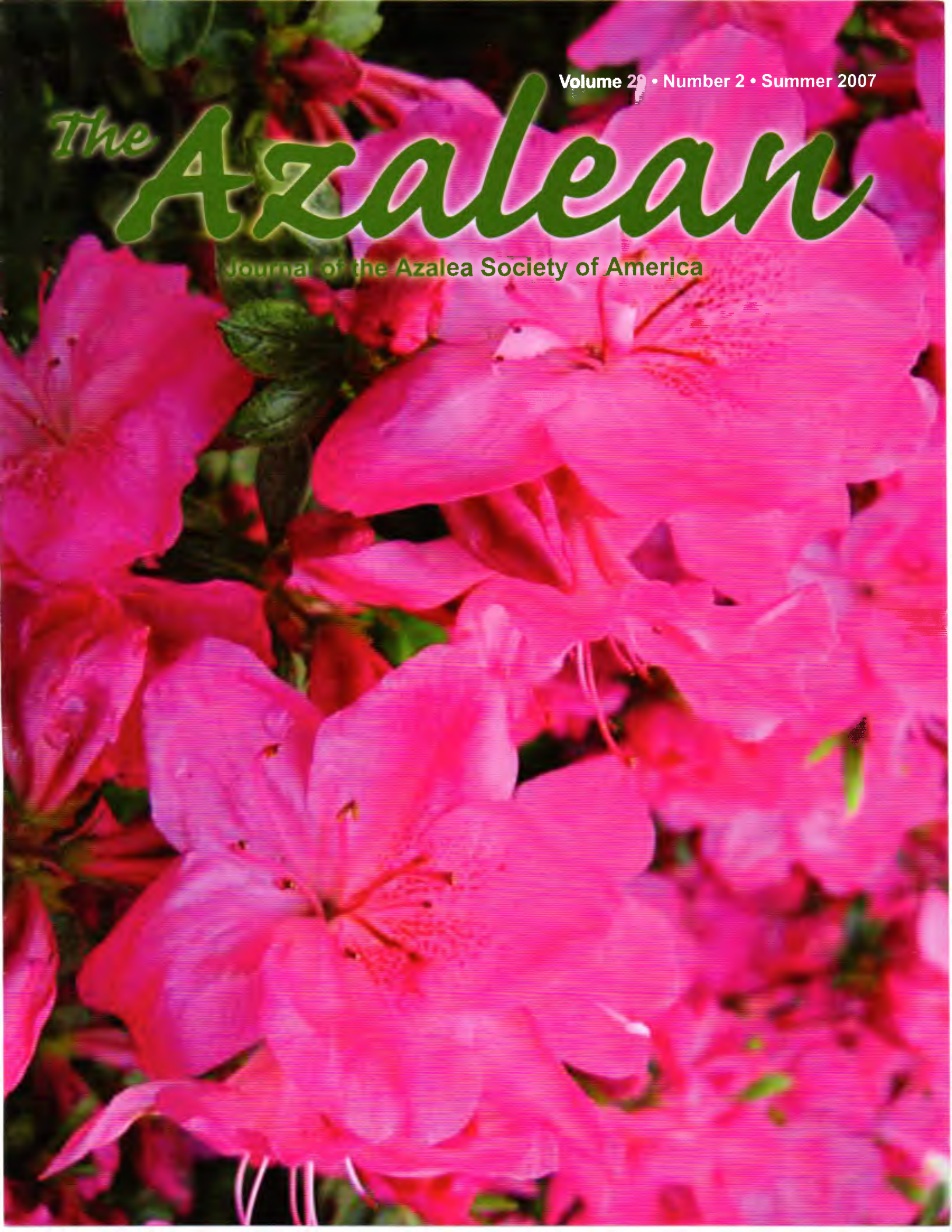
Volume 29 • Number 2 • Summer 2007

The Azalean

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



President's Letter

John Brown — Cleveland, South Carolina

Attending the Society convention in Nacogdoches, Texas, was an enlightening and rejuvenating experience for me. Each activity and garden led me toward a new sense of respect for all of the people and places involved.

As we walked through the gardens, the attendees and hosts displayed an accumulated knowledge that covered most of the plant kingdom in great detail. They shared this knowledge with all in such a willing way that no one needed feel embarrassed or inferior. It was a delight to follow along the garden paths and listen to these undisputed experts discuss the leading edge of topics like species identification, hybridization, and new plant material, not to mention their own newest baby plants.

The garden in Nacogdoches that is familiar, at least in name, to Society members — The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden — found us standing in awe of the garden itself and the accomplishments wrought by Dr. David Creech, our own Barbara Stump and the staff from Stephen F. Austin State University. Maybe the fact that we saw more than 5,000 plants of many species in prime condition, beautifully landscaped, and artfully presented, colored our opinion just a little.

Our hosts in Nacogdoches and Tyler, Texas, gave us the warmest welcome I can remember at any of our conventions. I will always have a warm spot in my heart for the people in these towns.

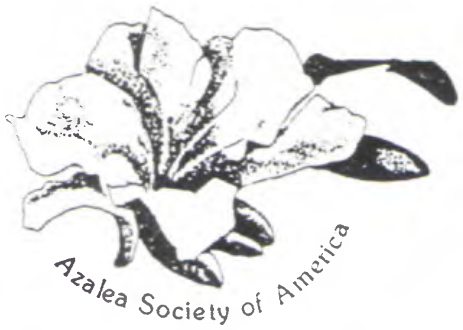
I am pleased to tell you that the Society business conducted at the convention was all positive. It is an indication of the direction that the Society is headed.

First, we owe thanks to the Board members who have retired (temporarily) or moved to new positions. Joe Schild is no longer Past President and will spend more time on his (our) Azalea City Program. Buddy Lee is now Past President and chairs two major committees. Bob Stelloh released the purse-strings as Treasurer but is keeping the Webmaster title. The retiring directors are Joe Coleman and Mary Rutley. To all, our thanks for the hard work that they have so freely given to better our Society.

Second, our financial picture is sound for the first time in years. Granted it is a temporary improvement, but along with a large increase in membership, I feel that we are turning a corner toward a bright future. Due to a trial marketing strategy, we have brought a very large number of professional garden writers into our membership. I welcome you to our group and hope you enjoy the benefits and privileges of membership. We will also welcome your articles for ***The Azalean*** and sincerely hope that you will be with us for many years.

The increase in membership will make ***The Azalean*** more attractive to advertisers. More advertising will help provide more funds to improve the journal, which, in turn, will draw more members. That circle can continue for as long as we support it.

If we continue to put forth the effort, all of the things mentioned above will inevitability lead to a bigger, better and more enjoyable Society. As your new President, I am enthused about all of the possibilities in front of us.



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)*.

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual amount of $25; life-membership for an individual is $500. Members receive ***The Azalean*** and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society including those of the chapter with which the member affiliates. For information and a membership application, write to the Membership Committee, Azalea Society of America, 7195 Henson Landing Road, Welcome, MD 20693 (phone 301-934-3556).or visit www.azaleas.org.

The Azalean
Journal of the Azalea Society of America

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The Azalean (ISSN-1085-5343) is published quarterly (spring, summer, fall and winter) by the Azalea Society of America, Inc., Carol Flowers, Secretary, 700 New Hampshire NW, Apt. 1011, Washington, DC 20037.

Additional copies of the current and back issues can be obtained from Azalean Back Issues, 1000 Moody Bridge Road, Cleveland, SC 29635; jbrown51@bellsouth.net. Please include $1 per copy ordered, plus $1 per order. Orders from outside the U.S., Canada, and Mexico are $2 per copy ordered plus $2 per order.

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

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Printed By: **Complete Printing**
Carthage, Texas

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Correction

The correct spelling of the plant featured on the cover of the Spring 2007 issue of *The Azalean* is Encore® Azalea **Autumn Belle**™ ('Robleo'PPIP).

On the Cover

A newly created 'Spirit of Valdosta' hybrid azalea with a letter 'V' pattern was given to the City of Valdosta, Georgia, as part of its annual Azalea Festival activites. The new azalea will be available for purchase later this year. City officials hope to plant many of these azaleas throughout neighborhoods and parks.

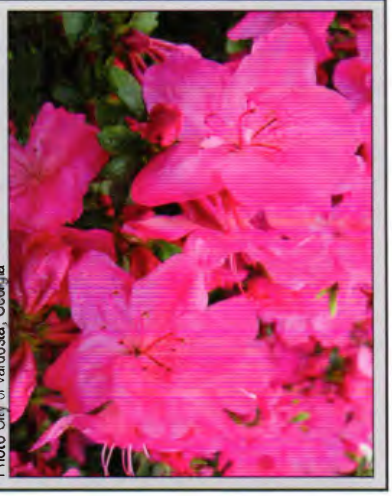

Photo City of Valdosta, Georgia

Rhododendron indicum and *Indicus, -a, -um*: A Slippery Slope

Donald H. Voss—Vienna, Virginia

Why would someone in the 21st century associate a Southern Indian hybrid evergreen azalea such as the large-leaved, large-flowered 'Formosum' or 'Red Formosum' with the relatively small-leaved, small-flowered *Rhododendron indicum*? In the 19th century, "Indicas" became a convenient vernacular name for the Southern Indian hybrids. Unfortunately, that usage persists and leads down the slippery slope of fallaciously attributing to *Rhododendron indicum* many plants belonging to other species.

The Latin adjective *indicus* in one or another of its forms has two quite different applications in plant nomenclature. In scientific botanical nomenclature, this adjective may be used as an epithet in the Latin name of a particular species or infraspecific taxon. In horticulture, it (or its English derivative "Indian") often appears in vernacular names to indicate the geographic origin of plants such as those which became parents of the Belgian Indian hybrids. As Stearn points out, the origin indicated thereby is none too clear:

> ***indicus, -a, -um*** Literally of India but also applies to plants originating throughout the East Indies and from as far away as China. . . . It seems as if any plant that came home in an Indiaman might be given this specific epithet without any further ado—to the confusion of future generations.(1)

In his well-known compendium, *Azaleas*, Galle points out that confusion in the use of "indica" dates back to the early 19th century when *Rhododendron simsii* was introduced in England and called *Azalea indica*. Under that name, Dr. John Sims in 1812 published a colored plate of the plant, together with a discussion of *Azalea indica* broad enough to embrace many familiar species of azaleas, thereby surely contributing to the confusion noted by Stearn (see sidebar).(2)

Shortly after this, *R. mucronatum* arrived in England and Lindley named it *Azalea indica alba* in 1824. (Blume had named this plant *A. mucronata* in 1823, and under the Botanical Code's rule of priority, *Rhododendron mucronatum*, based on Blume's name, is correct for this species.) Seedlings and hybrids of these and other introductions were soon being marketed as "Indica." In 1851, three forms of *R. simsii* ('Vittatum', 'Vittatum Punctatum', and 'Vittatum Bealii') came to England from Shanghai under the name "Indica." When these plants reached Belgium, they were used extensively in hybridizing. The Belgian Indian hybrids became popular conservatory and florist plants in Europe and were widely exported. Because these plants were largely intended for forcing, the Japanese *R. indicum* (which does not force well) was not used as a parent. (3)

In the United States, development of the Southern Indian hybrids was spurred by the popularity of the Belgian Indian hybrids, some of which proved to be hardy in the gardens of Georgia and South Carolina. The Fruitland Nursery of P. J. Berckman in Augusta, Georgia, played an important role in introducing and supplying plants of both series. The parentage of the Southern Indian hybrids is indeed a potpourri: Galle lists Belgian hybrids, forms of *R. mucronatum* (including a double), *R. indicum* (including hybrids with *R. simsii* and *R. mucronatum*), *R. simsii*, and forms of 'Vittatum' and 'Coccineum'. The page from Berckman's 1883 Spring Catalogue reproduced by Galle illustrates the vernacular use of "Indica" that still results in confusion. The page is headed "AZALEA INDICA" but contains 'Amoena' (*R. kiusianum* 'Amoenum') and 'Indica Alba' (*R. mucronatum* var. *mucronatum*), as well as Southern Indian hybrids including 'Formosa' (the feminine -a endings reflect Berckman's preference for *Azalea* as the genus name).(3)

The history of the term "Indica" in the genus *Rhododendron* (including the subsumed genus *Azalea*) confirms the wide use of the term as a geographical descriptor for plants of various species native to the Orient. Although Linnaeus in 1753 named a particular plant as *Azalea indica* (*Rhododendron indicum* (L.) Sweet is derived from the Linnean basionym), during the two intervening centuries

Excerpt from Sims' "*Azalea Indica* Indian Azalea"

> Kaempfer enumerates 21 varieties cultivated in Japan. . . . Among the varieties enumerated by Kaempfer, besides the many different colored flowers . . . with spots of the most contrary hues, the foliage of some is hairy, of others smooth; some produce their flowers before the leaves, some after; others are evergreen [and, implicitly, some are deciduous! DHV]; some have five, some ten stamens.
>
> . . . in our plant there were ten [stamens DHV], unequal in length, and slightly declined, which together with the form of the corolla and the spotting of the superior laciniae [petal lobes DHV], seemed to unite it with Rhododendron, rather than with Azalea; but in fact there are no natural limits between these genera, or at least the number of stamens affords none; and most of the varieties of this species recorded by Kaempfer are pentandrous [have five stamens DHV].

botanists added numerous varieties to *R. indicum* as plant explorers returned new plant material to centers of study. Many of these varieties are now recognized as separate species; for example: *eriocarpum, kaempferi, kiusianum,* x *pulchrum*, *scabrum*, *simsii,* and *transiens* (*R. kaempferi* x *R. macrosepalum*).

An example of the persisting confusion between application of the name *Rhododendron indicum* and the broad array of taxa included in the vernacular terms "Indica" or "Indian" is found in three 2003 plant patents. These relate to sports and sports of sports as follows: (4)

'Crimson Majesty' USPP14,362
branch sport of 'Red Formosum'

'Crimson Princess' USPP14,360
whole plant sport of 'Crimson Majesty'(5)

'Crimson Queen' USPP14,343
branch sport of 'Crimson Princess'

In each of the listed patents, the section "Background of the Invention" begins with the statement: "The present invention relates to a new and distinct variety of evergreen azalea, botanically known as Rhododendron indicum." In apparent contradiction, the section "Botanical Description of Plant Scientific Name," compiled with the assistance of Dr. Lowell E. Urbatsch, Director of the LSU Herbarium, Louisiana State University, includes the following:

> The plant belongs to a group of azaleas called the "Southern Indian azaleas" or "indicas" that are hybrids derived from various species of Rhododendron or derived directly from various species in that genus. *Rhododendron indicum* (L.) Sweet, although often given as the scientific name for this group of plants, has had little or no part in the parentage of the indicas. Most indicas are descendents of *Rhododendron simsii* Planch., *R. mucronatum* G. Don and/or *R. pulchrum* Sweet or their hybrids; in the industry, however, the accepted parentage is that of Rhododendron indicum.

The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist (2d ed.) states, however, that *R.* 'Formosum' (the source of 'Red Formosum' and indirectly the source of 'Crimson Majesty') is of uncertain origin, but may be a 'Phoeniceum' hybrid. 'Phoeniceum' in turn may be a form of *R. scabrum* or (*scabrum* × *mucronatum*).(6)

The highly questionable nature of the "industry" view mentioned in the cited patents may be judged by a brief review of leaf and corolla dimensions of *R. indicum*, *R. scabrum*, and the three patented plants listed above (all measurements in millimeters): (7)

	Spring Leaf		Petal	Corolla
	Length	Width	Length	Diameter
R. indicum	20-30	8-10	30-50	51-64
R. scabrum	30-90	20-35	45-60	50-100
'Crimson Majesty'	38-89	13-38	45-53	70-80
'Crimson Princess'	25-51	13-25	45-60	70
'Crimson Queen'	32-64	13-25	45-50	55-60

Anyone who has seen old, towering, midseason-flowering specimens of the Southern Indian 'Formosum' in southern gardens and who is also familiar with the compact, late-flowering *R. indicum* 'Balsaminiflorum' must entertain severe doubts about the assertion of *R. indicum* as the proper species for plants derived from 'Formosum'. The tabulation above points to other obvious differences: 'Crimson Majesty' has maximum leaf length three times and width nearly four times that of *R. indicum*; flower diameter averages about 30 percent greater.

Two centuries after Sims in 1812 misapplied the name *Azalea indica* to the plant now recognized as *Rhododendron simsii* (a species different from that named *Azalea indica* by Linnaeus in 1753), the time is well past for "industry," horticultural writers, horticulturists in general, and yes, even U.S. plant patent examiners, to heed azalea experts such as Galle and Lee and take note of the fact that the terms Southern Indian hybrid and "Indica" do not equate to *Rhododendron indicum* (L.) Sweet.(8)

Notes

1. Stearn, William T. 1992. *Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners*. London: Cassell.
2. Sims, John. 1812. *Azalea Indica* Indian Azalea. in *Curtis' Botanical Magazine*. 35:t.1480. London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones.
3. Galle, Fred C. 1987. *Azaleas*. Revised and enlarged edition. Portland, OR: Timber Press.
4. U.S. plant patents may be viewed on the Internet at www.uspto.gov; select Patents/Search/Patent Number Search/enter PP14362. Note that in this article matter quoted from patents follows the Patent Office practice of not italicizing Latin botanical names.
5. The term "whole plant sport" has appeared in U.S. plant patents Nos. 6,217; 8,212; 13,260; 14,360; 16,290; 17,002; 17,044. In these patents, the term refers to a mutant plant discovered in cultivation among a group of propagules from a given clone. It thus differs from a bud- or branch-sport, which is first discovered as mutant growth on a source plant and subsequently propagated asexually. Where mutation is not induced (e.g., by X-ray or colchicine), the discovery is serendipitous. In both cases, subsequent propagation of the mutant is required to establish that the new variety is stable.
6. Leslie, Alan C. (comp.). 2004. *International Rhododendron Register and Checklist* (2d ed.). London: Royal Horticultural Society.
7. Cultivar data is from the respective patents. For *R. indicum* and *scabrum,* leaf data and petal length are from Chamberlain, D.F. et al. 1990. A Revision of *Rhododendron*: IV Subgenus *Tsutsusi*. *Edinb. J. Bot.* 47(2):120; corolla diameter, from Galle *supra,* and from Cox, Peter A. and Cox, Kenneth N. E. 1997. *Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species*. Scotland: Glendoick Publishing
8. Galle, *op. cit.*; Lee, Frederic P. 1958. *The Azalea Book.* Princeton: D. Van Nostrand.

The author expresses appreciation to Mr. William C. Miller III for calling attention to the misapplication of the botanical name Rhododendron indicum *in the patents discussed in this article and for guidance relating to whole plant sports.*

Nature Is My Greenhouse: Let's Simply Propagate—Part I

Mike Creel—Lexington, South Carolina

Editor's Note: The following article was presented at the 23rd Annual Cullowhee Native Plant Conference at Western Carolina University in July 2006.

I must admit right off that my once-productive vegetable garden west of Lexington, South Carolina, has grown up in neglect since I discovered that I can easily propagate and grow native plants the entire 12 months of the year outdoors with no greenhouse needed and very minimal expense.

I started in the winter of 1990-91 with two little one-gallon pots that I stuck dormant native azalea cuttings into and covered them with two two-liter soft drink bottles. I did this on a whim using dormant, leafless wild azalea cuttings that a botanist clipped from his fresh, soon-to-be dry herbarium specimen. My intent was to keep the stems alive long enough to produce blooms. I stuck one pot of leafless stems with flower buds present and a second pot of stems with only leaf buds.

I had pretty much forgotten about the two pots of unknown wild azalea cuttings until I noticed from a distance something white in one of the two pots in mid-May, and when I looked closer I found open azalea blooms—white and fragrant—by which I could determine the species. The real surprise was in the second pot, which was filled with green leafy stems that had rooted. The cuttings in the blooming pot had not developed roots during the same period, but had spent all their energy in feeding those fat flower buds. I learned several lessons: I can root the reputedly difficult native azaleas; I don't need a greenhouse to root plants; dormant cuttings will root, given time; and flower buds should always be removed from cuttings I want to root.

Over the past several years I have been developing and refining a natural approach to both seed and cutting propagation that uses nature's calendar and climate controls. My simple, low-tech approach finds a use for all sorts of recycled materials, like pots, hanging baskets, clear soft drink bottles, wire and so on. A friend from Norway once called my techniques "Creel-Way" propagation and the name stuck.

I like to say that nature is my greenhouse. Patience and leaf mold provide my rooting hormones, and the weather whims of the four seasons are my climate controls. In the center of South Carolina where I live the native plant gardener can pretty much plant seeds and stick cuttings outdoors with minimal equipment year-round, except for rare days of steady rain and sustained freezes.

Consider the principal features of Creel-Way propagation below and compare them with traditional propagation methods. You will find them quite different from the norm, less expensive, and more carefree.

I go to extremes to ensure good drainage and a sturdy container, since both help my plants survive and prosper with inattention. Once I fill a pot with cuttings or seeds, it must be able to withstand local extremes of heat and cold, periods of heavy rain, wind, shifting angles of the sun, and frequent attacks by squirrels, birds, curious cats and other varmint.

What is different about Creel-Way propagation from usual practices?

- It is done totally outdoors, and possible all 12 months if weather permits.
- It needs no expensive greenhouse, and can be done very small scale, even one pot.
- It uses inexpensive materials, such as recycled containers and pots.
- It works for all vascular plant species with little variation, both woody and perennial.
- It requires no rooting hormones, fertilizers, pesticides or fungicides.
- It duplicates natural, thorough drainage by adapting pots and media.
- It is easy to begin and requires minimal cost, time and upkeep.
- It can be adapted to any region by changes in timing and local materials.

I will teach you ways to propagate native plants easily on a budget so you can preserve, grow and propagate native plants around your home garden without removing them from the wild. Most vascular plants can be rooted from green or woody cuttings outdoors, in a well-shaded area kept just moist. There are some tricks to doing this right. Rooted cuttings will be copies of the plant unless the cutting is a "sport" or mutated stem. Seed grown plants will be similar to parents in colors and habit, but not identical.

Why should we be interested in propagating native plants? So you won't be tempted to dig and remove plants from the wild. Because most home site preparation destroys preexisting native plants. Because local varieties are seldom propagated and used in home landscapes. Because local and regional forms are rarely offered by nurseries. So we can share extra plants and clones with gardeners. So we can select and provide cultivars for nurseries and friends. So we can learn to propagate better and teach others how to. So we can copy local and rare forms and species for restoration. So we can restore missing species to our homesteads.

The main things I do in native plant propagation are:

- For woody species like trees, shrubs and vines sticking only woody cuttings, regardless of the season.
- Keeping cuttings stored in the refrigerator for extended periods, in inflated plastic bags with no water.

- Drilling extra drain holes in pots with a 3/4 inch hole-saw in a uniform staggered pattern;
- Filling pots for cuttings or seed only half full with "special recipes" of fast-draining media;
- Covering seed pots with secured "varmint caps" of wire mesh, 1/4 inch hardware cloth;
- Topping media in seed and cutting pots with sifted humus fines from the same or a related species;
- Using no fertilizers, rooting hormones, fungicides, pesticides or chemicals;
- Wounding and sticking woody cuttings (not new growth) into "dryish" media, using no hormones;
- Attaching to cutting pots "mini-greenhouse" non-degrading clear or translucent plastic domes that allow water to reach media between the dome and the pot rim with 1/2 inch or more clearance;
- Placing pots just off the ground on a pedestal or hanger to prevent earthworm invasion;
- Protecting closed dome-pots of cuttings from full sun with 65-70 percent shade cloth;
- Watering pots after placing them, and then as needed to total one inch per week;
- Disturbing pots only when imperiled by saturated media or other problems; and
- Letting nature do the rest.

Several new things I've learned since my last propagation workshop:

- Propagation pots and humidity domes can be made from a wider variety of containers.
- Regular clear 2-liter soft drink bottles work well as humidity domes for one gallon pots.
- Discarded hanging baskets of all sizes can be converted into propagation and plant pots.
- A corded drill, which rotates faster, works better than a rechargeable one to enlarge and add drainage holes to pots or for vent holes, and will make clean holes in thinner plastic pots.
- A 3/4 inch hole-saw bit works best for making drain holes in all sizes of pots and containers.
- Securely wire propagation domes and varmint caps to the pot, rather than using a press-in hold-down.
- Woody cuttings can be taken year-round in many areas, though a cold frame may be needed.
- Woody cuttings can be stored cold for longer periods in a plastic bag with no added moisture.
- Pre-trimming and retrimming woody cuttings for transport storage does not hurt them.
- To rescue cuttings and plants imperiled by growing in too-wet or too-dry pots.
- Pine bark mini-nuggets are important to sustaining good media drainage.
- Do not use sand, gravel, or pea pebbles in media mixes, even coarse washed sand.
- By doing a postmortem on failed pots of cuttings and seeds, you can learn what you did wrong.
- Be alert to survivors in apparently failed pots of cuttings and seedlings.

NOT-SO-TECHNICAL TERMS I USE REPEATEDLY

Cuttings are always woody stems, unless I am rooting perennials, when I use firm green stems.

Humidity Domes or Domes are clear or translucent bottles or containers I use to cover cuttings.

Vent Cap is a screw-on bottle cap or a rubber plug made from a chair foot that seals a dome.

Drilled Pot is a nursery pot or container that has been improved with extra drainage holes.

Hold-Down is a bendable wire to secure clear domes to prop-pots by two holes made in the pot rim.

Dome-Pot is a combination of a dome, vent cap, drilled pot, hold-down, and media.

High-Rise Pot is a pot for cuttings or seeds made from used or new hanging baskets drilled for proper drainage and fitted with a clear dome made from a one-gallon spring water bottle.

Hole-Saws are drill bits for making holes in pots and domes, 3/4 inch for drain holes, 7/8 inch and larger for vent holes in domes.

Vent Plugs made from rubber chair feet are used to seal vent holes in certain domes.

Varmint Caps are pot covers made from hardware cloth, 1/4 inch mesh 2 feet wide, attached to pots of seedlings or small plants with a length of wire. A 6-inch square covers a gallon pot.

Two-Brr Pot is a pot made from a plastic box drilled for drainage, fitted with 2 domes for cuttings.

Pedestal is a support made from anything to keep a pot off the ground, to aid drainage.

GETTING STARTED IN CREEL-WAY PROPAGATION

You will need a few basic facilities, materials, and tools to get started:

(1) Create an area that you can keep shaded and watered year round for dome-pots;

(2) Have an adjacent area in the sun to grow out cuttings and seedlings;

(3) A potting bench is also useful, easy to build pre-cut ones are available as kits;

(4) A small sprinkler and egg-type timer provide easy weekly watering when rain does not;

(5) Get a number of plastic pots, one gallon and larger, preferably thick walled;

(6) Scavenge (or buy cheaply) some clear or translucent containers for use as humidity domes, 2-liter clear soft drink bottles, 3-liter soft drink bottles and one-gallon spring water bottles are best;

(7) Buy or salvage some 1/4 inch mesh hardware cloth to make varmint caps for seedling pots;

(8) Heavy scissors or surgical shears for cutting the bottom from propagation domes;

(9) Flexible wire, like electric fence wire, serves to fasten humidity domes and varmint caps to pots;

(10) Keep handy some wire cutters for trimming wire hold-downs;

(11) Have a pair of tin snips for cutting wire mesh and a pocket knife awl for hold-downs;

(12) Find some durable identification labels, erasable ones if possible;

(13) You need a hand cultivator and large pot, or some other means, for mixing small batches of media;

(14) For media buy pine bark soil conditioner, pine bark mini nuggets, and Fafard 3B potting soil; and

(15) A 3/8 inch corded drill to make new drain holes in pots and vent holes in propagation domes.

A shade cloth on a frame is essential when rooting cuttings in clear humidity domes, regardless of location or season. You cannot depend totally on tree shade. I use a 6 by 15 foot Coolaroo brand mesh shade cloth (medium density, blue margin thread) that limits sun reaching the dome-pots by 64 to 70 percent. I use a green one (for luck) supported by an old dog pen fence with 2-inch PVC cross beams. Not pretty, but it has worked for years.

Recently I built a better-looking shade bed with six six-foot treated posts at six-foot intervals along a 14-foot-wide concrete pad, where a dog pen had been. I screwed treated 1 by 5-inch boards along the top outside of the posts. This created two four-foot-high areas where I can stretch two 6-by 15-foot shade cloths across and roll the cloths up when needed for access or watering.

Without secure and consistent shade, cuttings in a dome pot will "cook" after an hour or so even in winter. I found simple plans online for a PVC-frame lawn tractor shed that would work great as a small shade enclosure. A very small shade device can be made for one or a few pots. Stiff wire will form a small shade support.

DESIGN AND USE OF CREEL-WAY DOME-POTS

All of my "dome-pots" for stem cuttings work on the same design, appearing to be miniature greenhouses, but much more carefree. Each dome-pot maintains a warm captive high humidity environment inside a clear or translucent dome, while the root zone stays moist but well-aerated and fast-draining through proper media selection and extra drainage holes. Given sufficient time, filtered sunlight and warmth, any good cutting will root in a dome pot.

In warmer regions such as where I live in the central midlands of South Carolina, or USDA Hardiness Zone 8A, woody cuttings of many species can be collected and stuck in outdoor dome-pots year-round, even during plant dormancy. In colder areas subject to severe and prolonged freezes, dome pot cuttings would need to be stuck during the growing season or protected by a cool greenhouse or cold frame. Dormant cuttings in zones colder than 8A could be stuck outdoors near the end of winter just before bud emergence. Terminal buds and bloom buds always need to be removed.

Dome-pots are protected outdoors from overheating by a 64-70 percent shade cloth and receive weekly watering from nature or a sprinkler to equal one-half to one inch. No rooting hormones or chemicals are used, but a little local native humus is added to the media surface. Woody cuttings "only" are used for woody plants, and firm green stems are used as cuttings for herbaceous plants that form joints.

Once cuttings are rooted, after about three warm months in a dome-pot, the ventilation cap or plug is removed to allow cuttings to acclimate to drier outside air, while the now-vented dome is kept in place with the pot still protected by shade for another 4 to 6 weeks. After this period the pot can be moved into a sunny area with the open vented dome kept in place or removed. Usually after four months the cuttings can be repotted from a dome-pot to separate pots or spaced out in a larger pot.

Both propagation domes and pots can be made from a variety of containers, if they are the right size, can be drilled easily for drain holes or ventilation holes and do not break down or become brittle with prolonged exposure to sun or climatic changes.

DESIGN AND USE OF THE CREEL-WAY SEED POT

Rather than grow native plant seeds indoors under lights, I plant them outdoors throughout the year in well-drained pots protected by wire mesh commonly sold as hardware cloth. All pots are filled with fast-draining media to the halfway point or slightly above and all have been converted to fast drainage with a 3/4-inch hole-saw.

With varmint cap covers I use all sizes of pots for seed, from one gallon to 10. Find a sunny spot, drill pot, prepare wire mesh varmint cap, mix media, fill pot halfway, sprinkle humus, sprinkle seeds, install varmint cap, move pot to bed in sun or half shade, put on pedestal, water in *situ* after moving pot to long-term location, water once weekly if no rain.

When planting seed pots you will need fresh seeds or seeds that have been properly maintained since collection. Small seeds like azaleas and rhododendrons are surface sown, while larger ones like dogwood and *Stewartia* are planted shallow. I sprinkle humus fines from like or related species on the media surface before planting.

I always use varmint caps for seed pots to protect seedling pots from squirrels, birds, and other varmints with a wire mesh cap. For one-gallon pots I cut a 6-inch square of 1/4-inch mesh hardware cloth (from 2- to 4-foot wide wire fabric) using tin snips and bend the edges down for fastening to the pot.

Varmint caps can also protect small cuttings planted low in the pot. For three-gallon or larger pots I cut a 12-inch square, snipping three to four inches long with 45-degree cuts into each corner and 90-degree slots midway each side, which aids in bending edges to fit various pots. Secure the varmint cap to pot with a single wire attached to a hole on each side.

MEDIA CHOICES AND SOURCES

Choosing and mixing media for outdoor propagation pots is a primary concern of mine. I have found no commercially

available media mix that is ready to use as is. Most have a tendency to become saturated in a pot that is watered weekly and exposed to rains.

For propagating cuttings and seedlings I use one primary media mix (Mix A) which drains well and maintains thorough drainage over time. I mix media with a hand cultivator in a 10-gallon low pot or by shaking a 6.5-gallon clear trash can with lid. The second way provides good exercise and you can see the mixing. The small amount of perlite in mixes A and B offer visual evidence of good mixing.

Media Mix A: For a long time my all-purpose mix for cuttings and seeds has been 5 parts soil conditioner (a finely milled and composted pine bark mixed with one part of a soilless mix such as Fafard 3 or Baccto® Pro or an equivalent soil-less mix). I use this in pots that have been drilled for drainage, and I fill pots just to or slightly above the halfway point with media.

Media Mix B: This is a recent mix I am experimenting with for cuttings and seeds, which I make by mixing 6 parts of soil conditioner or pine bark fines with 1 part of pine bark mini-nuggets and one half of a soil-less mix as cited above. This mix drains so well that drilling of extra drainage holes may not be necessary.

Media Mix C: This new mix for repotting seedlings and cuttings came from my friend Vivian Abney in Tennessee and is showing good performance in full pots that have not been drilled for extra drainage. This repotting mix contains 2 parts of soil conditioner or pine bark fines mixed with 1 part of pine bark mini-nuggets. I usually double the recipe on this one to create a good batch of media.

When using Media Mix A, pots need to be drilled for extra drainage, half-filled with media if a standard tall (not a low, wide) pot is used, set on a pedestal (made from anything that drains) off the ground or hung from a tree or support.

Find locally available equivalents to the materials I use. Develop your own media from local suppliers, but it must drain well in a container and break down slowly.

The soil conditioner I use is from P and L Bark in Pageland, South Carolina, and sold by Lowes as Garden Plus soil conditioner (product number 97675). P and L Bark is on the bag label in small print. The Gro-Bark company in McCormick, South Carolina, also produces a good pine bark soil conditioner. Many commercial azalea nurseries use similar bark media. Take care not to let your bags become saturated by the rain.

Do not mix or use media that is already saturated. Investigate locally for similar materials.

It surprises most people when they learn that I use no rooting hormones to root cuttings. Before sowing seeds or sticking cuttings into media I sprinkle about a teaspoon of humus fines (sifted through a mesh pot or crumbled between my fingers) onto the media surface.

I collect fresh humus as a combination of rotted leaves with some soil from nearby plants of the same or a closely related species from beneath unrotted leaves in the root zone. It is rich in natural soil bacteria and *mycorrhizae*. I try to select mature plants not heavily fertilized or sprayed regularly with fungicides.

The humus must be from the new area where the plants will be growing, not from the original site where the mother plant was growing. In pots of cuttings or seeds I avoid fertilizer, fungicides, pesticides, and over watering.

Prompt, thorough drainage is key to rooting cuttings and growing seedlings. Container drainage can be improved by: (1) selecting pots that drain well such as low wide pots and mesh garden pond pots; (2) limiting media level to 1/2 or 2/3 full; (3) drilling extra drain holes; (4) changing media recipe to drain faster; and (5) elevating pots off the ground on a pedestal or hanging the pot in the air. Never use pots with only drain holes in the bottom.

Earthworms are drainage demons of the flower pot and will invade a propagation pot via drain holes in the pot bottom quickly converting a pot of well-draining media into saturated media which destroys the air spaces needed for roots on cuttings, seedlings, and plants. Avoid putting pots into direct ground contact but elevate them on draining material.

SELECTION AND USE OF PROPAGATION DOMES

Propagation domes to hold humidity around cuttings in the process of rooting must be made of clear, transparent or translucent plastic that does not break down quickly outdoors. They must have a sealable and removable upper vent hole such as a screw-on cap. If a potential dome has no vent, it must be of a material that is easy to drill so ventilation hole can be installed top center. Rubber chair feet of different sizes work well as vent plugs.

Bottles converted to propagation domes need to have their bottom removed making a straight cut with heavy scissors or surgical shears. Tall bottles such as a 3-liter soft drink container can be cut in half to make two domes, or left tall for long cuttings. Cylindrical plastic food containers and other liquid containers can be turned upside down, then a vent hole drilled.

Matching a dome to the pot is critical to the function of the dome-pot. Domes must fit inside (not outside) the propagation pot with a minimum 1/2-inch clearance between dome edge and pot rim for water to enter media in the pot from overhead—rain, hose nozzle or sprinkler—and flow down into that space and into the media. Each dome must be centered in the pot against the media and secured with a strand of wire. The dome-pot must permit easy entrance and drainage of water. Never enclose a pot inside a dome.

A standard 2-liter soft drink bottle cut in half, or using the upper 3/4 of the bottle, works well as a dome for a one-gallon pot. Some wider one-gallon pots have enough space to use a 3-liter soft drink bottle cut in half. It must be centered onto the media and wired to the pot.

Three-liter soft drink bottles, which are hard to find today, make good propagation domes for wider gallon pots, mum pots, two-gallon pots, medium hanging baskets and low azalea pots. Once the 3-liter bottle is cut in half, the top half already has a sealable vent hole, the cap. A vent hole in the

dome made from the bottom half of the bottle can be made by carefully drilling it with a 7/8 inch hole-saw. I invert a bottle half over a 2-foot 4 by 4 post section in the ground (with the bottom of a 1-liter bottle bottom half snugly fitted over the post, which stabilizes the 3-liter bottle section slid over it. I drill a center hole and plug it with a 5/8-inch outside diameter rubber chair foot. Three-liter soft drink bottles can be found only as chain grocery store brands.

Clear one-gallon PET spring water bottles work perfectly in three-gallon pots, hanging baskets and larger pots. Be sure to use clear, weather-durable plastic bottles. Translucent gallon milk bottles will work as domes, but they become brittle outdoors. To clean algae off the inside of domes use moist fine sand and water.

I recommend using the durable clear one-gallon bottles sold by Nestlé Waters North America brands: Arrowhead® Brand Mountain Spring Water (in CA, AZ and NV), Deer Park® Brand Natural Spring Water (in Northeast and Atlantic states), Ice Mountain® Brand Natural Spring Water (in Midwest and near-South states), Ozarka® Brand Natural Spring Water (in TX), Poland Spring® Brand Natural Spring Water (in Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states) and Zephyrhills® Brand Natural Spring Water (in FL). One-gallon Dannon spring water bottles of similar material also work well as propagation domes in the pot sizes mentioned.

Attaching the propagation dome to the pot is required to maintain a seal between the propagation dome and media in the pot. Don't cover the pot with the dome. The dome should be centered on the media with at least 1/2 inch of open space all around to permit overhead water to enter the media between dome and pot rim. Water entering media from the pot margin will migrate to the center of the pot, moistening all the media.

Make two small holes in opposite top edges of the pot rim, fit a length of flexible wire (electric fence wire) through the holes, looping the wire around the bottle spout or over plug and secure wire to both sides. Never fill a standard depth pot (drilled for drainage) more than halfway. Regularly check for saturated media. Never fill pots with wet media. Do not water seed or cutting pots and then overly handle them as this compacts the media and retards drainage. It is best to water pots after moving them to their long-term site.

PROPAGATION POT SELECTION AND USE

Very few off-the-shelf "flower pots" today are designed for effective long-term good drainage that most native plants need. Most just have too few drainage holes or have holes that are too small or wrongly shaped. I can recommend a few fast-draining pots that are ready to use "as-is." These include the mesh-walled containers used for garden pond plants and some inexpensive kitchen colanders.

Open any drain spaces in mesh pots or colanders that may still be sealed with plastic. The garden pond section of chain store garden departments always stock mesh pond pots – square, round or octagonal. Dollar stores carry inexpensive colanders.

My propagation pots look like Swiss cheese because they are filled with so many holes. I drill extra drainage holes in plastic pots with a plastic-capable 3/4-inch hole-saw attached to 3/8-inch corded drill, which maintains a constant fast speed longer than the rechargeable 18-volt drill I once used. Drilling clean drain holes in stiff, thick-walled plastic molded pots is pretty easy, but the thin-walled vacuum-formed ones required a lighter touch to prevent tearing. I also enlarge existing lower drain holes in pots to 3/4 inch.

In new or recycled plastic pots I drill new holes midway between each of the existing drain holes (if widely spaced) around the bottom side and make two more rows up the pot in an alternating pattern about 1/3 way up the pot. Drainage hole size should be as large as possible such that media does not run out of hole when watered. The 3/4-inch hole-saw seems the best. Hole-saws tend to fill up on the inside with plastic from holes cut. I just let the space fill up until there is space for one cut hole layer, which I peel away after drilling each hole. I want to invent a hole-saw bit that pushes out the waste plastic. A piece of foam rubber that compresses and rebounds inside the hole-saw cavity might solve this problem of waste build-up.

For planting seeds, cuttings, and plants I fill drilled pots about halfway or slightly above with media to form a final surface about two inches above the upper drain holes. I always seat pots on a pedestal or stand or hang them. The media level in low, wide pots can be 2/3 the height of the pot to full, but I do advise enlarging drain holes to 3/4 inch, adding drain holes between each of the bottom side holes and perching the pot off the ground.

For drilling plastic pots and domes the sharper the drill bit and the fresher the drill battery the better. You need plastic-capable hole saws in a 3/4 and 7/8 sizes. The 7/8-bit makes the vent hole in containers and bottles used for propagation domes (particularly the bottom half of 3-liter soft drink bottles). Plug the 7/8-inch hole with a white or black rubber 5/8 outside diameter chair foot. When making the hole-saw holes in thick Rubbermaid containers used for pots or domes, it is wise to drill a small pilot hole first using a 1/8-inch drill bit. For drilling vent holes in larger containers used as domes you will need larger diameter hole saws and larger rubber chair feet for removable plugs.

Drilling in thin-walled or brittle plastic pots and containers to create extra drain holes, or a vent hole, must be done with special care. Wear protective glasses and don't get into a hurry. Fill the pot first with firmly packed dense media to provide resistance against the spinning hole-saw drill bit. Drill slowly using a fresh, sharp hole-saw while applying light pressure (to prevent cracking and tearing). Drilling a 1/8-inch pilot hole (prior to hole-saw drilling) helps particularly well when converting plastic food containers to pots or domes. I often use this technique when I "rescue" too-wet plants by adding extra draining holes to the pot or making small drain holes larger.

I use flexible wire to make hold-downs for propagation domes and varmint caps on seed pots. New or used electric fence wire is perfect. Attach a hold-down wire to pot by making a hole in both sides near the top edge using a 1/8-inch drill bit or pocket knife awl.

Always use hold-down wires to attach domes to cutting pots and varmint caps to seed pots. Hanger wire from the hardware store works well for creating hanging baskets from plastic kitchen bowls and colanders, also for making a small shade cloth frame that you can stick into the ground.

PROPAGATION POTS ABOUND - MANY FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

Keep your eyes open for plastic nursery pots and hanging baskets that have been discarded. The world is full of potential pots and propagation domes, sometimes in unlikely places.

I was once seeking some very large domes and pots for rooting some big-leaved species trees. At one bargain store I found a 6.5-gallon clear 1136 Sterilite clear trash can designed for storing children's toys, which made a perfect dome to fit in a 10 gallon pot I had. I drilled a 1-3/4 inch vent hole with a hole-saw in the top center of the trash can and plugged it with a 1-1/2 inch vent plug (rubber chair foot).

At a local car wash I asked about some empty translucent 20-gallon drums (one end with two screw caps/vents) which the manager gave me after I inquired and told him my plan. He also had some 55-gallon drums of the same material. I sawed the 20-gallon container in half to make two 10-gallon domes which fit nicely in a 20-gallon blue utility tub/pot, I found at a dollar store.

I create propagation dome-pots and seed pots called "high-rises" from used and new hanging baskets to place on a short pedestal just off the ground or hang in a tree or frame. Cuttings seem to root faster in aerial pots, due to greatly improved drainage, well aerated root zone and lighting from the sides. Several high-rise pots could be hung in a small area using a sturdy frame, shaded for cuttings, sunny or part shade for seeds.

Since most hanging baskets drain so poorly I remove the attached tray, enlarge existing bottom drain holes to 3/4-inch using a hole-saw and add one or two new rows of drain holes above in a staggered pattern. Unlikely pots sometimes work well, like a miniature hanging basket planter I found, drilled and added a dome made from the top half of 2-liter soft drink bottle. It rooted several 'Camp's Red' Cumberland azaleas which repotted successfully.

I also buy inexpensive plastic food colanders to which no additional drainage needs to be added. Use a 1/8-inch drill or pocketknife awl to make two holes for installing a wire "hold-down" for the propagation dome. To make the colander into a hanging basket just drill the three equidistant holes for the hanging basket wire.

The "colander pot" can be used either hung like a hanging basket or sitting on a pedestal just off the ground. If you use the colander pot, you can use a heavier media than what I normally use and water it more often. Check the colander pot every other day. In normal dome-pots I just water once a week if it has not rained.

Propagation pots and domes can be made from all sorts of common household items. I once stuck dormant cuttings in a rectangular pot made from a "Rubbermaid® Latchable" in the 6.5-quart or 6.1-liter size. I drilled a pattern of good drainage holes in the box and used its lid for a perch. I attached two clear propagation domes made from half a 3-liter soft drink bottle: The domes fit perfectly side by side in the clear box with sufficient space between pot sidewall and dome sidewall for water to enter the media.

Rescuing pots in peril with rooted cuttings and small seedlings is a daily effort. Most of them are suffering from saturated media which is noticeable by plants dying or losing leaves in a pot, a pot feeling too heavy, earthworm castings plugging drain holes, weeds such as violets outgrowing the intended plants, and stunted plants with little vigor. Such pots can often be rescued by repotting the plants in proper media and pot, by drilling extra drain holes in the pot or by removing the bottom half or third of media from the pot to speed drainage.

RECORD KEEPING

Identification tags that remain readable and are long-lasting are essential for both seed and cutting pots. Label each pot of cuttings, plants or seeds with "pencil-writable" metal or plastic ID tags stating what is planted, who provided it and date planted. I press tags into the media along pot sidewall to hide them. Two labels are often better than one.

I also keep a pocket notebook and old mailing labels with dates and plant material received. Used or new metal offset printing plates are the longest lasting material as I have some plants labels from layers dating to 1983 which are still quite readable with pencil writing.

Never use vinyl mini-blinds for plant tags as they fade quickly. Old aluminum blinds work. Seek similar materials in your area. Some waste plastics from businesses like credit card manufacturers work well as labels and are erasable and reusable.

Mike Creel's first loves are his family followed by the two family felines, but after that, he turns "green," venturing to a 7-acre native garden and the wilds of South Carolina to propagate, preserve, and share every worthy native plant he encounters. He considers propagation a critical tool of native plant conservation. A 1977 University of South Carolina journalism graduate, he recently retired from state government as writer and photographer on environment and natural resources. Through workshops, web correspondence and U.S. mail he shares his simple propagation techniques and plants with people across America and abroad.

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D&M Custom Landscapes
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Newport, NC 28570

Patricia Drackett
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14140 Old Woolmarket Road
Biloxi, MS 39532

Ken Druse
105 Cambridge Place
Brooklyn, NY 11238

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Azalea City News

Valdosta, Georgia receives designation

By Kathy Brunot—Valdosta, Georgia

Valdosta, Georgia, has long been called an "Azalea City" and this motto was even incorporated in the city's logo.

A city employee by the name of R.J. Drexel, who later became the first city park superintendent, was instrumental in propagating and promoting the planting of azaleas in the 1940s and 1950s. He had a desire to make the parks in the city so beautiful that Valdosta would be a more interesting place to live.

Interestingly enough, Georgia adopted the azalea as its state wildflower in 1979. Both native and cultivated azaleas can be seen in landscapes throughout the city, blooming between March and August.

In 2000, a committee was formed by citizens of Lowndes County seeking to establish a spring festival that showcases the beauty of the azaleas planted throughout the community. On March 17, 2001, the first-ever Valdosta-Lowndes County Azalea Festival was born, attracting between 8,000 and 10,000 people to beautiful Drexel Park.

Drexel Park has been the location of the Azalea Festival ever since. The community recently celebrated its 7th Annual Azalea Festival, which became the appropriate time to announce Valdosta's selection as a certified "Azalea City" by the Azalea Society of America.

The Azalea Festival continues to grow bigger and better with each passing year. The 2005 festival saw nearly 35,000 participants over the two-day festival. A highlight of last year's festival was the planting of a special hybrid azalea named the 'Spirit of Valdosta' in Drexel Park. The 'Spirit of Valdosta' azalea will be available for sale to area residents later this year. The city hopes to see many of these azaleas throughout its neighborhoods and parks.

The city has nine active garden clubs that promote beautification efforts. One of our local women's clubs, the Azalea City Women's Club, has adopted a project of planting azaleas along a multi-purpose trail that traverses a 2.7-mile section of our community.

The trail, appropriately named the Azalea City Trail, crosses a portion of Valdosta State University Campus and Drexel Park, both of which showcase an abundance of azaleas. This trail is widely used by the community and allows citizens to enjoy the beautiful flowers.

The city will continue to look for ways to promote and appreciate the beauty that the azalea is known for in the community.

Editor's Note: Valdosta, Georgia became the seventh ASA certified Azalea City on March 10, 2007. For a complete listing of Azalea Cities visit the ASA Web Site at www.azaleas.org.

Photo Bill Miller

▲ Azalea City Committee Chairman Joseph E. Schild, Jr., left, and ASA President Robert "Buddy" Lee, right, presented Mayor Joey Seeber of Tyler, Texas, with a framed Azalea City designation on March 30, 2007.

Tyler, Texas named official Azalea City

Courtesy of the Tyler Morning Telegraph

The Azalea Society of America says Tyler is one of the best cities in the nation to showcase and promote azaleas.

Because of this, the national group designated Tyler an official Azalea City.

After submitting an application emphasizing the annual Azalea & Spring Flower Trail, the city learned in December that it had become the nation's fourth Azalea City.

The ASA held its national convention in Nacogdoches and many of its members came to Tyler on Friday, March 30, 2007, for the presentation ceremony.

Azalea City Chairman **Joe Schild** said Tyler's application left no doubt that it met criteria.

"It was so beautiful and well thought-out," he said. "Ya'll did your homework."

Mayor Joey Seeber said the designation confirms what residents have long known — that Tyler is a beautiful city.

After the ceremony, ASA President **Buddy Lee** said Tyler will be featured on the ASA Web site and its newsletter and in information sent to thousands of horticulture writers.

ASA established the Azalea City program in 2004 to certify cities that promote azaleas.

Chamber of Commerce and tourism officials (in Tyler) say azaleas annually attract tens of thousands of visitors.

Chapter News

Ben Morrison Chapter

Bob Hobbs, Newsletter Editor

The chapter recently established a planning committee and a membership task force. Both groups will meet periodically to plan and schedule events for the chapter and also develop ideas to increase membership.

Ms. Carole Bordelon, curator of the camellia collection at the U.S. National Arboretum, was the guest speaker at the chapter's March meeting which was held at the Annapolis Library.

Ms. Bordelon provided an interesting, informative and highly visual presentation on the camellia collection at the National Arboretum.

Louisiana Chapter

Allen Owings, President

The Louisiana chapter was well represented at the ASA national convention in Texas. A good group of about 25 members attended. We are proud of the efforts of **Buddy Lee** for leading the national organization over the last four years. Thank you Buddy!

Congratulations to **Margie Jenkins**, our current chapter treasurer and long-time member, on being named an ASA Distinguished Service Award winner for 2007.

Our spring-quarter meeting was held March 21 at the LSU AgCenter's Hammond Research Station in Hammond. Members and guests enjoyed a catfish dinner with all the trimmings and heard a presentation from **Richard Odom**, owner of Country Pines Nursery in Forest Hill, Louisiana, on the development and release of his "Crimson" series azaleas.

"Crimson" azaleas were introduced in 2004 and are vegetative sports developed from 'Red Formosum'. 'Crimson Majesty' is the largest of the series and will mature at a height of 5-8 feet. The mid-sized variety in the series is 'Crimson Queen' (3 feet by 3 feet), and the most dwarf form is 'Crimson Princess' (2 feet by 2 feet). The unique characteristic of these plants is foliage coloration. Leaves are crimson on the upper and lower sides. Some fading of the crimson color may be seen on the lower and older foliage as aging occurs. The "Crimson" series of azaleas is patented.

Our spring crawfish boil was held Sunday, May 6 at **Jim Campbell's** home. We always appreciate his hospitality.

Northern Virginia Chapter

Eve Harrison, President

In December, the chapter met for a social observance of the holiday season at the home of **Dave** and **Leslie Nanney** in West Springfield. There was plenty of food and fellowship. One of the great features of an azalea chapter is the sharing of experiences with members. This was the perfect opportunity to accomplish that objective.

Don Hyatt demonstrated how to make a music video using photos of flowers at the February chapter meeting. The process was not too difficult or technical. Don used Windows Movie Maker software and demonstrated how to transfer video from a camcorder to a computer. He also explained how to use the software to edit movie segments.

Chapter members are also developing plans for a tour to several local azalea gardens in late April or early May.

Oconee Chapter

Frank Bryan, Newsletter Editor

In January, some members of the Oconee Azalea Society Chapter met with the ARS to hear **Mike Creel** of Lexington, South Carolina, speak on the *Creel Way of Propagating* azaleas and other plants. The session on simple and inexpensive ways to propagate plants was very informative and interesting, and it lasted for more than three hours.

At the February chapter meeting, **Joe Coleman** showed slides from the 2006 ASA convention in Rockville, Maryland. **Don Bloodworth** displayed examples of dome pots and hanging baskets modeled after the Creel Way of propagation, and he led a discussion about Creel's propagation methods. **Jim Thornton** described his technique of killing weedy vines (as printed in the Spring 2007 issue of ***The Azalean***).

Texas Chapter

Barbara Stump, Treasurer

The ASA Board formally approved the chapter's name change in March. Formerly known as the Dallas Chapter, members initiated a reorganization in 2006 which included re-naming it as the Texas Chapter. Chapter officers are: **Bart Brechter**, president; **JoAnn Smith**, vice president; **Vicki Lange**, secretary; and **Barbara Stump**, treasurer.

Tri-State Chapter

Larry Miller, President

The ASA Board of Directors voted unamiously to hold its 2010 annual convention in Evansville, Indiana.

Last year the Tri-State Chapter hosted a delegation from the Lake Michigan Chapter and organized a tour which included the new Fred Sievers Garden at Sunrise Park, the Preservation area, the former Holly Hills Nursery, the Zoo and Botanical Garden, and several other private gardens.

ASA Past President and horticulturist **Buddy Lee** also made the trip from Independence, Louisiana, and suggested the possibility of hosting a national convention in Evansville. He was impressed with the city's historic preservation area and used a photo of **Pam** and **John Guthrie's** residence in a presentation he made at the convention in Nacogdoches.

Vaseyi Chapter

John Brown, Newsletter Editor

Dr. Charles Horn, professor of biology and department chair at Newberry College, was the guest speaker at the chapter's March meeting.

Dr. Horn outlined the history of six years of field research into the distribution of *R. eastmanii* and its locations in the Carolinas. He discovered that *R. eastmanii* thrives in the Broad River basin north of Columbia and south of the North Carolina state line. He hopes to find the plant farther up the reaches of the Broad River which is fed by the Green River just south of Hendersonville.

In April the chapter met at **Doley** and **Melody Bell's** garden and discussed weather damage, its causes, effects and possible remedies.

Chapter officers and directors for the year are: **Doley Bell**, president; **Jackson McCarter**, vice president; **John Brown**, secretary; **Bob Stelloh**, treasurer; **Ed Collins**, past president; **Leon Pace**, director 2006-08; **Dwayne Clayburn**, director 2006-08; **Ken Majer**, director 2005-07; and **Vivian Abney**, directory 2005-07.

Letters to the Editor

My First "Azalean" — Wow!

I have been a devoted gardener for most of my life. As a "young" 68-year-old, I can still remember my beloved Godfather picking me up on Saturday mornings and taking me with him to survey the local country club golf course and grounds in my hometown of Newport News, Virginia. He was a landscape architect, but finishing his education in the Great Depression there were very few positions for people with that degree. He was hired to work in the Newport News Shipyard by my late father who was an official of that firm. The Saturday job was a part-time avocation for Elton Sault and I remember those journeys quite well.

I have grown and propagated azaleas for more than 40 years and just became acquainted with your organization after contacting **Bob Stelloh** about an article I was writing on azaleas for *The Virginia Gardener*. I told him that the very least I could do was to join the ASA, which I am pleased to have done. I am currently the President of the Virginia Daffodil Society and recently stepped down as a Director of the American Boxwood Society (I'm a daylily enthusiast, as well!). I want you to know that next to the semi-annual publication of the European Boxwood and Topiary Society, your (our) Society publishes the finest quarterly publication I have seen in a long, long time.

...Thank you for producing such an excellent quarterly publication. They will add a great deal to my love for azaleas, particularly when the now extended bloom season is over late this summer.

Ross A. Hotchkiss
Richmond, Virginia

Mercer Arboretum Offers Chance to See Full Encore® Azalea Collection

Visitors to the Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens in Humble, Texas, will find a surprise on the azalea berms adjacent to Cypress Creek. Spring, summer or fall the azaleas are blooming.

This phenomenon is brought to the Mercer Arboretum by Encore® azalea, the only patented brand of azaleas to bloom in spring, summer, and fall. The 23 varieties of Encore® azalea offer a growth habit and bloom color for every landscape.

Gardeners can now view the entire Encore® azalea collection on a berm near Cypress Creek directly behind the prehistoric plant walk. Through the presence of the Encore® azalea collection, gardeners will be able to see how the Encore® azaleas fare in Houston-area climates.

The creation of plant breeder Robert E. "Buddy" Lee of Independence, Louisiana, the evergreen Encore® azaleas enjoy more sun than traditional azaleas, but offer the same easy care.

Encore® azaleas begin blooming each spring like a traditional azalea. Once this initial blooming concludes, new shoots begin to grow and set buds. Then blooms emerge again in mid-summer and continue in many areas until first frost; a feat no other azalea can consistently achieve.

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens—now a nationally recognized horticultural facility spanning more than 300 acres—owes its existence to the Mercers, who purchased the original 14.5 acres of wild woods alongside Cypress Creek in 1949. The plant collections of Mercer are located within this 14.5-acre loop that also is now home to the Encore® azaleas.

The only opening in the wooded land when the Mercers arrived was a small burned area. Over the next 24 years, the Mercers created a garden paradise despite floods, droughts, and nature's other familiar ravages. Today, the more than 300 acres of East Texas piney woods are said to showcase the region's largest collection of native and cultivated plants.

Aldine Westfield Road divides the facility into two special use areas. The east side is home to the Botanic Gardens with over 20 acres of developed gardens, including herb, ginger, fern, daylily, bamboo and endangered species collections, color displays, and extensive walking trails. The west side of Aldine Westfield is home to the Arboretum, including picnic pavilions and three miles of walking trails that wind through beautifully preserved woodlands with environmental interpretation.

Encore® azaleas are grown by a network of growers, and are available at local garden centers, landscape supply houses, and www.plantsbymail.com.

To learn more about Mercer Arboretum call (281) 443-8731 or visit the Web Site at www.hcp4.net/mercer.

Society News

ASA Seed Exchange

By Aaron Cook—Valdese, North Carolina

As most of you know by now we have a new seed exchange program in the ASA. In order for it to grow and become successful we need your seed contributions. So please make crosses and collect seed from desirable plants in order to contribute seed to the seed exchange.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the following contributors: **Bob Stelloh**, **Joe** and **Donna Coleman**, **John** and **Sally Perkins**, **Ray Head**, **Frank Pelurie**, **Larry Mucci**, **Jim Thornton**, **Ed Collins** and other members of the **Vaseyi Chapter**. Last year there were 94 different seed lots which generated approximately $200 for the general operating fund of the ASA.

The future success of this program is dependent on you. Please consider making a seed contribution for this year's seed exchange. Seed will be accepted from ASA members and other sources through December 15.

The seed packets from each plant should include at least 50 seeds and be described by the following:

- contributor's name
- seed parent name
- pollen parent name
- pollination type (c.w.–collected wild; o.p.–open pollinated; h.p –hand pollinated)
- where collected (geographic feature or town)
- notes

There is a seed data form on the ASA Web page (www.azaleas.org) that should be used to describe the seed. It is a small (4KB) PDF file that can be downloaded and printed.

If you have digital pictures of the parents, please e-mail them to Bob Stelloh at bstelloh@mac.com with the name, date and location taken. Photos will be posted on the ASA Web site with a link to your seed.

Seed should be current year's production and cleaned. Put cleaned seed from one plant into one paper envelope with one completed form, and mail any number of envelopes at once to:

ASA Seed Exchange
804 Piedmont Ave.
Valdese, NC 28690-3161

When seed is received, each packet is assigned a number and stored until January 1 when it is listed on the ASA Web site.

Seed orders from contributors and ASA members will be filled beginning January 1. Starting March 1, orders will be filled for anyone.

As an added incentive to contribute seed, all contributors will be sent a list of "bonus seed" which is comprised of seed received in quantities too small to be offered in the seed exchange. Contributors may order seed from the "bonus seed" list free of charge (shipping fees will apply).

All seed not distributed before the annual meeting will be brought to the convention and offered for sale. Once the sale at the convention is complete, the seed exchange will be closed until the following year.

Board Approves E-voting

By John Brown—Cleveland, South Carolina

At the April 1, 2007, Board of Directors meeting action was taken to ratify the President's interpretation of the word "mail" to include e-mail as it appears in the By-Laws Article VI Board of Directors Section J manner of acting "...in the interim between duly constituted meetings of the Board, the President or any three members of the Board acting in unison may order the submission of a mail-in ballot to the Directors."

The Board has placed restrictions on the adoption of this interpretation, and I have summarized those restrictions as follows.

E-voting will be limited to matters requiring the immediate attention of the Board. This would include decisions and approvals necessary to meet publishing requirements for ***The Azalean*** but would not include the same decision that did not have a time requirement. The President has the responsibility of determining whether or not to call a vote. Input from board members will be appreciated.

Before any vote is imposed, it must be determined that every board member has access to the e-mail list either in person or by reliable proxy. No limit shall be placed on any Board member's ability to pose questions on the e-mail list but e-voting will follow as closely as possible the normal voting procedures, i.e. only the President may call for an e-vote and it is his responsibility to insure that all Board members have the question, and are given an opportunity to debate and vote.

For each question, a reasonable time will be allowed for discussion before calling the question. Quorums will be determined by a count of the members voting and must satisfy the quorum requirements given in the By-Laws. The By-Laws further state "....an affirmative vote of a majority of those eligible to vote shall be interpreted as the official action of the Board and shall become a part of the minutes of the next official meeting of the Board."

The President may personally contact any Board member(s) to obtain a vote on critical issues and shall post that vote on the e-mail list.

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