinese") Wilson. In 1917, the Ames Collection was increased when Wilson obtained additional Kurumes from Oishi Gardens in Hatageya. In all, Wilson collected 50 Kurumes, sending them to the Arnold Arboretum near Boston for evaluation, where they were judged to be a valuable introduction into American gardens.

Originally, the Ames Collection plants were grown as greenhouse specimens, and they were only gradually introduced to Boston's climate. The plants proved relatively hardy, and many are now grown in the Boston area. The Kurumes have become popular in American gardens, especially in the Mid-Atlantic States, whose climate is similar to their native Japanese environment.

After Mr. Ames died, the collection came into the hands of noted Massachusetts horticulturist and nurseryman Allen C. Haskell of New Bedford. Haskell added substantially more plants of his own collection to make the whole collection an outstanding display of azaleas. The Ames-Haskell Collection was first displayed in 1976 at the New England Flower Show in Boston. Since that time, the collection has won more than 30 awards, including the Arnold Arboretum Award, the Garden Club of America Award, the Chicago Horticultural Society Award, the New England Flower Show Director's Award, and nine gold medals.

Regarding the displays of the collection, Genevra Higginson, Assistant to the Director for Special Events at the Gallery, noted "For many years, Allen Haskell, an artist whose medium is plants, worked closely with me, planning and growing the appropriate plant material to accompany exhibitions. In 1991, he asked if the Gallery might be interested in having the azalea collection, and thus it came here on the occasion of the Gallery's 50th anniversary. Since then, it has become a tradition to display them each spring around the great rotunda fountain in the West Building, where they are seen by thousands of visitors from all around the world."

The Gallery's Chief Horticulturist Don Hand says, "The National Gallery of Art is, indeed, fortunate to have this amazing collection of azaleas. We not only maintain the present collection but continue to propagate and renew the plants in the collection, as well as add new varieties from the groups represented."

The present collection at the National Gallery contains several of the original varieties sent to Mr. Ames by "Chinese" Wilson (Wilson's names in parentheses):

- 'Benifude' ('Sunbeam')—salmon pink, white throat, single, 1-2 inches in diameter
- 'Hana Asobi' ('Sultan')—red-orange, single, to 2-3 inches in diameter, highly ruffled
- 'Ho O' ('Apple Blossom')—mostly white blushed with light pink, single, 1-2 inches in diameter
- 'Otome' ('Maiden's Blush')—blush pink, single, 1-2 inches in diameter
- 'Sakura Tsukasa' ('All-A-Glow')—bright pink, very open corolla, single, 1-2 inches in diameter
- 'Waka Kayede' ('Red Robin')—bright orange-red, single, borne in heavy masses, 1 inch in diameter

- 'Beni Kirishima'—orange-red, large, double, now classified as a Satsuki

The collection also includes many specimen plants from other hybrid groups, such as the Belgian, Rutherford, Southern Indian, and Glenn Dale hybrids.

Further Reading on Wilson's Fifty:

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Wilson, E. H. and A. Rehder, 1921. *A Monograph of Azaleas*. In Publications of the Arnold Arboretum Series, No. 9: 33-38. Cambridge, MA: The University Press.

[This article was developed at the suggestion of ASA member Jerry Goodman from Verona, New Jersey, who saw this collection at the National Gallery. Material used is based on information provided by the National Gallery of Art. Some Society members may remember that Don Hand used to draw the covers for THE AZALEAN. A similar article appeared in THE AZALEAN in 1991, 13(3): 56, after Diane Gregg from Brookside Gardens chapter had visited the National Gallery and had seen the display, Ed.]

see photo on page 40





The Ames-Haskell Azalea Collection, West Building Rotunda, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Photo used by permission of the Gallery.

Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden Dedication

Sunday, April 9, 2000, Stephen F. Austin State University and the SFA Mast Arboretum officially dedicated the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden at a reception for the garden's major benefactor Mrs. Dorothy Mize Wisely and members of her family. The dedication ceremonies were attended by members of the SFA Board of



Interim SFA President Dr. Roland Smith, Regent Pattye Greer, and Dr. David Creech, Director of the SFA Mast Arboretum, and Azalea Garden Endowment benefactor Dorothy Mize Wisely, at the unveiling of the plaque dedicating the garden to Mrs. Wisely's mother, Ruby May Mize.

Photo by SFA Photographer Hardy Meredith

Regents, representatives from the SFA administration, and about 150 invited guests. The reception was held in the garden under a cloudless and cool spring sky. Mrs. Wisely unveiled a bronze dedicatory plaque mounted on a native East Texas iron ore rock in the garden's focal point, the Council Ring. She especially noted the plaque's inscription, which she feels captures the way her mother felt about gardens:

*With the kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth;
One is nearer God's heart in a garden
Than anywhere else on earth.*

Mrs. Wisely thanked all the well-wishers who continue to support the use and growth of the garden, and asked, "Now, isn't this just a little piece of Heaven?" The dedication ceremonies closed with brief tours around the garden.

For more information, contact Dr. David L. Creech, 936-468-4343, or visit the website, www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum/azaleagarden.

[Editor's note: The quotation is from poet Dorothy Francis Gurney, 1858-1932.]

Callaway Gardens Opens Garden Center

Until April 17, 2000, plant material seen at Callaway Gardens was only available on site through a once-a-year Plant Sale in March. Now you can buy year-round at their new retail Garden Center, located in the newly renovated Information Center on US Highway 27. This brick-and-mortar-site will also help expand the plant selection already available for purchase at the online retail outlet at www.callawaygardens.com.

Society member Hank Bruno, Trails Manager for Callaway, has been developing the new garden center. Plant material on sale includes: herbs, perennials, shrubs, water garden plants, trees, annual bedding plants, and vines. Among other merchandise featured are garden tools, pots, and books. After-tax proceeds from the Garden Center's sales support the nonprofit Ida Cason Callaway Foundation, owner of Callaway Gardens.

For more information, contact the website listed, or telephone 1-800-Callaway (1-800-225-5292).

continued from page 35

use. The problem with most standard propagation — when dealing with native plants — is over-watering and poor drainage.

I believe that each of these unorthodox propagation methods I am using has a future, at least among patient and caring gardeners seeking to grow and establish the choicest forms of America's native azaleas, thereby preserving a bit of natural heritage on their homestead.

It seems more the rule than the exception for new native azalea and some rhododendron cultivars (mostly seedlings) to be named and then to never be propagated at all or to vanish after a year or two in a few catalogs. I wish there was an old living repository of past native azalea cultivars somewhere.

I hope to improve native azalea propagation techniques so that superior cultivars (not just seedlings) can continue in propagation by breeding and identifying a number of easy-to-propagate cultivars. I do not feel that tissue culture will always produce truly viable, long-lived plants. Another need is to create an informative list of current and important past cultivars; a list of source nurseries and breeders; and to write a book on all the 16 species, which will enable more gardeners to grow and enjoy native azalea cultivars hardy to their areas all across America.

Mike Creel is the senior news writer for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources in Columbia. He is an avid native plant conservationist, photographer, and lecturer — as well as propagator — who occasionally assists state botanists in field and literature studies. He can be reached at: Phone: 803-734-3950; Fax: 803-734-3951; E-mail: creelm@scdnr.state.sc.us .

Azalea Care & Culture

Black Walnut Trees' (Juglone) Effect on Azaleas

Phil Louer — Haymarket, Virginia

[The following is a reprint from the Northern Virginia Chapter "Azalea Clipper," Vol. 21(2), 1999, Ed.]

There were some communications recently on the Azaleas e-mail list concerning the effect of juglone (from black walnut trees) on plants, specifically, azaleas. It started with a message from Bob Stelloh, Treasurer of the Azalea Society of America.

Bob was researching the topic of allelopathy (poisons put out by plants, either to kill other plants or to make themselves unattractive to insects) for a friend who has a lot of black walnut trees (known to put out "juglone" that kills competitive plants). He noted a few azaleas listed that are purported not bothered by juglone: *Rhododendron periclymenoides*, and the Exbury hybrids 'Gibraltar' and 'Balzac.' For a list of other tolerant plants and more information on the topic, he referred to the website: <http://www.anet-chi.com/~manytimes/page18.htm> .

Barbara Bullock, Curator of Azaleas, US National Arboretum, Washington, DC, replied to the above message. She was reporting about the (10,000-plus or minus) 55-year-old Glenn Dales planted on the south slope of Mt. Hamilton in the National Arboretum. The black walnut is a native species on the hillside. Where there are old black walnut trees (about two), the Glenn Dale azaleas have died out. Where there are black walnut trees that have seeded in, and have not yet fruited, the azaleas still thrive. They [Arboretum staff] try to remove the saplings as soon as they see them. There is an ongoing tree removal program, but the dangerous trees get the higher priority for removal. The black walnuts [at the Arboretum] are not dangerous to their visitors. So...as far as Barbara can see, Glenn Dales are NOT tolerant of juglone.

We (the Louers) have had considerable experience with the black walnut trees and the juglone effect on azaleas. When we bought our five acres 20 years ago,

we had about 12-14 black walnut trees on the property. We innocently planted many azaleas near these trees, many varieties including the Glenn Dale, Robin Hill, Satsuki, Gable, Girard, Kurume, and other hybrids.

All of these plants within a radius of about 40 feet from each tree died over the years—a total of more than 200 plants. One particular plant, 'Big Joe' (Gable), lived longer than most, but not well. We moved it to a better location, and it has survived well. As far as other flowers are concerned, we did find that iris and gladiolus would grow all right under these trees.

We have since reclaimed the areas by, first, removing every black walnut tree. About two to three years after each tree was cut down, we again planted azaleas. We dug the holes larger than the plant root ball, removed the dirt completely, refilled the hole with fresh dirt and compost, and then planted the azaleas. Our success rate with this restoration process is near 100% after five to 15 years. We have not lost any plants that we can trace to the juglone effect in the restoration area.

[For the complete discussion on this topic on the Azalea e-mail list, subscribe to azaleas@azaleas.org, then use the archives feature described in the sidebar on page 38 to review all the e-mails contributed, Ed.]

Philip Louer has been a member of the Society since 1979. Phil and his wife Frances have been active in the Northern Virginia Chapter. They opened their five-acre garden near Haymarket, Virginia, for one of the tours offered during the Society's annual convention in 1998. Their woodland garden collection contains over 2,000 varieties of azaleas intermixed with many interesting companion plants. Phil, for the past several years, has been editor of the chapter newsletter, "The Azalea Clipper."

Society News

Report of the Membership/Public Information Committee for 2000

William C. Miller III — Membership Chairman

For the period April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000, I submit the following report. Twenty-three letters were received from 13 states and three non-North American countries (England, Norway, and Germany). The most mail came from Florida. April, June, and August were the busiest months for correspondence. While the number of incoming letters dropped off very significantly when compared to previous years, it was more than made up for by e-mail traffic. With the growth of the ASA's e-mail list and the advent of the "Ask Us" module of the ASA's official website, some who would have previously written letters are now using the electronic facilities.

Annual Mass Mailing of ASA Brochures

A mass mailing of more than 1100 membership brochures (hand addressed during the month of November) was posted during the last week in December, 1999. Special thanks to Bee and Bob Hobbs for the pre-processing and the actual mailing at the North Beach, Maryland, post office. The mass mailing activity would not have been possible without Bee and Bob.

Last year at this time, I issued a special plea to all you folks who operate nurseries and belong to state, regional, or local associations (e.g., Southern Nurseryman Association or local garden clubs). I asked that you please send me copies of your membership listings so that I could

target our mass mailings to such groups. I want to thank the two gentlemen (you know who you are) who took the trouble to do what I asked. Now... what about the rest of you?

A New Brochure and a Distribution Program

It was necessary to revise and reprint the ASA membership brochure that was three years old and out of date. On March 3, 2000, the printer delivered an improved, tan colored brochure on schedule. Working supplies of the new brochure were either mailed directly to the ASA chapters or hand delivered to chapter representatives who attended the ASA National Meeting in Charleston. All of the local chapters have now been provided with brochures to use in their public outreach programs.

In 1999, Jim Thornton proposed and Bob Stelloh developed a voluntary ASA brochure distribution program. In a survey that he conducted, he asked who would be willing to display ASA brochures at their places of business and who would be willing to include an ASA brochure in azalea orders. The response was quite positive, so positive that it exceeded the number of (old) brochures that I had on hand. Given that a new brochure was in the making, I decided to delay implementation of the new program until such time as the new brochure was available. On March 12th, I sent a personal letter to each of the 24 individu-

als who had responded favorably, and on March 16th a supply of brochures was mailed to each participant. Since there was no way to estimate how many brochures everyone could use beneficially, I selected an arbitrary number that I suspected would be too great for some and not enough for others. We will learn from this first distribution and adjust accordingly based on feedback. My thanks to the folks who have recognized that, in the final analysis, we are all ASA ambassadors-at-large.

Finally, with the recent activation of the "Join Us" module on the ASA website, it is now possible for people to join the ASA electronically and to pay for it with a credit card. I predict the "electronic means" will have an ever-increasing impact on the ASA.

Early Warning of New Members

Effective immediately, the Membership Committee will begin notifying chapter representatives by e-mail of all new members. This early and unofficial notice will be before the data is entered into the ASA database. In the past, the chapters were the last to learn of any new members due to the logistics of the process. Unfortunately, that often translated into a significant delay measured in weeks. This early notification will avoid that problem, and the chapters will be able to welcome their new members in a more timely fashion. The official notification process will continue to run its course as well.

Two Prizes for Best Article In THE AZALEAN for 1999

Barbara Stump — Editor



The Azalea Society of America has been blessed with a number of thought-provoking and well-written contributions from many members throughout this past publishing year. The membership voted, both via e-mail and at the 2000 Convention in Charleston, South Carolina, from among 21 fine candidates. The voting tally was the highest in recent years.

Results showed two articles as cleared leaders above the rest, and indicate the membership's twin interests in evergreen and native azaleas. This year's recipients were:

- Donald H. Voss for his article "The Growth Cycle of the Evergreen Azaleas," (pages 70-72, 74 in the December issue)

- Tom Dodd III for his article "Breeding and Propagating Native Azaleas," (pages 46-47 in the September issue).

Both have received handsome certificates created by Bob Hobbs as well as checks for \$50. The Society thanks them for their work on our behalf in helping continue our educational mission.

Chapter News

[Editor's Note: Many thanks for the wonderful newsletters I get from the various chapters. The hard work of the editors is quite evident, and the care and culture articles are especially welcome as material to publish for the entire readership of **THE AZALEAN**. The newsletters are a key way to share information, and my primary source of up-to-date input for the Azalea Calendar and In Memory sections of the Society's journal. Consider writing items for your local newsletter editors; they will really appreciate it, and so will I.]

Ben Morrison Chapter

Joan Sweeney, Newsletter Editor

Reporting about the February meeting hosted by Dr. Greg Stiverson at London Town Gardens in Edgewater, Maryland, chapter president Joe Miller especially noted the new faces at the meeting, particularly from Anne Arundel County and the northern reaches of Ben Morrison's membership area. The chapter voted to donate \$500 to London Town Gardens to assist in development of their native azalea gardens. To quote from the newsletter: "We all should be proud of this achievement, as it will represent a permanent contribution to the community in an effort to educate plant lovers about azaleas. Thanks to all who helped in this effort."

The chapter met May 7 at the Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum, St. Leonard, Maryland. Long-time chapter member L. Courtland Lee of the Boxlee Nursery, Glenn Dale, Maryland, discussed "Companion Plants for Your Azalea Garden." Boxlee Nursery features historic Glenn Dale azaleas and a wide selection of native azaleas, Satsuki, and companion plants. Bob Hobbs also presented a slide show of highlights from the 2000 ASA Convention in Charleston, South Carolina. Members exchanged favorite companion plants following the meeting.

Northern Virginia Chapter

Frances Louer, Corresponding Secretary

In a nice regional gesture, Frances sent the April 2000 newsletter to the former Richmond, Virginia, chapter members and other "At-Large" members in the northern Virginia area, inviting them to attend the meetings usually held at Green Spring Gardens Park, near Annandale.

Louisiana Chapter

Robert (Buddy) Lee Receives Award

Robert (Buddy) Lee, current director of ASA and past president of the Louisiana Chapter, was recently recognized with a Professional Achievement Award from the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association (LNLA).

Buddy was selected for his significant contribution to the industry through development of the "Encore Azalea" Series. These are a new group of multi-seasonal flowering azaleas being marketed by Flowerwood Nursery. Buddy received his award during LNLA's annual membership meeting held in Mobile, Alabama, during the Gulf States Horticultural Expo in January 2000. [Information contributed by Allen Owings, Executive Secretary, LNLA, Ed.]

Recent speakers: November, 1999, meeting: Don Voss, "Robin Hill Azaleas Revisited." Don discussed how his father-in-law, Robert Gartrell, who developed these azaleas, got started and continued to evolve other varieties. One special note, the correct name for one of the most well known is 'Nancy of Robinhill,' three words only. February 27, 2000: Don Hyatt, "Computers in the Garden." April 9, 2000: Several speakers on early-blooming varieties, with a focus on hybridizing. Local hybridizer Joe Klimawicz reported on results of his recent crosses. Members were invited to bring samples of their early-blooming plants. May 6, tours of members' gardens were held, organized by Barry Sperling.

Frances' report on the ASA Convention in Charleston, South Carolina, made interesting reading. We agree with her, "Ya should 'av been there!"

Finally, Phil Louer summarized the e-mail list's discussion of the effects of black walnut trees on azaleas. (See Azalea Care and Culture Section.)

Oconee Chapter

Ruth Bryan, Newsletter Editor

The March 5, 2000, meeting was a participation workshop held at the Rockdale Cooperative Extension Service in Conyers, Georgia. The Extension Service had asked a subcommittee of the Oconee Chapter to revise a slide series on azaleas. Jim Thornton, Al Penland, and Frank Bryan make up the subcommittee that is working with the existing slide series and script produced in 1981. Members were invited to attend to critique slides proposed to fill in gaps in the existing series and to contribute slides for duplication to make up the new slide series. Also invited

were design ideas for the title and subtitle slides that the Cooperative Extension Service will make to complete the project.

The Rockdale Cooperative Extension Service is now providing the meeting space for the Oconee Chapter, an arrangement that began with the November 5, 1999, meeting. The slide show describes common cultivars in yards in Georgia, shows other cultivars that are unique in color, bloom type, and time of bloom and culture techniques. The project is still in progress, with new slides coming from chapter members and the script is now in its fifth draft.

John Callaway agreed to fill the chapter vice president vacancy. He also serves as program chairman. Members were encouraged to contact him with ideas for future programs.

A cutting party and swap is planned for later this year, so azalea wish lists were to be sent to the Bryans, or phoned in to 770-760-1569.

NEW MEMBERS

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* Indicates new members who have e-mail addresses. Consult the printed Membership Roster enclosed with this issue or the Society's Online Roster, accessible from the Society website at www.azaleas.org.

In Memory

The Northern Virginia Chapter reported in February that they had lost one of their newest members: **Mary N. Dowell** "...enthusiastically supported our convention and chapter functions. May she rest in peace."

Member Dr. John Thornton of the Louisiana Chapter informed us that **Lloyd S. Cotton**, aged 67, died April 8, 2000. He was co-owner, with Thornton, of Pushepetappa Gardens in Pine, Louisiana. He is survived by his wife Phyllis and three daughters.