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The

Azalean

Journal of the Azalea Society of America

**An Azaleophile Salute—
Dr. John Lewis Creech**

Ben Morrison Chapter Field Trip

Grow Evergreen Azaleas From Seed

**Breeding Evergreen Azaleas
at Glendoick**

**The Winds of August
and September**



1000 Moody Bridge Road
Cleveland, SC 29635

President's Letter

Robert (Buddy) Lee — Independence, Louisiana

The spring azalea bloom season always passes faster than I would like. There is just something exciting after a long winter of waiting to enjoy the spring rebirth of my azalea garden. This time of the year just seems to energize me, and I get more of my projects completed and still have plenty of time to enjoy the spectacular show of blooms. I love working in my nursery and garden from daylight to dark in this wonderful time of the year.

I feel that our Society is at a turning point. Our goals have remained the same as they were from the onset of this Society; however, our means of achieving these goals have changed. In the late 70s when our by-laws were formed, the use of words such as Internet, Web page, and interactive on-line discussion were not part of the everyday language. Our journal has grown into a state-of-the-art publication that is not only colorful to look at but is also very educational and enjoyable to read. The Archives Project, the Azalea City Project, and our many other pursuits are all cutting edge attempts at perpetuating our Society and its goals into the future. The ASA is a strong and stable Society with a hard-working and devoted board of directors and officers.

So you may ask, "What is the problem?" Well to start with, I like the quote, "Your chances of getting what you need drastically improve if you just ask for it." So, if that is true, then here is what our Society needs. First, we need additional volunteers to help move this Society forward. Many of our officers have multiple duties and my fear is that they will get "burned out" over time. Second, we need to increase our operating finances. Our Board is extremely conservative and frugal with the Society's funds. Every member is very important to the Board, and every attempt has been made not to raise the annu-

al dues. Most members would probably be surprised to know that their dues do not even cover the cost of compiling, printing, and distributing our journal. Members of our Board work hard to solicit and maintain advertisers in our journal to help balance our operating costs. We have a significant endowment/general fund; however, our by-laws restrict the use of this fund as operating funds. Our dues, which have not been increased for a long time, may have to be increased to help cover the ever-increasing cost of doing business.

You can help by getting new members to join our Society; or better yet, give gift memberships to plant enthusiasts. Another way to help would be to make a gift contribution to the operating fund or to one of the projects such as the Azalea City Project. Our Archives Project is funded by a generous anonymous donor for which our Society is very grateful. Last but not least, I ask for your comments and ideas on how to improve our organization. The strength of the Azalea Society of America depends on an active membership. The Board and officers will be more than glad to hear from you.

Well, I guess that I am starting to sound like "Chicken Little." However, I can assure you that the sky is not falling on the ASA. Every progressive organization needs to periodically evaluate its operational status and to correct items that may hinder its potential and growth. I feel confident that the ASA is a very stable and progressive society. So "come on down" and get active with our Society; you will have a great time.

Hope you had a great spring and have a wonderful and productive summer.

Robert (Buddy) Lee

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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The Azalean

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On the Cover

'Haru-no-akebono' is a Kurume introduction by the late J.B. Stevenson of England. It is a moderate yellowish pink hose-in-hose 3/4" diameter flower, with a pale center and dark blotch. Planted in 1990 or before, the plant is now 45' wide by 23' tall. The source is unknown. (Photo by Bob Hobbs)



An Azaleaphile Salute — Dr. John Lewis Creech

William C. Miller III — Bethesda, Maryland

John Lewis Creech was born in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, on January 17, 1920, to Bessie (Faulkner) and Edward Creech, who were originally from England. He received a BS degree in Horticulture from the University of Rhode Island in 1941, and like many of his generation, World War II had a profound effect on his life. In 1941, as a newly commissioned ROTC graduate, he served with the First Infantry Division in North Africa. While on patrol, he was captured by the Germans and sent to the Oflag 64 Prisoner-of-War camp in Szubin, Poland. The camp was built around an old school, was used exclusively to hold US ground officers, and grew from about 150 American officers in 1943 to 1500 in January 1945. While a prisoner, he put his horticultural training into practice. The Germans allowed him access to a greenhouse and to three cold frames. He was permitted to develop and maintain a 2 1/2-acre plot of land on which he grew tomatoes, beets, lettuce, and other vegetables. Creech thus helped his fellow prisoners avoid starvation by supplementing the meager rations provided by the Germans. In 1945, he was liberated by



This USDA photo of Dr. John L. Creech was probably from the early 1980s and was among the photos of the Directors that hung in the hall at the National Arboretum. Thanks to Barbara Bullock, curator of azaleas, for assistance in obtaining the USDA photo. (All photos by author William C. Miller III unless otherwise noted.)



(L to R) Dr. John L. Creech; Dr. Shigetoshi Takabayashi, director of the Kyoto Botanical Garden; and Dr. Yotaro Tsukamoto, professor emeritus of Kyoto University. Photo taken on April 14, 1989, at the Kyoto Botanical Garden.

the Russians. For his efforts on behalf of his fellow prisoners, he was awarded a Silver Star and a Bronze Star.

After returning home, Creech resumed his studies and attended the University of Massachusetts, where in 1947 he earned an MS degree in Horticulture. That same year, he began his career with the US Department of Agriculture, joining the Office of Plant Exploration with the title of Horticulturist. That is where he met B. Y. Morrison, whom he much admired. Creech remarked that “my first order of business was to get a key to the (Arboretum) grounds and spend all my spare time working the azalea beds and other plantings with B. Y. Morrison, the first Director.” [1]

From 1950 to 1959, Creech was superintendent at the Glenn Dale Plant Introduction Station where, among other accomplishments, he participated in the final years of the Glenn Dale azalea distribution program, oversaw the completion of Morrison’s Belgian-Glenn Dale project, pursued his own azalea breeding program, and continued his education, earning a PhD in Botany from the University of Maryland in 1953. In 1955, consistent with his interest in ornamental plants of the Far East (especially camellias, hollies, and azaleas), Creech went on the first of nine international plant exploration expeditions sponsored by the USDA under an agreement with Longwood Gardens. Over his career, plant exploration destinations included Japan, Okinawa, China, Taiwan, Yugoslavia, USSR, and Nepal.



John L. Creech (right) is presented with a Gold Medal and Certificate of Merit by the Honorable Hisashi Taniguchi in the Mayor’s office at Kurume City Hall on April 17, 1989. Dr. Creech was the first foreigner to be so honored.

John Creech, the Plant Explorer

Following in the tradition of David Fairchild, Ernest Henry “Chinese” Wilson, R. Kent Beattie, P. H. Dorsett, and Frank N. Meyer, Creech’s record of plant introductions is breath-taking. A summary of material that he collected in his 1961 trip to Japan alone is six typed pages and includes *Ilex pubescens*, *Machilus thunbergii*, *Filipendula*

kamtschatica, *Poncirus trifoliata*, and a number of azaleas and rhododendrons with more familiar names. A more direct measure of Creech's contribution to the azalea community is to note how many times his name appears in Appendix C of Lee's *The Azalea Book*. [2] Appendix C is a compilation of federal azalea introductions (seeds, seedlings, scions, plants, and cuttings) beginning in the early 1900s. Creech's name is well represented on practically every page.

John Creech, the Scientist

It is beyond the scope of this article to adequately describe the azalea breeding program of John Creech, the research scientist, but certain general patterns reflect the wide-ranging nature of his interests. A survey of working documents from the files at "Bell Station" [3] reveals a number of interesting directions. Early in his career Creech



John L. Creech presenting paper entitled "Kurume Azaleas in Western Gardens" at Symposium, First International Azalea Festival at Kurume, Japan, April 17, 1989.

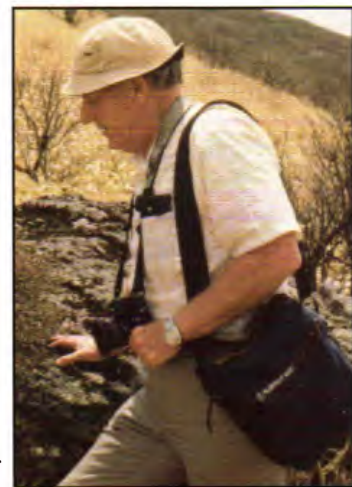
crossed *Rhododendron atlanticum* with many of the Ghent hybrids at the station. Select Glenn Dale hybrids (e.g., 'Sheila') were crossed with 'Seattle White' and Satsuki hybrids. He explored the evergreen by deciduous question with his *kaempferi* x *japonicum*, *kaempferi* x *luteum*, and *canescens* x *Mucronatum* crosses. In the mid-1950s, Creech returned to his focus on *atlanticum* and the American native azaleas. In the late 1950s, he conducted studies involving *weyrichii*, *reticulatum*, *simsii*, and *tosaense*.

Creech held increasingly responsible positions as Assistant Chief of the New Crops Research Branch from 1959 to 1966 and then Chief from 1966 to 1972. He was an Agricultural Research Service (ARS) National Program Staff Scientist from 1972 to 1973, after which he became the third Director of the National Arboretum, succeeding Dr. Henry Skinner in 1973. As he advanced in his career, Creech found that his duties inescapably took on a more administrative nature, clearly a situation not entirely to his liking. In an October 19, 1959 memorandum to his boss, Dr. Carl O. Erlanson, under the subject "Species Crosses in Rhododendrons," Creech sought to craft a "back door" that would enable him to continue his breeding activities. He wrote, in part:

"For several years, I have been making a few crosses between azalea species in the Section *Sciadorrhodion* and Section *Tsutsusi* as a means of showing the close relationship between these two groups. For example, we have at Glenn Dale, a few seedlings of the following crosses that I made as follows:

- R. weyrichii* x *R. reticulatum*
- R. simsii* x *R. weyrichii*
- R. weyrichii* x (*R. simsii* x *R. weyrichii*)
- R. tosaense* x *R. weyrichii*

"It is my understanding that even though the duties at the Branch level are administrative, we are encouraged to maintain a research interest. I should like to informally continue the program involving perhaps 2 to 3 crosses a year along the above lines. This would not involve more than my having the pollinations made at Glenn Dale and the progeny raised in an unheated greenhouse. I believe that this will neither interfere with my work nor the operations at Glenn Dale. Should any of these crosses produce material of more than basic research interest, I would turn them over to Dr. Whitehouse for use in his ornamental program."



John L. Creech visiting an ancient *Rhododendron kiusianum* at Handakogen highlands, part of the Aso Mountain range where *kiusianum* can be observed growing in the wild. This was an "old friend" that Dr. Creech had visited many times. Photo taken on April 19, 1989.

Erlanson's approval took the form of a brief handwritten comment.... "No objection... COE." [4]

In recognition of his expertise, Creech was asked to draft the US position paper for the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. In addition, Creech was one of the first to recognize and call attention to the problems of genetic erosion and the importance of genetic diversity. When major crops on which we are dependent are allowed to become genetically uniform, they become vulnerable to epidemics as was precisely demonstrated in 1970 when



'Mrs LBJ', an evergreen azalea named to honor Mrs. Lyndon Baines Johnson on the occasion of her presenting the first B.Y. Morrison Memorial Lecture in 1968. (Photo by Don Hyatt of a specimen at the Polly Hill Arboretum on Martha's Vineyard.)

the US corn crop was severely damaged by a virulent strain of *Bipolaris maydis*, the southern corn leaf blight.

Creech's foreign travel was not limited to plant exploration. In 1974, he went to China as a member of the first National Academy of Sciences Plant Science delegation to visit China since World War II.

The American Horticultural Society Connection

Ben Morrison was a very important figure in the early development of the American Horticultural Society (AHS), including serving as the editor of the society's journal, *The National Horticultural Magazine*, for 37 years. A very significant and influential figure in the horticultural community, it was only natural that others in Morrison's sphere of influence would become involved in the AHS. Creech was no exception and served as AHS president from 1953 to 1956. He also served on the Editorial Committee for the journal, eventually becoming the committee chairman. The purpose of the committee was to assist Morrison in securing material for publication. In 1954, Creech was the editor for a special AHS publication entitled "Vegetative Propagation," an 86-page "how to" compilation of thirteen articles covering every conceivable aspect of propagation in which Creech wrote the articles on "root cuttings" and "layering."

John Creech, USNA Director

Creech served as Director of the US National Arboretum from 1973 to 1980. Asked early on if he had any specific plans for the National Arboretum, he responded: "I really can't foresee any basic changes in direction. For years, Dr. Skinner had many dreams about the future of the Arboretum and has developed a master plan incorporating many of them. My ambition is to expand on the base that he has already developed." [1] While not contemplating radical departures, Creech envisioned the development of gardens and promenades for the elderly and the handicapped, features that dis-



'Ben Morrison', an evergreen azalea named to honor Benjamin Yoe Morrison, the first Director of the National Arboretum and a noted horticulturist. The prestigious Morrison Lecture was established in 1968 by the Agricultural Research Service.

played autumn colors as an alternative for those who couldn't escape to the mountains, and an increase in the emphasis on research and education activities.

Recognizing that even small matters are important, an example of one of Creech's first initiatives was to improve the appearance of the Arboretum's annual report that was submitted to the National Arboretum Advisory Council. A secondary function of the annual report was to serve as a vehicle for reporting progress to other arboreta and botanical gardens. Originally a simple mimeographed report, Creech perceived that its current form conveyed a certain image. With the addition of a cover page and plastic binding, the report looked more professional and was comparable to similar reports received from other arboreta, botanical gardens, and other USDA units.

In 1975, Creech took a leadership role in resolving the status of the Friends of the National Arboretum (FONA), which was an entity created by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Arboretum's Advisory Council and the Agricultural Research Service for the purpose of receiving gifts and expending funds on behalf of the Arboretum. The Department's Office of the General Counsel (lawyers) had questioned the adequacy of the MOU. It required Congressional action to modify the National Arboretum Act of March 4, 1927, to resolve the matter. This was more than a minor issue and over the years FONA has played a significant role in support of the Arboretum.

A number of significant changes in structure, program, and responsibility occurred during Creech's tenure as USNA Director. In 1975, the Plant Introduction Station at Glenn Dale became part of the Arboretum; Dr. William L. Ackerman transferred from Glenn Dale to the Arboretum to focus on his *Camellia* research; Dr. Howard E. Waterworth, a virologist by training, became the Glenn Dale "location leader"; and the study of plant viruses was added to Bell Station's responsibilities and quarantine mission.

Creech was instrumental in negotiating a gift from the Nippon Bonsai Association on behalf of the Japanese people in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the United States (America's Bicentennial in 1976). This led to the development of the Arboretum's National Bonsai Collection. The gift of 53 bonsai and six viewing stones (*suiseki*), in 54 cases and requiring 16 trucks, arrived at quarantine facilities at the Glenn Dale Plant Introduction Station on April 1, 1975, having been accompanied from Japan by John Creech and Sylvester ("Skip") March. The official dedication ceremony was on July 9, 1976. [5]

In 1976, the Arboretum received a \$5,985,000 supplemental appropriation for the acquisition and rehabilitation of the long sought after 32-acre brickyard property that adjoined the Arboretum. It was necessary for Creech to obtain the

approval of the National Capital Planning Commission, which approved the proposal on August 12, 1976.

Finally, the National Herb Garden was completed and dedicated. A cooperative project between the Arboretum and the Herb Society of America, the original concept of a National Herb Garden dated back as far as 1965 and a number of possible locations were considered before the Arboretum was selected. Due to Congressional regulations, it was necessary for the Herb Society to develop an "official" relationship with the Arboretum so that private funds could be used. Construction began on December 15, 1978, and the garden was dedicated on June 12, 1980. [6]

In August of 1980, Dr Creech retired from the Arboretum. Dr. Frank S. Santamour, Jr. served as Acting Director until Dr. Henry Marc Cathey assumed the position on June 14, 1981.

Publications and Recognition

An AGRICOLA (USDA bibliographic database) literature search reveals 47 Creech citations, the majority of which are published in *The American Nurseryman*. [7] In addition, Creech is the author of five articles in the *Journal American Rhododendron Society* beginning in 1967, and six articles in *The Azalean* beginning in 1985. Some of his other important literary contributions are: an introduction and commentary in "A Brocade Pillow" by Itoh Ihei, (translated into English by Kaname Kato, 1984); a revision of "Garden Shrubs and Their Histories" by Alice M. Coats, 1968 and revised in 1992; and "The Bonsai Saga—How the Bicentennial Collection Came to America," 2001.

The numerous horticultural achievements of John Creech have been recognized by many organizations here and abroad. A partial listing of these awards is shown in Table 1.

Retirement

When John Creech retired after more than 33 years of Federal service, he went south to Hendersonville, North Carolina, rather than east to Scientists' Cliffs where many USDA retirees seem to traditionally congregate. In 1986, he was appointed part-time Interim Director of the North Carolina Arboretum, a 426-acre public garden affiliated with the University of North Carolina system and located southwest of Asheville near the Blue Ridge Parkway. He actively promoted the North Carolina Arboretum and participated in their fund raising programs.

In the spring of 1989, Creech led a group of nineteen Americans to visit Japan and to attend the 1st International Azalea Festival and Symposium, which coincided with the 100th anniversary of the city of Kurume. He had been involved in the planning for the international festival since 1985, and was one of the speakers at the Symposium. His presentation was entitled "Kurume Azaleas in Western Gardens," and it was

published in *Azaleas in Kurume—Monograph of Kurume Azalea and its Relatives*, the official proceedings of the symposium. [8] The three-day portion of the trip that involved Kurume was filled with numerous receptions, including a visit with the Honorable Hisashi Taniguchi, the Mayor and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Festival. In the Mayor's office, Creech was presented a medal and certificate for distinguished contributions to Japanese horticulture and Kurume.

John Creech was just the person to help the North Carolina Arboretum develop a bonsai program, which had its genesis in 1992 with the donation of a large number of specimen plants from Mr. and Mrs. George Staples of Butner, North Carolina. Other donations followed, and the North Carolina Arboretum became recognized as a major center of bonsai activity in the southeast. One unique feature is that they have begun to focus on applying bonsai techniques to plants native to the Blue Ridge region. In 1995, as a result of Creech's suggestions, a National Native Azalea Repository was established at the North Carolina Arboretum with the goal of developing a repository with a complete collection of native azalea germplasm.

John Creech's Legacy

When asked in a 1991 AHS interview to name his "most important" introduction, John Creech responded *Lagerstroemia fauriei* (crape-myrtle) because it illustrated precisely the critically important partnership process between plant explorers and hybridizers of identifying, acquiring, and utilizing wild plants to improve existing domestic plants. [9] Creech had collected seed of *L. fauriei* on a 1956 trip to Yakushima. Some time later when the seed was germinated, it was discovered that about half of the resulting plants exhibited a resistance to powdery mildew, a major problem with existing hybrids in the trade. In the mid-1960s, Dr. Donald Egolf launched a breeding program designed to incorporate the highly desirable resistance characteristic of *fauriei* into a cohort of significantly improved hybrids. The plant that was to become 'Natchez' was officially named and released in 1978. More than 20 improved and powdery mildew resistant crape-myrtle hybrids resulted, and it all began with John Creech's initial collection of seed on a small Japanese island in 1956.

Other noteworthy Creech introductions are: *Pyrus calleryana* 'Bradford' (the Bradford pear), *Betula platyphylla* var. *japonica* 'Whitespire' (Japanese white birch), *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Gulftide' (holly olive), *Euonymus fortunei* 'Longwood' (Wintercreeper), *Juniperus conferta* 'Emerald Sea' (Japanese shore juniper), *Aucuba japonica* var. *borealis* (Japanese aucuba), and *Camellia lutchuensis*.

John Creech was responsible for the introduction of two evergreen azaleas: 'Mrs LBJ' and 'Ben Morrison'. While he was not the hybridizer of either plant, neither

would have been available today without his involvement, a matter of Creech being at the right place at the right time. Both plants were introduced by Secretary of Agriculture Orville L. Freeman at the June 26, 1968, meeting of the American Institute of Architects in Portland, Oregon, to honor two distinguished Americans. It was on this occasion that Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson delivered the first B. Y. Morrison Memorial Lecture.

Not as familiar to the azalea community as the very popular 'Ben Morrison', 'Mrs LBJ' is described in the June 26, 1968, press release as "an evergreen azalea that grows 3 feet tall, with leaves that are medium green and shiny on new growth. Its flowers are described as "hose-in-hose" – a trumpet inside a trumpet, making almost a double flower. The flowers are white, with some frills on the edges, and are 2 to 3 inches across. The flowers grow in clusters of two or three. 'Mrs LBJ' blooms in late May and is hardy to Zone 7, which includes southern New Jersey, Delaware, most of eastern Maryland, northern Virginia, and Tennessee." [10] Subsequent research has shown that it was Clone D in a series of azaleas produced by Albert Close at Glenn Dale, which utilized 'Seattle White' as the seed parent. The recently introduced 'Brookside Delight' is a sister seedling. [11]

'Ben Morrison', which needs little introduction, was described as "grows to 3 feet tall. It has medium green, dull leaves and single flowers up to 3 inches across, 2 or 3 in a cluster. The flowers have rose centers and white borders, with blotches of darker rose. It blooms in middle to late May, and is also hardy in Zone 7." [10,12]

Conclusion

Thomas Jefferson, one of America's great early horticulturists and third President of the United States amongst his many other accomplishments, appreciated the rela-

tionship between mankind and the environment. By his actions, he supported conservation, agricultural education, and plant exploration and introduction. In a 1797 letter to M. Giraud, Jefferson put into context the importance of the search for new crops when he wrote: "One such service of this kind rendered to a nation is worth more to them than all the victories of the most splendid pages of their history, and becomes a source of exalted pleasure to those who have been instrumental in it." He later elaborated on that concept in an 1800 memorandum, when he wrote: "The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture." [13] Jefferson was expressing his own feelings of satisfaction for his many contributions to the world of agriculture. With more than five decades of dedicated service to his country, John Creech, patriot, planter explorer, and scientist identifies well with Jefferson's point of view as one of America's distinguished horticulturists.

Notes and Endnotes

1. Undated Background Statement distributed by the US National Arboretum when Dr. Creech assumed the position of Director in 1973.
2. Lee, Frederic P. 1965. *The Azalea Book*. 2nd Edition, D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., Princeton, New Jersey, 1965.
3. "Bell Station" was the common name for the Glenn Dale Plant Introduction Station (or Plant Introduction Garden). "Bell" was actually the name of the interurban trolley line station that was adjacent to the property. That is also the explanation for "Bell Number," the working number assigned to crosses and to selections from crosses prior to naming and introduction.
4. October 19, 1959. Memorandum entitled "Species Crosses in Rhododendron" from J. L. Creech to C. O. Erlanson.

Brookside Gardens Chapter Support

Dr. Charles Evans (left), president of the Brookside Gardens Chapter, presented a check to David A. Vismara, director of Brookside Gardens, at the December 4, 2005, chapter meeting. The chapter's contribution supported the annual Green Matters Symposium Series, held in February 2006 that is sponsored by Brookside Gardens. The program focuses on environmental, ethical, and educational issues. (Photo by William C. Miller III)



5. Annual Report. 1974-75. US National Arboretum, Agricultural Research Service, US Department of Agriculture. p. 7.
6. "Celebrating 25 Years: The National Herb Garden," James Adams, Arbor Friends, Friends of the National Arboretum, Summer 2005. pp. 1-3.
7. The AGRICOLA literature search was performed by Robin Everly, librarian at the US National Arboretum Library in Washington, DC.
8. *Azaleas in Kurume—Monograph of Kurume Azalea and its Relatives*. 1989. Published proceedings of the First International Azalea Festival.
9. A Peter Loewer interview with Dr. Creech entitled "Bringing Back Asia's Best" that was published in the December 1991 issue of *American Horticulturist*, pp. 16-22.
10. USDA Press Release dated June 24, 1968, for release on June 26 announcing the introduction of two new evergreen azaleas....'Mrs LBJ' and 'Ben Morrison'.
11. Miller III, W.C. Spring 2002. "The Evergreen Azalea Cultivar 'Brookside Delight'—One of Life's Little Mysteries." *The Azalean*. 24 (1): 4-5, 17.
12. 'Ben Morrison' should not to be confused with 'B. Y. Morrison', an orangey-red self-colored azalea of unknown origin that was associated with Henry Hohman's Kingsville Nursery.
13. Thomas Jefferson. c. 1800, Writings. Memorandum, "Service to my Country." 703, Library of Congress. For more information see the Thomas Jefferson Agricultural Institute Web site at: www.jeffersoninstitute.org/initiative/jefferson.shtml.

Acknowledgments: I would like to recognize Robin Everly, Nancy Luria, Nadine Hiers, and Barbara Bullock of the National Arboretum, and David Ellis of the American Horticultural Society for their assistance in the preparation of this article. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Charles Evans for his suggestions.

William C. Miller III is a recipient of the Society's Distinguished Service Award and the Brookside Gardens Chapter's Frederic P. Lee Commendation. He is a past president of the Brookside Gardens Chapter, a former vice president of the Society, a past member of the ASA board of directors, was co-chairman of the ASA's membership committee and chairman of the public information committee, is a long-time ASA member, and is a frequent contributor to The Azalean.

AWARD	ORGANIZATION	YEAR
Alice B. Doscher Horticultural Award	NY State Federation of Garden Clubs	1962
Thomas Roland Medal	Massachusetts Horticultural Society	1964
Meyer Memorial Medal	American Genetic Association	1969
B. Y. Morrison Memorial Lecture	USDA and American Society for Horticultural Science	1971
Professional Award	American Horticultural Society	1972
Silver Medal	UN Food and Agriculture Organization	1974
Gold Seal	National Council of State Garden Clubs	1975
Recognitions Award	Woman's National Farm and Garden Association	1977
Superior Service Medal	USDA	1977
Gold Medal	A. H. Scott Foundation	1979
Medal of Honor	Garden Clubs of America	1980
Hutchinson Medal	Chicago Horticultural Society	1987
Norman J. Coleman Award	American Nursery & Landscape Association	1987
Gold Medal and Certificate of Merit	Kurume City	1989
Liberty Hyde Bailey Award	American Horticultural Society	1989
The Gold Veitch Memorial Medal	Royal Horticultural Society	1992
Award of Merit	American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta	2000
Presidential Award	University of Rhode Island	2002

Table 1. Awards, Awarding Organizations, and the Year the Recognition was Received.

Ben Morrison Chapter Field Trip a Success!

Bob and Rosa McWhorter — Gambrills, Maryland

A special thank you is extended to the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and its past president Don Hyatt for inviting the Ben Morrison Chapter to join the field trip to the Great Smoky Mountains to see the beautiful native azaleas growing in their natural habitat. We are especially grateful to Don for his hard work and unselfish effort to plan and execute the perfect field trip. We also thank Bill and Gabrielle Scott for coordinating participation of Ben Morrison Chapter members.

In March 2005 the details of the field trip were published in the *Azalea Alert* and members were invited to sign up. The trip was scheduled for June 13 to 17, 2005.

Like many chapter members we were greatly impressed by a photo presentation and articles written about these azaleas by Don Hyatt, and there was considerable interest in the trip.

Preparation for the Hike

In deciding whether or not to take the trip we considered the nature of the hikes involved. The hike up and down Roan Mountain would take four to five hours. The hike to Gregory Bald would be four hours up and three and a half down and involved approximately a 3,000-foot change in elevation. With this information we considered our health, equipment needed for the trip, snakes, bears, poison ivy, and motivation.



Photo 1. Rosa and Bob well-prepared for the hike with his backpack, their walking sticks, and a flame azalea in the background. (Photo by an unidentified couple also hiking that day.)

Discussion of all this resulted in the determination that some equipment would be needed (security-blanket type stuff). A list of "trail items" was created but couldn't exceed what Bob could be expected to lug around for the better part of a day. Beyond this, we were about to retire and would have

the time. We had seen Don's pictures of the areas to be visited and wanted to see them for ourselves. Although we were concerned about the arthritis bothering Rosa's knees, we decided to make the trip while we both were still in generally good health. Opportunity usually knocks only once. "Ok, we're in," we said.

Bob has a backpack so we then had to decide what to put in it. For her retirement present Bob gave Rosa a large nine-ounce canister of Guard Alaska Bear Repellent with belt holder. This generated a lot of talk. It was decided that Bob would wear the bear repellent and Rosa would stick close to Bob.

We did buy some lightweight hiking pants and shirts that, being made of quick-dry material, proved to be very durable and comfortable. We were also equipped with good hiking boots. As a side note, between April and June we walked a mile and a half four or five days a week in preparation for the trip. We wore our hiking boots to get used to them. Being in average condition, this was all the physical preparation we made for the trip.

For each mountain hike eight bottles of water (about six pounds) were added to Bob's pack. Also included were snacks sealed in foil (don't want to attract bears as the repellent warning states "may not be effective in all situations") and lunches consisting of fresh fruit salads in vacuum sealed containers; add another pound. Then the question of nature calls came up. It was decided that a camping toilet was absolutely indispensable; add three more pounds to Bob's pack.

Finally there were the rain jackets, snake bite kit, calamine lotion, pocket knife, matches, and a lot of other stuff that make you feel secure when on the trail in the "big woods." Bob's backpack is starting to feel like an "overnighter" and at the last minute it was decided hiking sticks were needed; one for Rosa to point out the way to Bob and one to help Bob with the pack (Photo 1).

The Hike Began

What we did not know was that while we were getting the backpack ready, whipping ourselves into shape, and dreaming of beautiful azaleas (and bears), Don Hyatt was researching and planning every minute detail of the week-long trip. We discovered this when we arrived in Elizabethton, Tennessee, on June 13 and met Don and chapter members **Bill and Gabrielle Scott, Dale and Carol Flowers, Dave and Eileen Holm, Joe Miller and Adrien**, a teaching assistant from Senegal who was staying with Joe for the summer. We were also greeted by **Barbara Bullock** and her friend Tom along with other members of the Potomac Valley Chapter, ARS.

The weather forecast was very bleak due to a tropical storm in the south. However, after a few showers the first morning, the sun came out and the weather was just perfect all week!

The first half of the trail up Roan Mountain was wide, improved, and a relatively easy hike. Stopping for rest and water made it an easy and enjoyable adventure. At Engine Gap, about the halfway point, we found many beautiful flame azaleas blooming. Roaming about among these beautiful azaleas was a photographer's delight. It was here that Don, equipped with three cameras, lost his glasses in the dense grass that was everywhere around the azaleas. You would think our group of 22 persons could find those glasses; but alas, no luck.

Then it was onward to the top of Roan Mountain to see the *Rhododendron catawbiense* abounding there. While we did not see the big show of color hoped for, we found quite a few blooming along the trail, some in the most picturesque places imaginable. This upper half of the trail was narrow, rocky and our walking sticks were quite handy. Bob took a picture of the most beautiful bluets (*Houstonia purpurea*, small wildflower) that were growing along the edge of the trail. Overall, the hike was not unduly strenuous. No bears, poison ivy, or snakes to be seen.

While Don went to get new glasses in Johnson City, Tennessee, the group made its way over to Vivian Abney's East Fork Nursery to check out her native azaleas. Everyone found some beautiful plants. For example, Rosa Gardens now includes: "Gregory Bald seedling" (dark orange); "Lemon Drop" (deciduous seedling; *R. arborescens* (very fragrant); *R. canadense* (syn. *R. rhodora*), another Gregory Bald seedling (also orange); an unknown pink deciduous azalea (just beautiful!); and a red *Kalmia* 'Ostbo'.

The morning of our hike to Gregory Bald we saw two bears while entering the park. The convoy halted in the road and a few pictures were taken from the safety of our cars; no bear repellent needed. The early 6:00 am start afforded us the chance to see a spectacular sunrise over Cade's Cove before starting the hike. A picture of this is now on the desktop of Bob's computer.

During the hike up the mountain Bob kept Rosa drinking water, for all the right reasons of course. The camping toilet did come in handy. (With careful use it is quite invisible!) It took a full four hours to reach Gregory Bald. After a quick lunch everyone set about exploring the bald.

Don said we were seeing the early blooming azaleas, which was a treat for him, as he had not seen many of them before. He mentioned how beautiful the mid-season bloomers are. Nearly every bush was covered in blossoms, and one can only imagine what the mid-season must be like.

Everyone took lots of pictures. It really pays to have a digital camera with one or more large storage capacity flash cards. Just click away to your heart's desire. The beautiful early blooming varieties displayed white, pink, red, orange, yellow, and blends of all these colors. As amazing as our pictures turned out, they are no substitute for seeing this in the wild! (See Photos 2 and 3 for two of Bob's favorites.)



Bob's favorite Gregory Bald azalea. (Photo by Bob McWhorter)



Another beautiful Gregory Bald azalea. (Photo by Bob McWhorter)

After a rattlesnake was discovered somewhere in the grass, roaming about the bald slowed down a good bit. This was OK, because everyone had seen about everything there was to see, and it was time to head down the mountain. Although not used, the snakebite kit was a good idea.

The hike down took three and a half hours. Along the way we observed many of nature's wonders: mosses, ferns, fallen logs with rhododendron seedlings growing in them, mushrooms, and voles, and the streambed with waterfalls and three log bridges to cross were interesting and beautiful. When we got down, Rosa sat on the first log she came to. Her right knee froze and Bob was sent for the car. With a little ice and a rubdown Rosa was as good as new the next day. Everyone was absolutely delighted with the hike to Gregory Bald!

Rising for an early departure for home, we found that Don Hyatt had put a CD with all the great pictures he had taken on the windshield of everyone's car. Thus, Don assured that all took home wonderful memories of our trip to share with those who could not be there. We, along with all those who made the field trip, are indebted to Don Hyatt for the hours of planning, preparation, and perfect execution of this fantastic field trip.

The maps, briefings and list of cell phone numbers Don provided the group assured that no one was lost or without help if needed. His knowledge of native azaleas and their habitat and his attention to detail resulted in our having an unforgettable azalea experience. Don's sense of humor tickled everyone. Returning from Johnson City with his new glasses he arrived in the restaurant with large

black-rimmed glasses including a big nose and thick mustache. This gave everyone a good laugh.

There must and will surely be future trips back to Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald. There are now a number of persons qualified to plan and lead such an expedition. If you have not been there and seen them first hand, look for the next opportunity and take it. Bob will loan you the bear repellent.

We laughed all the way home as we recounted the week's activities and how we enjoyed the good company of friends (old and new). As Dale and Carol Flowers put it, "the thing we liked most about the trip to Roan Mountain were the amazing vistas, which you don't see from the overlooks along the scenic drives. It was like the mountain shots in the movie *Sound of Music*, except even more beautiful." Everyone felt the same.

We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone on the field trip for making it one of our most memorable trips ever. We hope that the Ben Morrison and Potomac Valley chapters will find more fun and interesting things to do together in the future. Happy azalea trails till we meet again!

Bob McWhorter is a retired Maryland State Trooper and Rosa McWhorter is a retired IT project manager for the Department of the Navy. They joined the ASA in 1997. Their collection of azaleas and rhododendrons and the friendships made have enriched their lives and helped make Rosa Gardens an exciting place to spend time together and with family and friends. Bob is past president of the Ben Morrison Chapter of the ASA.

How to Achieve a Color Explosion: Grow Evergreen Azaleas from Seed

Robert (Buddy) Lee — Transcend Nursery, Independence, Louisiana

[Reprint of article from American Nurseryman, used by permission, Ed.]

Introduction

Evergreen azaleas can be grown relatively easily from seed. Although the process can be meticulous and time consuming, it can be extremely rewarding. There are no absolute correct or concrete guidelines for this process; however, there are overall accepted procedures and conditions that can be successfully incorporated into most situations.

Evergreen Azalea Seed

The seed capsules of evergreen azaleas can be inconspicuous and almost undetectable among the leaves (Photo 1). A developed seed capsule is usually green in

color and approximately 1/8" to 1/4" long, depending on the cultivar. Later in the growing season, the seedpod starts turning to a brown color as it matures (Photo 2). The actual azalea seeds are located inside the seed capsule. Some azaleas, such as 'Formosa', are sterile and will not produce any seed capsules. On the other hand, the cultivar 'Hinodegiri,' will usually set numerous seed capsules. Because azaleas in commercial production are usually shaped by shearing after they have bloomed in the spring, most, if not all, developing seed capsules are also removed from the plant by this shearing process. Even in established azalea plantings in the landscape, azalea seed cap-

sules may be difficult to locate because many evergreen cultivars just do not set that many seed capsules.

Pollination must occur if a seed capsule is to develop with viable seeds. Open pollination occurs when pollen (male) from a flower of one azalea cultivar or species is carried by insects or wind to the pistil (female) of a flower of another azalea cultivar or species. If the pollen tube successfully moves down the style to the egg nucleus, successful pollination should result in viable seeds. Controlled cross-pollination occurs when pollen from a selected evergreen azalea is placed upon the stigma (tip of the pistil) of another selected evergreen azalea. These are brief descriptions of pollination steps. A more detailed study would be advised if someone would like to venture into azalea breeding. Any plant-breeding program can be expensive and lengthy, but it would save time, energy, and disappointment if a person would become knowledgeable with the species and cultivars of the plant group of interest.

Preparing the Germination Medium

Evergreen azaleas thrive in loose, well-drained soil composed mainly of organic material that helps to promote root growth and also retain moisture. A soil acidity level of 4.5 to 6.0 pH is also important for evergreen azalea survival. For growing healthy azaleas, I prefer a soil and irrigation water supply to have a pH of 5.0 to 5.5. These conditions for growing healthy azaleas are also critical components for germinating azalea seeds. For the germination tray, I use a standard 10" x 20" tray filled with medium-ground pine bark to 1/2" from the top of the tray. The remaining portion of the tray is filled with pre-soaked peat moss and distributed evenly across the tray to make a level surface where the azalea seeds can be sown. Watering the peat moss "in" will also help to level and smooth the top surface. Later, as the seedlings in the tray germinate and grow, their roots will grow through the layer of peat moss into the pine bark. The pine bark used to fill the bottom of the tray is the same type of potting soil that will be used later in transplanting the seedlings to bigger containers. This process of using pine bark in the germination tray should help reduce transplanting stress, since the seedlings should already be adjusted to the pine bark potting soil.

Harvesting and Preparing the Seeds

Some azalea breeders suggest waiting until late autumn or even after the first frost to collect the mature capsules. A seed capsule consists of five chambers, with each chamber containing numerous seeds. If the seed-pod is left on the plant too long, it will dry out and the capsule will split open to form a star-shaped opening, which will allow the small seed to fall to the ground, as nature intended. I collect seed capsules around the first of August and have had very good germination success. Maturation of evergreen azalea seeds usually occurs approximately 90 days after successful pollination. Some

years I have harvested the seed capsules as early as mid-July and have had good results; however, the date of pollination on these seed capsules probably occurred in March and April.

When the seed capsules are collected, they need to be placed in a paper cup and placed in an area that will allow them to become dry and freely split open, releasing the seed. This drying out process usually takes approximately seven days. There may be as many as 500 or more seeds in each capsule; however, in some cases the seed count may be fewer than 100, depending on the cultivar or environmental factors. Once the capsule has split open, the seed can be removed from the capsule chambers by shaking the cup. This motion will cause the seed to fall out of the chambers. After the contents of the cup are emptied onto a sheet of paper, all the old capsule parts and other debris (chaff) from the seed should be removed. I prefer to sow the azalea seed immediately after cleaning them. From my experience, I find that the seed germinate faster and have a higher rate of germination when they are sown in the fall. Some azalea breeders, however, prefer to save the seed until the following spring. Over-wintering seedlings in geographic areas of extreme cold weather probably is a major factor in waiting to plant the seeds the following spring. The cleaned seeds are sown by carefully sprinkling them from a cup or sheet of paper onto the prepared germination medium, making sure to sow them evenly and not too thickly.

Caring for the Seedlings

After the seedlings have been sown, they are placed in a 10' x 20' open-sided greenhouse. The seeds are moistened by using a mist water nozzle, making sure that the medium does not become too wet or too dry. Within 7-14 days, the seeds will start to germinate (Photo 3). The open-sided greenhouse allows a more natural environment for azalea seed germination. Its main purpose, while the temperature is still warm, is to protect the seed from the direct sun and pounding rains. No supplemental lighting is used in the greenhouse. During the time when the seeds have initially been sown and until they start germinating and growing, the nighttime temperature is in the lower 70°F range, while the daytime temperature is in the lower 90°F range. Later, as the temperature grows colder, the open sides of the greenhouse are closed with plastic sheeting. Then I use propane heaters when needed to keep the greenhouse above freezing temperatures. Seedlings are fertilized weekly starting in March with a half-strength solution of liquid fertilizer that is recommended for azaleas. Controlling plant disease and pests is extremely important. Sticky paper placed above the trays is great for controlling some insects. Applying a light application of multi-purpose fungicide about every 10 to 14 days can control most fungal diseases such as web blight (*Rhizoctonia solani*), which can appear in the seedlings with little notice and can destroy an entire tray of seedlings. Applying insecticide

around the greenhouse periodically can help to create a barrier to stop insects. Germinating seeds and young growing seedlings are very fragile and need to be monitored frequently. Problems need to be addressed immediately before fatal damage can occur.

Transplanting the Seedlings

When the seedlings become approximately 1" in height, they can be transplanted into individual grow cells. This initial transplanting usually occurs in late May or June of the following year after the seeds were planted. I like to use the standard 72-cell size for the initial planting (Photo 4). I transplant all the seedlings of each cross at this stage and continue to fertilize with half-strength liquid fertilizer weekly until the seedlings have rooted into the soil. Then I will apply a light application of granular nursery fertilizer as recommended or as needed. As the plants grow larger, the more vigorous and healthy seedlings are transplanted into 4" containers and fertilized as with any 4" size azalea. At each transplanting stage, the less vigorous seedlings will be discarded. Later the seedlings in the 4" containers will then be transplanted into 6" containers and grown to blooming size.

This is the most exciting and rewarding phase of the seedling growing process for most azaleas breeders. Not only are plants mature enough at this stage to evaluate growth habits and many other characteristics, but also the plants are mature enough to give an explosion of color during their blooming season (Photo 5).

Suggested References

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Robert (Buddy) Lee is the current president of the Azalea Society of America for 2004-2006. He has been a member of the Louisiana chapter of the ASA since 1983, serving as president of the chapter from 1990-1992. A true promoter of the azalea, he coordinated two national conventions for the ASA, one in New Orleans (1991) and the other in Charleston, South Carolina (2000). He owned and operated Savannah Spring Nursery, a wholesale plant nursery specializing in container-grown azaleas from 1973-1986. Along the way he found time to develop the multi-season-blooming Encore™ Azaleas now marketed through Flowerwood Nursery in Loxley, Alabama. In 2000, the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association recognized his significant contribution to the industry by awarding him a Professional Achievement Award, presented during the Gulf States Horticultural Expo in Mobile, Alabama, in 2000. He is presently active in the development and testing of new azalea varieties through Transcend Nursery.



(All photos by Buddy Lee). **1.** Developing seedpod. **2.** Dried seedpod and seeds with coin for size comparison. **3.** Azalea seedlings germinating on peat moss. **4.** Transplanted azalea seedlings. **5.** The color variations from a group of Buddy Lee's evergreen azalea seedlings.

Breeding Evergreen Azaleas at Glendoick

Kenneth Cox — Glendoick Gardens, Glencarse, Perthshire, Scotland

Glendoick Gardens was founded by Euan and Peter Cox in 1953. Euan had already established the garden at Glendoick in the 1920s on his return from plant hunting with Reginald Farrer in Burma. The nursery has expanded gradually over the years and is now the largest retail rhododendron and azalea specialist nursery in Europe. Bucking the current trend where everything is grown in containers, we still grow more than 80 percent of our stock outside in nursery beds where they form large and vigorous root systems and good plant habit. We export as far away as Japan, the United States, and all over Europe.

Peter Cox began hybridising dwarf rhododendrons (the birds such as 'Chikor', 'Ptarmigan' and 'Curlew') in 1959 and in the late 1960s turned his hand to evergreen azaleas. The problem he faced was that most evergreen azaleas we tried in Scotland struggled or died. It was soon apparent that lack of summer heat was the main cause of death, since the wood did not ripen for the winter. He tried Kurumes, Satsuki, Glenn Dales, and lots of others, but most survived only a short time. The few good ones such as *Rhododendron kiusianum* and its hybrids such as 'Kermesina' and 'Diamant' were small-flowered and not very evergreen. Using *R. kiusianum* and some new forms of *R. nakaharae* from Polly Hill and others, he began making crosses. He had immediate success with his first few crosses, and 'Panda' is now probably the best selling white azalea in the United Kingdom.

When I joined in the hybridising game in the early 1980s, I used the first batch of mammals ('Squirrel', 'Lemur', 'Wombat') to make further crosses, often using Hachmann azaleas from Germany to augment the palette. Later on we found that Hans Hachmann was using our azaleas for the same reason. I wanted to create hose-in-hose and double-flowered azaleas with good foliage retention in all the color shades; we find 'Johanna' and 'Marushka' are very good for this. I also wanted to get the colour of 'Red Red', which we can't grow, into something suitable for Scotland; we managed this by crossing it with 'Johanna'. What I'd like to do next is to get some Satsuki blood into our hardy azaleas to see if there is any potential there for multi-colors, none of which we can currently grow, perhaps using Glenn Dales and Robin Hills as a bridge. We have now started using the trademark "Glendoick" to protect our new hybrids, as a cheaper alternative to patenting. We have now also started breeding deciduous azaleas, too. Watch this space.

Some of the Glendoick azaleas are grown in the Pacific Northwest. I doubt that there is any need for them in



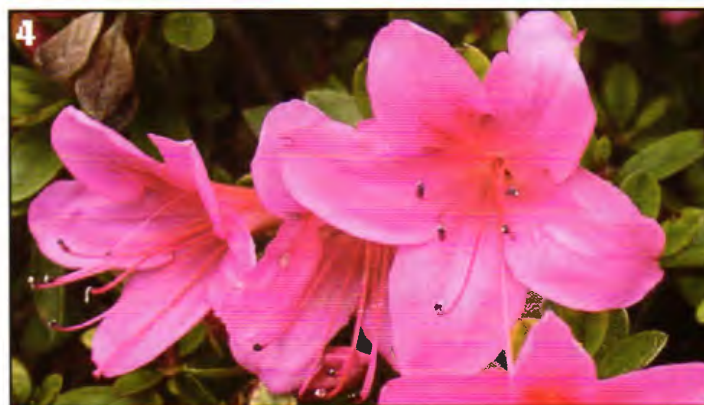
1. GLENDOICK®
DREAM

2. GLENDOICK®
GLACIER

3. 'Racoon'

4. 'Wombat'

(All photos supplied by
Kenneth Cox)



most of eastern North America, though John Weagle is trialing them in Nova Scotia.

The Glendoick evergreen azaleas named so far are:

'Arctic Fox' ('Panda' x 'Mucronatum')—Large pure white flowers.

'Chinchilla' ('Vida Brown' x 'Vuyk's Scarlet')—Hose-in-hose vivid red flowers.

'Chipmunk' ('Vida Brown' x 'Lemur')—Hose-in-hose bright pink flowers, very compact.

GLENDIOICK® CRIMSON ('Red Red' x 'Johanna')—Vivid, very dark red flowers in May.

GLENDIOICK® DREAM ('Panda' x 'Rokoko')—Double, or semi-double, some flowers having a few petaloid stamens, strong purplish red flowers in May.

GLENDIOICK® ERMINE ('Panda' x 'Mucronatum')—Large pure white flowers.

GLENDIOICK® GARNET ('Red Red' x 'Johanna')—Deep red flowers in May.

GLENDIOICK® GLACIER ('Red Red' x 'Rokoko')—Double white flowers with greenish flushing and spotting.

GLENDIOICK® GOBLIN ('Red Red' x 'Johanna')—Semi-double petaloid stamens, strong red flowers (color similar to 'Red Red').

'Lemur' (*R. nakaharae* 'Mariko' x 'Vuyk's Scarlet')—Single deep pink flowers, low growing.

'Marmot' ('Vida Brown' x 'Vuyk's Scarlet')—Deep purplish pink.

'Panda' ('Everest' x *R. kiusianum* white form)—White flowers. Our best seller.

'Raccoon' (Second generation *R. nakaharae* cross)—Bright red flowers, vivid red in June-July, compact, spreading.

'Squirrel' ('Galathea' x *R. nakaharae* 'Mariko')—Vivid reddish orange flowers in June.

'Stoat' ('Kermesina' x 'Lemur')—Deep purplish pink flower.

'Wombat' (*R. nakaharae* 'Mariko' x 'Gaiety')—Deep purplish pink flowers, spreading ground cover.

Note

The Trademark "GLENDIOICK" is a registered trademark in the United Kingdom and covers most European countries.

Peter and Kenneth Cox are authors of many books on Rhododendrons including the definitive color guide to rhododendron and azalea species, The Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Species. For more information, visit: www.glendoick.com.

Climate note

Glendoick is on the east coast of Scotland, a few miles from the Tay estuary. The coldest winters recorded have reached -18°C (-0.4°F), but this happens only a few times a century. A cold winter is usually more like -12°C (10°F). Summers have few days over 27°C (81°F). Rainfall is 600-760mm (23.6-29.9") annually. Our greatest problem is late spring frosts after periods of mild weather: flowers and growth are often frosted, and bark-split can result.

Society News Chapter News

[Thanks to the Louisiana and Vaseyi Chapter newsletter editors who sent in their chapter newsletters by e-mail, and to Northern Virginia, which supplied theirs as a pdf, Ed.]

Ben Morrison Chapter

Bob Hobbs and Carol Flowers, Newsletter Co-editors

At the December 4th Christmas party meeting the chapter also announced the winners of their digital photography contest:

Category I—Close-up of azalea or truss: Barry Sperling (1st), Bob McWhorter (2nd), and Bob Hobbs (3rd).

Category II—Scenery, with azaleas in the landscape: Bob McWhorter (1st and 2nd), and Barry Sperling (3rd).

Category III—Critters with azaleas: Bob McWhorter (1st)

First prizes were \$25 gift certificates from Timber Press and other prizes were poinsettias.

The spring meeting was held March 5, with Dr. Francis Gouin, professor emeritus of the Agriculture and Natural

Resources Department of the University of Maryland, giving the talk, "What a Gardener Needs to Do to Help Azalea and Rhododendron Plants Transition from Winter to Spring."

Louisiana Chapter

Bill Bode, Reporting

The December 4th meeting was held at the home of Mrs. B.Y. (Margie) Jenkins, with 18 members attending. Two of these were first-time attendees. The members discussed several issues, with the following results:

- The chapter will contribute \$400 to the ASA to help with projected shortfall
- Newly elected officers are:

Bill Bode—President
Vincent Ciolino—Vice president
Keith Pendergraft—Secretary
Margie Jenkins—Treasurer

- The spring chapter meeting date was moved to an earlier date so members could attend early garden and flower shows.
- The chapter approved awarding the 2008 national ASA convention to Vaseyi Chapter, with the only caveat that there be no dorms or fire alarms in the night.

Northern Virginia Chapter

Frances Louer, Corresponding Secretary

The big news from the December meeting was president Dan Krabill's informing the chapter that they would be hosting the 2009 ASA national convention.

The February 5th meeting featured chapter members Eve and Bob Harrison describing how they successfully moved their huge and beautiful garden of azaleas, rhododendrons, and companion plants (500 or so!) over 60 miles from the Harper's Ferry area of West Virginia to larger acreage in Luray, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley. The chapter also voted to send \$300 to help with the national organization's projected financial shortfall.

April 2nd Karen Rexrode, formerly the manager of Windy Hill Plant Farm, spoke about "The Supporting Cast: Plants that Hold a Garden Together." A noted plantswoman, she shared "information about the plants she relies on to keep a garden exciting through deer attacks, humid summers, dry spells, soggy springs and insect infestations." Her focus was on long-lasting attributes, not just flowering capabilities.

Oconee Chapter

Frank Bryan, Newsletter Editor

The chapter has a new secretary, Ruth Mellon. The March 12th meeting featured a sale of deciduous azaleas, including Dodd's "Confederate Series."

As usual, the newsletter is full of great azalea research, including a report on the Klimavicz hybrid evergreen azaleas and a summary of the history of the Satsuki in this country. Of important local interest is the largest wild colony (of purportedly more than 1,000) of wild *Rhododendron prunifolium*, the plumleaf azalea, in the Providence Canyon State Park, near Lumpkin, Georgia. This 150-acre park is one of the seven wonders of Georgia. Since it is heavily eroded, as the result of "unwise farming techniques" undertaken 150 years ago, it is referred to as "Georgia's Little Grand Canyon." Visiting this canyon area is a great opportunity to see these 12' to 15' tall native azaleas in their natural habitat along shady banks close to and often draped over a shallow stream.

Vaseyi Chapter

John Brown, Newsletter Editor

At the meeting November 27, 2005, the chapter voted in new officers and approved a motion to purchase 1000 of the new color brochures the ASA is developing, should national need the assistance in covering the printing costs. The chapter also approved the motion to host the 2008 national ASA convention near Asheville, North Carolina. Ed Collins will chair the planning committee and the middle of May was selected for a date to allow tours of *R. vaseyi* on Pilot Mountain. The group selected a theme honoring local notables-Beadle, Kehr, Skinner, and Creech. The new chapter officers are:

Ed Collins—President
Doley Bell—Vice president
John Brown—Secretary
Bob Stelloh—Treasurer

The January 22nd meeting program was Herb Quarles speaking on "Four Seasons Gardening" as a way to address "Winter Drab." Herb is general manager of A Growing Concern, a nursery near Hendersonville, North Carolina. He also teaches an outdoor course at Blue Ridge Community College called "The Remedial Yard."

The program for the March 26th meeting was "Bonsai, a Horticultural Art Form," presented by architect Hubert Jones. Jones is an ASA member and also Director of District 10 of the American Rhododendron Society. His talk was illustrated with 15 specimen bonsai, ranging in size from 4" to 39", and he showed the members how he "styles" a small azalea bonsai-in-training, using skills that have evolved over the past 4000 years in the Orient.

Texas Convention Planning

Barbara Stump, Reporting

Planning for the 2007 ASA Convention to be held in Nacogdoches in East Texas is right on track, according to co-chairs Barbara Stump and Barbara Wagner. The theme is: "Azaleas in the Pines—A Texas Garden Party." Prepare to see a very verdant and wooded Texas, not the dry mesquite and sagebrush Texas of the cowboy films of our youth. Nacogdoches is the oldest town in Texas, is situated in the Pineywoods ecosystem of Texas, and is ready to offer great hospitality. The plants will come from the Stephen F. Austin State University Mast Arboretum and ASA members in the Louisiana Chapter and from Maarten van der Giessen. We will visit idea gardens and formal gardens in Tyler and Nacogdoches. Both towns have a long history of attracting garden lovers to their annual Azalea Trails. A major feature of the Nacogdoches day will be a visit to SFA Mast Arboretum's 8-acre Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, a project whose deep azalea collection a number of ASA members have helped develop. Mark your calendars for March 29-April 1, 2007. More information is coming in the Fall 2006 issue of *The Azalean*.

The Winds of August and September

A Report by Members of the Louisiana Chapter

[Thanks to Bill Bode for reporting on his survey for this article and to Buddy Lee for the news from Zemurray Gardens in his Transcend Nursery. The information is current as of February 14 and 19, 2006, respectively, Ed.]

The Louisiana Chapter has hosted three national ASA conventions, so many of you have visited our gardens, both public and private. This report is a compilation of interviews with those owners, keepers, and caretakers who faced the storms, Katrina and Rita, and their assessment of damage to their gardens. Most of the Louisiana Chapter's members live in the central Gulf South area, which extends from Alabama to Texas. These storms caused a terrible loss of life; villages, towns, and cities were destroyed; and hundreds of thousands of homes and gardens were lost. All of this has been on your radio or television, and in your newspapers.—But what happened to azaleas? How did they fare in such adversity?

Hurricane Katrina in August and Hurricane Rita in September were considered Category III storms on the Safir-Simpson Scale as they crossed the coastline; however, the storm surges generated by them were in no way equal. Katrina's surge in some areas was calculated to be 35 feet, while Rita's was estimated at 9-13 feet. Katrina had an abnormally large diameter, so that some members were subjected to hurricane force winds for as long as 7 hours.

The material for this article was gained by interview by telephone, in person, or by e-mail from members of the chapter, and their comments are noted. Bill Bode did the bulk of the data collection and reporting. The survey was based on questions about the amount of damage sustained from four factors:

1. Either line or cyclone winds.
2. Falling or flying objects.
3. Tidal surge.
4. Fresh water flooding or standing water.

Hurricane Katrina Damage

The following extract is from a member on the east side (wet side) of Hurricane Katrina.

Bellingrath Gardens. Located near Theodore, Alabama, this was one of the sites visited on the tours

during the 1999 national ASA meeting in Mobile, Alabama. Dr. William Barrick is the director and kindly furnished this information by phone. This garden has been one of the major attractions on the Gulf Coast for many years for both Gulf Coast residents and visitors. It probably has more visitors than any private garden from Pensacola, Florida, to Beaumont, Texas. Some of you will remember the magnificent live oaks as well as our beloved azaleas. Dr. Barrick told me that while the oaks escaped major damage, they do show the effect of 100+ mph winds. Mobile, several miles to the east of

Bellingrath Gardens, experienced major flooding. Dr. Barrick reported no major standing water or tidal surge, and lastly he told me "the azaleas fared well and some are even in bloom today." To which I said, "Amen."

The following extracts are from members living on the west (dry side) of Katrina.

Dr. John Thornton's **Push-etappa Nursery** is located on Louisiana Highway 1072, in Washington Parish, and near the village of Pine, Louisiana. This garden suffered major damage overall. However, the azaleas planted in the ground, including those of the Glenn Dale distribution,

were not damaged to any great extent by the line winds. John's neighbor has an anemometer and told John that he recorded sustained winds of 100+ mph for a period of 4 hours. The main damage done to this nursery was caused by falling oak trees and flying branches. Oaks have such large crowns that they frequently damage structures, pumps, pipes, electric and communication lines. Since John was unable to secure an adequate generator, all chance of irrigation was lost. John lost electric power and communications, since the cell phone towers were inoperable. The moderate drought that followed added to his loss.

Thomas Milner III lives as he claims "in the dead center of Harrison County, Mississippi" and was very close to the "eye" of Katrina. He was subjected to hurricane force



At Zemurray Gardens huge pines are down, but sculpture is still intact. (Photo by Buddy Lee)

winds for about 8 hours. Thom's place is heavily timbered with pines, or at least it was. He estimates that 1000 trees were lost to the storm, and a goodly number fell on seedling and propagating areas, resulting in severe losses so that even now he is unable to get to parts of his nursery because of the amount of fallen timber yet to be removed. Additional losses occurred due to drought: Even though he had adequate generators to run the irrigation system, he ran out of fuel and had to cut his way out to replenish it. When he got to the fuel source no fuel was available. Some days a guy can't lay up a dime! He voiced his concern for the future of the growing areas that encountered the tidal surge because of the residual salinity and the depositing of other toxic substances. His nursery was not subjected to this.

Margie Y. Jenkins Nursery and Farm is located just off Louisiana Highway 16 one mile west of the Tangipohoa-Washington Parish line. Damage was moderate in the nursery area, but little if any in the propagating and seedling areas. This required some extended effort by the Jenkins family, and that exploit will be told a little later on. Margie experienced the same weather conditions as did John Thornton. The day after Katrina went elsewhere Margie found that the generators in place were not of sufficient size to operate the full irrigation system to provide adequate water for the time she knew the power would be off. She began a search for supplementary generators, and found that none were available in the immediate area, nor were any in Baton Rouge, Alexandria, or Lafayette, Louisiana. After several misadventures one of sufficient size was found in Houston, Texas. And so a Ford-350 pickup with trailer rode out to save the day. All's well that ends well, even though it takes a journey of a 1000 miles to make it happen.

Folsom Nursery, owned by Ms. Pat Newman, is located on Louisiana Highway 40 east of the village of Folsom in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. It is a moderate size wholesale nursery that takes pride in the number of varieties of azaleas it has for sale. The storm damage experienced here is a different story. It is a well-known fact that tropical storms spawn lots of tornadoes; Katrina did just that and saved one for Folsom Nursery. The damage caused by that one was severe to catastrophic to the "can yard" which was about 6 acres in size and covered by pines 60-75 feet tall. The day I visited, bulldozers were finishing the removal of all those trees and the lost azaleas.

David Boyd Jr. is a research entomologist at the **USDA Southern Agricultural Center in Poplarville, Mississippi**. His area of interest is in nursery production of azaleas. Reports he has received from local growers indicated "the nurseries fared well" and that no reports of "surge water" had been received.



Transcend Nursery propagation yard survives, despite a number of pines down around it. (Photo by Buddy Lee)

Zemurray Gardens is located approximately 60 miles north-northwest of New Orleans. This 120-acre garden, including the 20-acre Mirror Lake, was begun in 1928 by owner Sam Zemurray, a wealthy banana tycoon. The land is presently owned and maintained by the Reimer/Schneider family and is managed by Bennett & Peters, Inc., Forestry Consultants. During the 1991 national ASA convention, this garden was one of the stops on the day tour of the area north of Lake Pontchartrain. The garden is open to the public during the spring azalea bloom, and has become an annual destination for many locals and tourists alike.

Hurricane Katrina was not kind to this area of southeast Louisiana, and Zemurray Gardens sustained significant damage. According to Ken Robbins, who works for the management company, about 80 percent of the large pine trees (approximately 1000 trees) that stood so stately throughout the gardens were blown down or snapped in two. As the eye of the storm passed to the east, sustained winds estimated at 85 to 95 mph, with much higher gusts, roared through the gardens for several hours. Amazingly, all of the imported European statues were left undamaged. The fallen and damaged trees have been removed, and most of the roads in the gardens are now accessible. There is extensive damage to the azaleas from the fallen trees; however, a large portion of the azaleas should survive and do quite well in the future. The owners and the management company are now in the process of evaluating the future direction of the garden. While walking down the trails, it is heartbreaking to see the damage that has occurred. Even with the damage from this catastrophic storm, somehow one can still feel the special magic of this magnificent place. Beyond the uprooted trees and damaged azaleas, I can envision, and hope for, a bright future for Louisiana's best kept secret garden, Zemurray Gardens.

Transcend Nursery, owned by Buddy Lee, had approximately 60 trees blown down or damaged so significantly that they had to be removed. Fortunately, the irrigation system was not that badly damaged, and plants were

watered with power supplied by a gas generator. The extreme heat and drought that followed the storm for several weeks severely stressed and killed many older, established azaleas in the area. Cleanup is still underway, with mostly removal of small debris from the flowerbeds.

Hurricane Rita Damage

Robert Turley, Calcasieu Agricultural Center, Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana. Wind damage to azaleas planted in the ground was minimal; however, damage was severe to those that were subjected to tree fall and flying debris. Calcasieu Parish is in the southwest tip of Louisiana, and has an extended shoreline—both Gulf Coast and Mississippi River—and therefore is subject to tidal surges on two sides resulting in severe flooding. The heavily treed Allen, Beauregard, and Vernon parishes surrounding Calcasieu, all north and east of Lake Charles, suffered extensive damage.

Hodges Gardens is located on US Highway 171 in Sabine Parish, between Many and Leesville, Louisiana. This area is well known to fishermen (Toledo Bend Lake

and soldiers (Ft. Polk) and is heavily treed with second-growth pine and various oaks. Lynn Musick is the director and was not available when I called, but a spokesperson told me that while the garden had sustained considerable damage, “the garden is open and looking forward to the spring.”

Conclusions

1. Azaleas are tough and resilient.
2. They do not like salt-water baths.
3. They are very tolerant of pine trees, but not when hurricane winds are in the neighborhood.

Bill Bode has been president of the Louisiana Chapter 1995-1996 and 2005-2006 and was president of the Men's Garden Club of Baton Rouge from 1969-1970. He was president of the ASA from 1999 to 2001. He retired from a career as a hospital representative of the pharmaceutical industry (Merrell-Dow) in 1985. Buddy Lee is currently president of the ASA.

New Members

The following members joined the Society as of March 31, 2006.

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