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The Azalean

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



President's Letter

John Brown — Cleveland, South Carolina



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*).

Weather has been the topic of a lot of conversations this year. First, we in the south had unseasonably warm temperatures for three weeks. Then we had a sudden three night freeze in the lower 20s followed by a drought that is unabated as of this writing. The tales of lost plants, bark split, and die back, followed by hopes of recovery and warnings of more losses this winter, have tested our endurance as gardeners. As this article is being written, the news of serious destruction in Texas reminds us that our concerns are small in comparison. Most of us have experienced some recovery in our gardens. We can hope that the folks in Texas are able to recover some part of what they have lost.

It is now time to publish a new roster of members of the Society. You will note that the enclosed roster is about twice as big as the last roster published in 2005. The additional at-large members are all part of a group of professional garden writers chosen to receive membership in the Society to encourage articles about our favorite plant—the azalea. I recently had the opportunity to look at several magazines directed toward gardens and landscaping. There was not a single picture or article about azaleas included in any of the magazines. While we are welcoming the professional writers to our group, let us remember to share the knowledge that will hopefully become part of an interesting article.

Sharing is a by-word in our Society, and I had the chance to see sharing at its best during June. The Oconee Chapter held its annual cutting exchange meeting at the home of Dr. Joe and Donna Coleman. Joe invited members of the Vaseyi Chapter to join the exchange, and three Vaseyi members took him up on the opportunity. The Colemans' garden has been under development for about 27 years and has a stupendous amount of plant material available. Those who were lucky enough to visit their garden during the Atlanta Convention will remember the acres of tastefully displayed plants and miles of pine needle laden paths under a mixed overstory of hardwoods and slash pine.

About one dozen Oconee Chapter members and several guests from other organizations attended the exchange. Lawn chairs set up in the shade provided a place to rest, talk about all things azalean, eat a bite of lunch, and trade locations of plants in the garden. It was a time to renew acquaintances and make new friends. Joe is the kind of guy who so enjoys sharing that he will track you down in his garden to see if by chance you have missed a plant that he thinks you might want. The garden is large enough that only chance meetings occurred during our scavenging, but those opportunities were used to exchange pleasantries and locations of exceptional plants. Everyone came away with a sense of friendship and a boatload of cuttings.

The Vaseyi Chapter cutting exchange and propagation workshop meeting, held a week later, was another opportunity to share. A fair number of the same people attended both meetings and had chances to get even more cuttings from plants not readily available. The Vaseyi Chapter event is held indoors and members bring prepared cuttings to share on a lottery basis. The workshop conducted by President Doley Bell amounted to a roundtable discussion of the techniques used by all the members. The act of sharing one's time, plants, and knowledge is a wonderful glue that binds our members together and makes me very proud to be a part of the Society.

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contents

VOLUME 29

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FALL 2007

Features

- 52 Azaleas in the Pines—A Texas Garden Party:
2007 ASA Convention Highlights**
Barbara Stump & Barbara Wagner
- 57 Nature Is My Greenhouse: Let's Simply
Propagate—Part II**
Mike Creel
- 64 Lagniappe**
Aaron Cook
- 66 More Flowers, More:
A Summary of the 2007 ASA Convention**
Carol Flowers

Society News

- 50 President's Letter**
John Brown
- 59 New Members**
- 62 Chapter News**
- 68 Society News**
- 68 Letters to the Editor**
- 69 Azalea Mart**

On the Cover

'Girard Dwarf Lavender' is one of the favorite bright purple-red azaleas in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden of the Stephen F. Austin State University Mast Arboretum. The people who attended the 2007 ASA convention in Nacogdoches, Texas, were able to see this azalea and many more March 31 during the morning tour. The garden includes a number of azaleas in the university's school colors of purple and white. This photo was taken in Bed 26 during the four-hour wonder of a fluffy late afternoon snowfall on April 7, the week after the convention. Snow rarely falls in Nacogdoches, so this was one for the record books. Since the actual ambient temperature was only 33.8° F and the flakes melted within a couple of hours, the garden continued to bloom well into June without any frost damage.



Photo Barbara Stump

Azaleas in the Pines—A Texas Garden Party: 2007 ASA Convention Highlights

Barbara Stump & Barbara Wagner—Nacogdoches, Texas

We are now well into summer temperatures here, and luckily we are outside the flood zones of central and northern Texas. The Society's visit to Nacogdoches and Tyler in the cool, overcast days of March 29-April 1 seems now to be a dream. It was great to have 85 members and a few visitors from Houston and Tyler join in the annual convention. You certainly came at the right time—exactly one week later we had a freak snow fall of about two inches of fluffy wet flakes that stayed on the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden blooms just long enough to water them. What an amazing sight.

The Stephen F. Austin State University Mast Arboretum staff and volunteers, the Louisiana Chapter members, the Tyler Day Blue Ribbon Committee, and the Nacogdoches Convention & Visitors Bureau all pitched in to host the first-ever two-city convention. Since so much of the convention was hosted by the university, we used the model of an “away day” in Tyler and a “home day” in Nacogdoches. Yes, the bus trip to Tyler was over an hour, but we balanced that with several very short runs in Nacogdoches the next day. Thanks to nearly 40 helpful and gracious people, the convention events

▼ A sculpture in the City of Tyler Children's Garden memorialized beloved children and reminded us of the child in all of us.

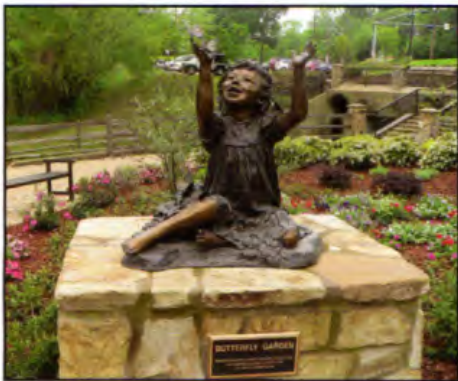


Photo Joe and Donna Coleman



Photo Joe and Donna Coleman

- ▲ The neighbors in the heart of Tyler's Azalea District share handsome “burrowed landscape” views of each others' garden.
- ▼ The Guy and Joan Pyron Garden in Tyler's Azalea District has a custom-designed gazebo, shown here with tiers of azaleas.



Photo Joe and Donna Coleman



Photo Barbara Slump

▲ The Ina Brundrett Azalea Garden at Tyler Junior College was recently expanded this spring to include the newest Encore® azaleas thanks to Buddy Lee and Flowerwood Nursery.

▼ The dedicatory Council Ring plaque in the center of the colorful Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.

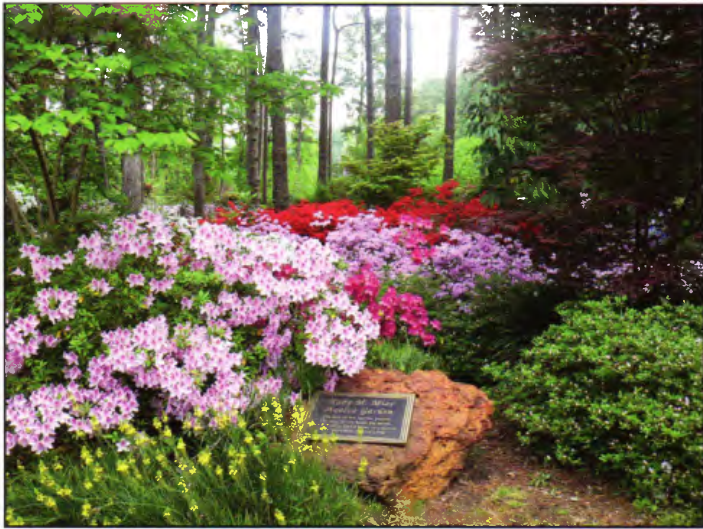


Photo Joe and Donna Coleman

all went off superbly. We thanked them officially in the handout that went into the convention bags, but we also want to do this again in the sidebar at the end of the article.

We were very pleased that so many of you came all the way to our lovely town of Nacogdoches, Texas. Most flew into Houston or Shreveport, Louisiana, and rented cars, but a number drove. Driving, as we all know, is the best way to bring plants to share and to take plants back. Our plant sale was a success, thanks to all of you. We especially thank **Buddy Lee, Maarten van der Giessen, and Ms. Margie Jenkins** for making sure we had some interesting plants in the sale. It was a real treat for us all to get Ms. Margie's new 'Freddie' azalea as a table favor, and the small Encore® azaleas were a great bonus.

Nacogdoches Mayor Bob Dunn and Tyler Mayor Joey Seeber each got their chances to give a good Texas welcome to the ASA. We kept that Texas hospitality thing going, since so many of you had not been to our part of the world before. As the events unfolded it became obvious why we chose our theme of "Azaleas in the Pines—A Texas Garden Party."

Not only are there many loblolly pines creating the filtered shade that promotes good azalea health and heightens their color, but our garden visits made us feel like we were special guests at very select garden parties. Even our hotel fit the theme, with a lovely pool area surrounded by azaleas in full bloom.

Thursday Night Talks

Arboretum Director **Dr. David Creech's** talk introduced the diversity that has made the SFA Mast Arboretum so well known among nursery owners and botanic gardens. We are proud of our unique gardens and the fact that we cooperate with many other arboreta. From research with blueberry cultivars to evaluating bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and other *Taxodium* clones to hollies, gingers, and teaching the next generation about both horticulture and environmental education, the Arboretum gardens do it all.

Next to speak was **Greg Grant**, Research Associate for the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center and a well-known horticulture author. He wowed us with his slides of fields of Texas wildflowers, his favorite old-home-place bulbs and garden architecture finds (aka "yard art"), and some good companion plants for azaleas.

We ended the evening with another convention first, but a standard way to end a Mast Arboretum lecture; a rare plant raffle. Dr. Creech and Ms. Margie Jenkins had brought along a few of their rare favorites from their shade houses; some people were lucky that night! Maybe future conventions will repeat this fun way to learn about new companion plants.

Friday—"Away Day" to Tyler

We got cracking early for the trip to Tyler, even overcoming a slight delay when one of the bus company's owners had to pinch-hit for her driver who'd been stung in the eye by a wasp. Breakfast on the bus worked out fine and the drive through farmlands went quickly.

Our welcome to Tyler at the Rose Garden was indeed special. Not only was there fabulous reception food, but also the City of Tyler had arranged a *full-scale press conference* for the awarding of the Azalea City designation for Tyler by **Joe Schild** and ASA President Buddy Lee.

Mayor Joey Seeber read the city's proclamation that March 30, 2007, was Azalea Society of America Day in Tyler. There must have been 100 people involved in this event, with lots of publicity photos taken. Meanwhile, the Smith County Master Gardeners gave tours of the "IDEA Gardens" that are part of the Tyler Rose Garden. The azaleas and Japanese maples in the garden were in full bloom. Because the ASA people were so nice, the homeowners whose gardens we were visiting later that day invited us into their homes as well as into their gardens. Talk about great Texas hospitality.

The buses then took us to Tyler Junior College, which has been working on developing the entire campus as a botanic garden. Central to this is the Ina Brundrett Azalea Garden, which we toured with Ms. Brundrett herself. New

Encore® azaleas had just been planted to expand this lovely garden right on a main entrance to the campus. Students also showed us plans for future gardens and the new James F. and Virginia Hawkins Gatewood Garden, which will feature a wide variety of Texas-adapted groundcovers.

After a quick trip through the five-mile Tyler Azalea Trail, we stopped in the heart of the Azalea District. Members ate lunch at the historic 1939 Woman's Building and toured residential gardens all around the block and the City of Tyler Children's Garden. What a lovely series of gardens these were. The sidewalk around the block is at a higher elevation than the backyards, so it was easy to see the wealth of colorful azaleas and other wonderful plantings.

These neighbors also really get to enjoy the "burrowed landscape" design concept: each yard is visible from the other and all looked beautifully maintained. From a boxwood parterre to plantings of new Southern Indicas and Encore® azaleas among tall shade trees and Japanese maples, water features, and statuary, the gardens gave us many ideas to try at home. The City of Tyler Children's Garden gave us a place to enjoy statuary that children would love; we played a little, too.

Lunch was wonderful as well, a full meal, not just a box lunch. The Chamber of Commerce provided table favor azaleas and an azalea for each member.

The final stop in Tyler was Ravenwood, which was like the final crescendo in a symphony of lovely gardens. The historic home has formal gardens that are immaculately maintained: a pink-and-white azalea color scheme, a reflecting pool, a swimming pool, and a mirrored garden pavilion. Homeowner Betsy Ellis and her garden club were very gracious hosts in this garden that has been the site of fund-raisers for many important projects in Tyler over the years.

Once back in Nacogdoches, dinner was a Tex-Mex buffet. Buddy Lee talked about how he's been deciding what azaleas to select and breed over his 20-plus years of "hobby gardening." All this work has led to the Encore® azaleas that we know today, but we know he's not stopping yet. Like Dr. Creech is about trees, we doubt Buddy has ever met an azalea that he didn't like, and didn't want to have a "sample" from.

To end the evening, **Dr. Len Miller** of the American Rhododendron Society showed us what he's been doing with his masterpiece garden, Lendonwood, in Grove, Oklahoma. It was fun to see that even masters begin with mud pits and bridges that start out as sticks and end up being replaced by more "finished" materials as time and money permit.

The ARS is hosting their annual convention in Tulsa in 2008, and Lendonwood will be one of the most delightful stops along the tour route.

Saturday—"Home Day" in Nacogdoches

We were all happy to sleep a little later and stay near home. The weather looked threatening, and we "Barbaras" fretted some about whether we'd have to cancel the tour, but

luck was with us. The weather in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden was overcast and a little sprinkly, but pictures taken that day show how flattering gray light is for azaleas.

Of course, the Society already is familiar with the development of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, since there have been several articles about it in *The Azalean* in the past six years, and members have been helping develop the collections in so many ways. So, after a brief introduction to the garden by **Barbara Stump**, we let everyone enjoy the eight acres for more than two hours. A local garden club provided refreshments under a Texas flag tent.

The photos included with this article show the diversity of azaleas (more than 520 different cultivars) that make this garden such a treasure.

From deciduous *Rhododendron canescens* 'Becky's Blush' and Huang hybrids that Barbara and **Mike Stump** brought back from the ASA plant auction in Mobile to the new Encore® azaleas and Aromi hybrid deciduous azaleas,

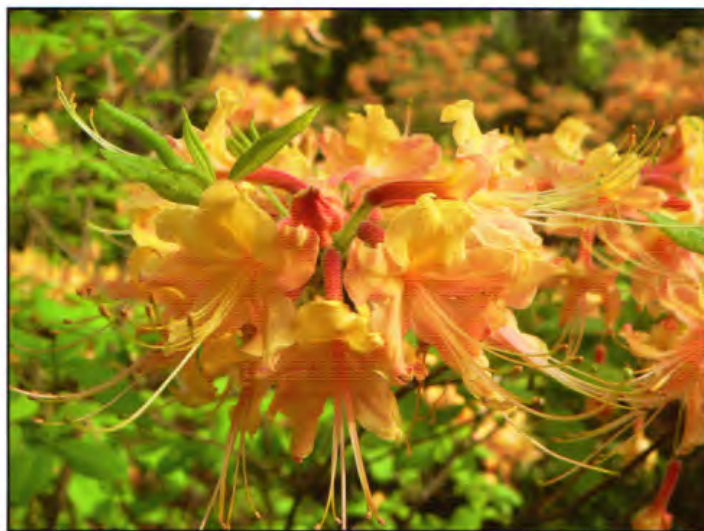


Photo Joe and Donna Coleman

▲ Deciduous *Rhododendron austrinum* 'Firecracker' from the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.

▼ Harris hybrid 'Frosted Orange' photographed June 6 demonstrates the long bloom period in the Mize Azalea Garden.



Photo Barbara Stump

there were plenty of blooms other than the typical Southern Indicas in many residential gardens in the area. Dr. Creech led an optional rapid-fire “walk-and-talk” tour of the arboretum side of LaNana Creek. We finally had to call them back in by cell phone.

Then the buses took us to a Texas barbecue lunch on the lawn of the Stumps’ historic 1901 Queen Anne house just five miles from the arboretum. It sure was fun to see the reactions of Joe Schild, Ms. Margie Jenkins, Maarten van der Giessen, and Buddy Lee as they saw some of their plants in the “eclectic” gardens amongst more typical Southern Indica azaleas, arboretum plant-sale plants, Chinese fringe trees, and lots of garden projects-in-progress. Barbara Stump can now devote more time to caring for these favorites, with *The Azalean* in Pam Fitch’s able hands.

The last tour of the day was a bus tour through about one-third of Nacogdoches’ 23-mile Azalea Trail with some Texas history thrown in and a stop at Naconiche Nursery



Photo Joe and Donna Coleman

▲ Huang hybrid 2-5-71 from the Mize Azalea Garden exhibits lots of sanding and speckling.

▼ Diversity in plants and garden architecture is a standard at Naconiches Nursery. The rings on the tin shed wall are pieces of tire that are cut off when you make a “crown-tire planter.”



Photo Joe and Donna Coleman

▲ ‘Roblen’ from the Mize Azalea Garden.

▼ Holly Springs hybrid ‘Becky’s Blush’ from the Mize Azalea Garden.



Photo Joe and Donna Coleman

▼ Saturday’s barbecue lunch in Mike and Barbara Stump’s front yard allowed ASA members to see deciduous yellow azaleas matching the color of the home and garage.



Photo Joe and Donna Coleman



Photo Carol Flowers

just outside of town. The nursery reminded us of Greg Grant's talk about yard art as we saw crown-tire planters, a bathtub lily pond, and many lovely metal trellises in amongst the unique perennials, shrubs, and grasses. They are also carrying some of the new deciduous azaleas for the discerning gardener. One specially featured plant was the 'Peggy Martin' rose that survived several weeks of inundation in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Named for the green-fingered garden-owner, a portion of the proceeds from the sale of these plants is going back to restoring New Orleans gardens.

As always the final events of the convention were the banquet, annual meeting, and rare plant auction. Texas radio and television garden personality **Tom Spencer** from Austin had us spellbound with his "Soul of the Garden" talk about the many personal themes that guide a gardener if he or she is willing to listen to echoes from their past experiences, or spiritual and mystic impacts of other events while they garden. It was unfortunate that while he was asking us to listen to our inner voices there was a loud fund-raiser going on in the hotel's meeting room next door. Tom was a trooper and carried through beautifully. He even put some of his pictures of our convention and the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden on his Web page, www.soulofthegarden.com.

The plant auction was fun and helped the new Texas Chapter raise about \$500 for its treasury. "The Barbaras" want to officially thank you for the pleasure of your company this past March.

We also send special thanks to **Joe and Donna Coleman, Dale and Carol Flowers, and Bill Miller** who sent us their pictures of the convention. They are a real treat and will help us remember those busy but happy days with the ASA. You are all welcome back to Nacogdoches any time, especially during Azalea Trail time!

Barbara Wagner, a native Texan, grew up in Dallas and lived in Austin for 18 years, serving as an administrative assistant and development officer at the University of Texas at Austin before her family moved to New York for nine years. While in New York, Barbara began gardening and joined a local garden club. When a new job took the family to Nacogdoches, Barbara joined the Flora Garden Club and began volunteering at the Mast Arboretum. Barbara Wagner met Barbara Stump and the rest is history. During the planning phases of the ASA convention, Barbara Wagner swore she'd never organize another convention, but the week after the ASA convention, her garden club voted to host a regional garden club convention in March 2008. So it goes.

*Barbara Stump was awarded a Master of Science degree in Agriculture for "Site Analysis and Design of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden" in 2001. She continues to work part-time for the SFA Mast Arboretum, coordinating improvements to the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden and in general development projects for the Arboretum. She edited **The Azalean** 1999-2006.*

Special Thanks to Our Convention Organizers

Co-Chairs Barbara Stump and Barbara Wagner
 Welcome ... The Honorable Bob Dunn, Mayor of Nacogdoches
 Registration Melissa Sanford, Eloise Adams,
 Roger & Shirley Hughes, Sara & John Bowie
 Publicity Amy Roquemore
 Hospitality Suite Ashleigh McCorkle
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Stephen F. Austin State University

Bus Transportation Vic Shepherd, Rusti Allen,
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 Plant Sale, etc.! SFA Mast Arboretum Volunteers
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 Bonnie Hammett, Pauline Patterson, Margie Rodriguez
 Bus Captains... .. George Patterson, Don Parsons, Dick Voigtel
 Community Volunteers Flora Garden Club, Judy Hairston,
 Dolores Martin, Jean Rudisill, Tip & Nanny Smith, Mike Stump

Nacogdoches Day Tours

Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden Barbara Stump,
 Dr. D. Creech, Elyce Rodewald
 1901 Home Garden Barbara and Mike Stump
 Nacogdoches Gardens Sue Ripley, Nathan Unclebach

Tyler Day Events

Tyler Blue Ribbon Committee Chairs LaVerne Gollob,
 Ina Brundrett, JoAnn Smith
 Publicity & Nametags Annette Findley
 Garden Tours Homeowners Bonnie & Don Edmonds
 Margaret & Gordon Davis, Joan & Guy Pyron
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 Gertrude Wilson Garden Club and Mignon Adams

Tyler Rose Garden

Proclamation The Honorable Joey Seeber, Mayor of Tyler
 Press Conference/Media Laura Krantz, City of Tyler
 Refreshments Charlene Miezenner
 Goody Bags Linda Gross, Barbara Sinclair
 IDEA Garden Docents Keith Hansen, Craig Reiland,
 Sue Adee, James Whilhite
 Complimentary Azaleas Justin Turner, Henry Bell

Tyler Junior College

Welcome & Garden Docents Mitch Andrews

Tyler Woman's Building

Catered Luncheon Shelley Arnold
 Children's Garden Docents Kristi Boyett
 Table Decorations Linda Whetsell, Sandee Walters
 Tyler Tour Bus Docents Annetta Payne and Don Edmonds

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Country Pines Nursery, Richard Odom, Forest Hill, Louisiana
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 & Aimee Coker, Loxley, Alabama
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 Jenkins Farm & Nursery, Margie Y. Jenkins, Amite, Louisiana
 Van der Giessen Nursery, Maarten van der Giessen,
 Semmes, Alabama
 Texas Chapter, ASA, Bart Brechter
 Louisiana Chapter, ASA

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

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.

While much of my propagation work has been with the reputedly difficult native azaleas, my techniques work well for woody and herbaceous plants at large. I successfully grow all 16 species of American native azaleas, plus variant forms of most.

I have worked successfully with an increasing variety of native species, including mountain laurel, dogwood, *Stewartia*, evergreen rhododendrons, and *Elliottia*. Often cuttings stuck during the least likely times root well, such as at bloom for *Stewartia* and *Kalmia* and in fall for dogwoods. Outdoor hardy herbaceous plants must be rooted during the warm growing season, and well rooted before the first frost so they can become dormant naturally in pots.

Any plant that roots naturally by layering in nature or spreads from running roots or stems will root in a dome-pot.

Patience and diligence are important so pots don't become saturated. All terrestrial native plants require excellent drainage to root and grow in a container, but some need even better drainage, such as herbs and shrubs from an area like the fall-line sandhills.

I regularly root sandhill species of false indigo, St. John's wort, and golden aster by using fast draining mesh pots that are designed for plants in garden ponds. I also have used kitchen colanders and strainers from cooking pots.

For shrubs, trees, and vines I usually select stems 1/8- to 1/16-inch in diameter from the lower branches where stems are smaller and less likely to form flower buds. Cuttings with larger diameter stems can be rooted if the wood is not too old. It must be used fresh or kept fresh by refrigeration in a plastic bag, slightly inflated, but with no added water.

Cuttings may contain the immediate past season's woody growth or wood up to 3 years old on jointed stems. I trim cuttings immediately and have found recently that pre-trimming cuttings for transport from the field and for cold storage does no harm.

Fresh cuttings with mature leaves can be kept (before sticking) with no added moisture up to three weeks in a refrigerator at about 39° F. Dormant leafless cuttings can be kept longer.

Before sticking cuttings I remove all obvious bloom buds, the terminal bud or buds, and any soft green shoots that will sap energy from the cutting. The aim is to encourage new roots and new shoots to form on the cutting, not to support immature leaves or shoots already produced by the original inground plant. Just before sticking a woody cutting

cut the base at an angle and scrape the bark about one inch on one side of the base (just enough to expose the cambium layer so the light color wood is visible).

I think a woody cutting from the previous season's growth or older has advantages over a green stem cutting. The internal hormones to root and sprout seem stronger in a woody stem. In azaleas, the woody cutting is covered with hidden adventitious buds under the bark. I have never seen soft green cuttings sprout from adventitious buds. A woody cutting (unless damaged) is much stronger in handling.

My favorite woody cutting is a Y-shaped joint with a lower single stem two to three inches long with two branched stems three or four inches long. It is important to scarify the lower stem up onto the joint and stick it in media deep enough to cover this.

Propagation Calendar For Native Azaleas In South Carolina Midlands Zone 8A

There are 16 azalea species native to the continental United States, all being deciduous rhododendrons. These include *alabamense*, *arborescens*, *atlanticum*, *austrinum*, *calendulaceum*, *canadense*, *canescens*, *cumberlandense*, *eastmanii*, *flammeum*, *occidentale*, *periclymenoides*, *prinophyllum*, *prunifolium*, *vaseyi*, and *viscosum*. In the Southeast we can propagate and grow fairly easily all but two: *canadense*, the northern rhodora, and *occidentale*, the Western azalea.

From late summer to fall, I harvest and plant native azalea seeds outdoors in pots. I hand pollinate between two plants of the pure species in my garden, find seed pods in pure stands of a species, share seeds with friends, make controlled crosses, or buy seeds of known origin from annual seed exchanges of azalea and rhododendron clubs.

I also collect fully expanded seed pods while they are still green but showing some brown. I let them dry fully in a paper envelope for about two weeks before cracking pods open and separating seed from pod pieces. Dry seed can be kept for a few months at room temperature in paper envelopes or stored longer if refrigerated.

While most azalea growers plant seeds under lights inside in winter, I plant mine outside any time of the year in a fast draining pot protected by a wire mesh cap. I always sprinkle a little local humus from a nearby azalea on the media surface. The seedlings come up on nature's schedule with no need for hardening.

From late October through winter, I collect and stick leafless dormant woody cuttings (1/8- to 1/16-inch diameter, or larger) from last year's growth or older wood (up to three years old), preferably with no bloom buds and stick them into dome pots. In deciduous azaleas, you can encourage terminal

leaf bud formation by breaking off flower buds from stems still on the plant. Removal of terminal buds and bloom buds on cuttings is essential. Before sticking cuttings, I sprinkle some humus fines from a nearby azalea on the media surface. In the coldest areas, dormant cuttings can be taken just before the end of dormancy and stuck into dome pots in outdoor shade beds. A cool shaded greenhouse or cold frame could protect earlier dormant cuttings.

Rooting cuttings can be difficult in the spring when most native azaleas are blooming and have emerging new growth and soft leaves. Many people with a greenhouse and mist systems stick green leafy cuttings at this time using soft, new growth. But, I prefer woody, leafless cuttings taken from thinner stems low on the plant. I make woody spring cuttings by removing all of the soft leaves and most new green stem. I treat the "spring woody cutting" as if it were a dormant leafless winter cutting, which forces it to create an entirely new set of leaves. Y-shaped or branched cuttings work better than single straight stems. After leaves and new soft growth have emerged in the spring is my least favorite cutting time, and I don't stick leafy cuttings until after the leaves are mature. Only a few native azaleas have leaves mature enough for leafy cuttings at bloom time. This includes later-blooming species like *eastmanii*, *viscosum*, *cumberlandense*, *arborescens* and *prunifolium*. *Eastmani* has mature leaves at bloom in mid-May and will root well then from woody leafy cuttings

From mid-summer through fall after leaves and stems have matured, I have some of the greatest success in sticking leafy hardwood azalea cuttings with terminal buds and bloom buds removed. I cut the leaves in half at an angle, removing lower leaves, any green growth and all wilted or dead leaves. I allow the cuttings to overwinter outdoors in dome-pots in a shaded bed. In colder areas than USDA hardiness zone 8A, overwintering dome-pots should be done in a shaded ground pit or unheated greenhouse. If cuttings are well rooted before onset of frost, the dome cap can be removed but the dome kept in place.

In all dome-pots overwintered outdoors, the leaves of cuttings will drop from stems as if they were on mature plants going from fall into winter. The same cuttings should revive in spring inside the dome, probably earlier than usual. The dome protects cuttings during winter and adds warmth to extend fall growing or jump-start spring growth.

When to Remove Dome Vent Plugs

You should remove the vent cap or plug from a propagation dome after at least two warm months (minimum) have passed and after a visual check on the growth status of cuttings shows mature leaves and well developed shoots. While keeping the dome pot protected by shade, remove the vent cap (keeping the dome in place) on the best looking cuttings. If the cuttings have not wilted after a day without vent caps, they are probably rooted. If cuttings have wilted, replace the vent cap, water the pot, and wait longer.

For the rooted cuttings, leave the caps off but domes on for another four to six weeks while in shade. The vented

dome over the cuttings aids in adjustment to drier, outside air. I have left domes in place over cuttings until they started to grow out of the vent hole.

A vented dome-pot with rooted cuttings can be exposed to more sun, which hastens growth. Fall-rooted cuttings left in vented dome-pots over winter will grow longer and start earlier.

When to Repot Cuttings and Seedlings

People always ask me at workshops about repotting cuttings and seedlings. Sometimes I leave rooted cuttings or seedlings in the same pot for a year or more if it is roomy enough, media continues to drain well, and plants retain obvious vigor. However, after six months cuttings may be repotted if leaves have emerged. I like for the leaves to be mature and not soft.

It is best to repot cuttings and seedlings before the plants are so large that the roots tangle. My first repotting is usually just moving cuttings to one larger pot (half filled with media and drilled) spacing them better. This takes less time and media than using individual one gallon pots.

Putting a dome pot of cuttings together is fairly simple, but you want to get all parts ready before taking cuttings from the refrigerator or collecting them. You need a shady spot to put the pot, a pot drilled for drainage, proper media half filling the pot, a ventable clear or translucent dome that fits inside the pot against the media with space for watering, native-plant humus sprinkled lightly onto the media surface, a length of hold-down wire to secure the dome with two holes made in the pot rim, and a gentle hose nozzle or watering can.

Prepare your cuttings by removing lower leaves, cutting leaves in half if present, and removing terminal flower buds. Make a fresh cut at the base and scrape the bark for an inch or so at the base. Stick each cutting into media deeply enough to cover the scraped bark section, and make sure the group of cuttings will fit inside the dome diameter.

Water the pot to make media close up around cuttings, wire down the propagation dome over the cuttings while centering it in the pot, put the pot into reliable shade, and water once weekly if there is no rain. Check periodically by just viewing through the dome; don't lift the dome or handle the pot.

Sharing What You Propagate Is Important

Someone asked once what I was going to do with all the azaleas and native plants I was propagating and developing. Mostly, I give away small plants, seeds, and cuttings. When I leave this earth I hope that my plants will continue to brighten other people's gardens, and that I have given away all I know that is worth telling and examples of all plants unique to me. I believe the personal plant treasures given to others comes back to you manifold in your life and survive past your existence.

While I regularly repeat practices in propagation that continue to work, I occasionally try new experiments. I

Continued on page 63.

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Chapter News

Northern Virginia Chapter

Eve Harrison, President

In May, chapter members gathered at **Dan Krabill's** for a local garden tour. The Krabills' have a great garden in a lovely setting. **Barbara** kindly provided coffee, drinks and sweets before she dashed off for Finnish lessons. Dan was a gracious, informative host and tour guide.

Members then caravanned to **Don Hyatt's** garden. His garden is lush, varied, and enticing. Don answered question after question about his many cultivars, and we were understandably inspired to return to our own gardens with lots of new ideas.

The day cooled measurably and spattered rain, but luckily most of us had rain gear, and we slogged through **Joe Klimavicz's** amazing garden. We were mesmerized by his explanations of hybridization standards. A few of us received permission to "rescue" plants destined for the compost pile having failed to meet his strict requirements.

Thanks to **Lee McElvain's** steady supply of plastic bags to stow away castoffs, we all left with more plants and more knowledge of hybridization techniques and requirements. Joe's plants are simply stunning and light up the entire street.

The last leg of the tour was a 45-minute ride to Haymarket to feast our eyes upon Phran's Azalea Trails. The word heard most often in walking the grounds was "wow!" There was a mini-plant sale with plants supplied by **Carolyn Beck** and **Jim Gears** as well as many specimens dug by **Frances Louers** and potted up. The chapter did quite well at this impromptu sale and it seems probable that this might be a good prototype for future tours.

The **Louers** are generous hosts and work extremely hard to accommodate so many visitors to their amazing and gorgeous property.

In August the chapter will host its first public azalea auction at Merrifield Garden Center in Fairfax, Virginia. The chapter has held private plant auctions for more than 30 years, but members thought it was time to invite the public.

Oconee Chapter

Ruth Mellon, Secretary

The April chapter meeting was held at the home of **Jim** and **Patsy Thornton**. The program consisted of **Joe Coleman's** narration of his and **Donna's** trip to the annual ASA convention in Nacogdoches.

He showed slides of beautiful azaleas taken in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden (the largest azalea garden in Texas), the Ina Brundett Azalea Garden in Tyler, and tours of the historic districts in the area. He said the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden staff has done a good job of labeling more than 6,500 evergreen and native deciduous azaleas.

Southern California Chapter

George Klump, Vice President for Projects & Publications

In March, the ASA Board of Directors unanimously approved the charter of a new chapter in Southern California. The new chapter was formed by members of the Southern California Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

The ARS chapter was established in the mid-1970s by **Carl Deul** and **Bill Moynier**. The chapter has grown and members have done remarkably well growing broad-leaf rhododendrons in an area where wisdom had decreed such plants could not be grown.

Due largely to the influence of the late **Pete Sullivan**, chapter members became interested in the species of the section *Vireya* of subgenus *Rhododendron*, sub-tropical plants which may be found anywhere from sea level to 13,000 feet elevation in some areas. The vireyas have flourished in the area quite well, and chapter members have spent many hours hybridizing various forms which are now accepted in the rhododendron plant world.

Members conducted experiments many years ago with various kinds of plant mixes. Members who lived on the west side of Los Angeles were atop a large vein of adobe clay, requiring them to develop raised flower beds. Different mix combinations were tried; however, the one which worked the best was an equal mix (1-1-1) of coarse peat moss, perlite, and redwood bark (shredded). The coarse peat moss provides a light but acidic medium which, together with the perlite, provides a way for oxygen to get to the root zone. The redwood bark does the same and simultaneously provides a little tannic acid, since it breaks down very slowly.

It has since been discovered that the organism which breaks down the wood is a predator of the *Phytophthora* organism which attacks the roots of ericaceous plants where drainage is a problem. Once that attack begins on an azalea or rhododendron, saving the plant is nearly impossible.

Last spring the idea of starting a chapter of the Azalea Society of America was discussed. Since azaleas are subgenera of the rhododendron genus, we did not see any conflict. The plants are all ericaceous and most of us grow azaleas. There is also precedent in the ARS for a combined chapter format.

Since there has not been an ASA chapter on the West Coast for some time, we felt it would be well to approach the national ASA with the idea of starting a chapter here which would parallel our existing ARS chapter. Receiving a positive response from the ASA Board, we began our organizing efforts in earnest.

Officers of the chapter are: **James Jaeger**, president; **John Morris**, vice president; **George Klump**, vice president for projects and publications; **Linda Kranen**, secretary; **Gladful DerSarkisian**, treasurer; **Fred Renich**, director; and **James McKechnie**, director.

We held a rhododendron plant sale in April 2006 at Descanso Gardens, La Canada Flintridge, California. We sold vireyas and azaleas. This year we hosted the plant sale again with the sale of both plants being very successful. We are planning to do this more often and through other venues as well; e.g., the Los Angeles Horticultural Society and the Los Angeles Rose Society.

The success of these ventures and the public relations it has created for the vireyas (we sold a vireya to one of the rose society officials and, we believe, made a good friend there!) has led us to think we'd be remiss not to pursue such activities. Vireya seems to be becoming more popular with landscapers who know about the plant.

Timber Press published a book in 1992 called "The Sub-Tropical Garden" which features the vireya as a plant for all seasons and for all reasons. However, the authors got some of their information crossed up in that they stated that vireyas are epiphytic and do not grow well in the ground. That is not entirely correct. I have about 75 or 80 of them growing well in the ground here at my home.

Like azaleas, vireyas love fast draining soil. Unlike azaleas the little seeds have "tails" on both ends so they are often picked up by trade winds in the wild and land in tree branches. In areas where it rains nearly every afternoon, the seeds will take root in trees and, of course, the water drains off the tree branch just about as fast as it rains.

The seeds will also take root in light soil which drains well. The flower colors are kaleidoscopic, from white, yellow, orange, pink, red and magenta, to various bi-color combinations. And like the elepidote rhododendrons, they tend to form very attractive trusses some of which are quite large. They fit well with azaleas, and I have them mixed in with different sorts in my garden where they work perfectly.

Vaseyi Chapter

John Brown, Newsletter Editor

Dr. Joe Coleman presented a program entitled "Photographic Highlights of the Nacogdoches Convention" to 14 members and guests at the chapter's May meeting.

He presented an interwoven history of the Nacogdoches region combined with the flora and a few examples of the fauna. ASA President **John Brown** provided a review of the business meeting that occurred at the convention.

The Chapter had plants for door prizes along with rooted cuttings of the Glenn Dale plants 'Litany' and 'Trinket' taken from plants in the Morrison Garden at the National Arboretum last year.

The chapter's annual propagation meeting and cutting exchange was held June 24.

Creel-Way Propagation

Continued from page 58.

learn more from failures and partial successes than I do from a total success. You never seem to figure out how something worked, and often cannot repeat the successful experiment.

A recent invention of mine is the Sunnyside Propagation Tower, which accommodates 16 large to medium hanging baskets. I converted the baskets to fast drainage using a pattern of 3/4-inch holes. With such a tower you can grow 16 large pots in a ground footprint of four-by-four feet square. I intend to cover the soil beneath the tower with white sand to maximize sun reflected on the bottom of the pots. I am using the Sunnyside Tower to grow various native plants, including azalea seedlings.

I plan to make a shaded version called the Shadyside Tower that will have a square support over the tower to hold a 65 to 70 percent shade cloth. This will enable me to hang dome-pots off the ground with shade but upward reflected sunlight from sand on the ground beneath.

I have not tried everything in propagation yet, but continue with new small-scale experiments such as leaf-bud cuttings for native azaleas in leaf or dormant; rooting large-leaved species in large domes and pots; trying vented dome-pots in the sun; and making a dome pot top and bottom from a single one-gallon spring water bottle. I would also like to make a propagation device based on "nurse logs" found in the wild.

Conclusion

I believe that home propagation of native plants is an important conservation tool and educational incentive. We should always be seeking ways to involve young people in the appreciation of native plants. Gardeners who share natives they have propagated prevent others from digging wild plants. Cuttings and seeds grow better outdoors than those grown indoors or in a greenhouse. Seeds planted outdoors in a well-draining pot will germinate and grow by nature's schedule. Cuttings stuck outdoors need only native soil inoculation, constant humidity, and excellent drainage. In my opinion, fertilizers, fungicides, and pesticides kill native soil bacteria and weaken plants. Cuttings and seedlings grown by my methods create strong plants that thrive with little care.

Mike Creel's first loves are his family followed by the two family felines, but after that, he turns "green," venturing to a seven-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.

Lagniappe

Aaron Cook—Valdese, North Carolina

It is 3:43 a.m. Tuesday morning according to the clock in the bottom right-hand corner of my computer screen. I just returned from the Nacogdoches ASA convention. The plants have been unloaded from the car, and dirty clothes are piled on the laundry room floor.

I am checking my e-mail to make sure my boss got the message that she has to cover my eight o'clock Applied Plant Science class. She has responded to my earlier e-mail and class is covered, so I can relax and get a little sleep before my afternoon classes. Now that I have done all the things I needed to do I am wide awake. Since I am up and the house is quiet I can take a few moments to reflect on the events of the last few days.

The first question that pops into my head is: "Why do I always try to attend the annual convention?" Is it the gardens? Is it the people? Actually it's both. It's also about seeing the immense pride and joy our members get from showing their gardens and local area.

If you have never been to a national ASA convention, you don't know what you're missing. Have you ever traveled alone to a convention and found it difficult to fit in? My first Human Anatomy and Physiology Society convention was like that. I shared an interest with these people, but I just didn't seem to fit in.

During the years, I have belonged to several societies and attended quite a few conferences and conventions. None have been as completely satisfying as a national ASA convention. From the first one I attended to this one, I have always had a wonderful time.

The ASA family has always made me feel welcome and at ease. The Nacogdoches convention was no exception. It was another great family reunion for those of us who never miss this opportunity to get together. We toured great gardens, made new friends, caught up on what's been going on since the last convention, and ate a lot of good food. Kudos and thanks to **Barbara Stump**, **Barbara Wagner**, and all the other volunteers for a wonderful convention.

I began this article before leaving for Texas and initially titled it "Before and After." I was planning to write about how we use convention travel to visit each other's gardens. However, after this convention, only one word can sum up this experience—lagniappe. Lagniappe is a Southern Louisiana term pronounced lahn-yap, or occasionally lan-yap, and it means "a little something extra; a gift or show of appreciation."

My personal Southern Louisiana lagniappe started to take shape on the tour bus Saturday as we were driving through the private gardens of Nacogdoches. I was talking to **John Thornton** about some of his elepidote rhododendron hybrids. I had read his article about breeding rhododendrons for the Gulf Coast and was curious about how the plants were doing after the hurricane.

I asked John, "When is the best time to see them in bloom?" He stated in his straightforward way: "They are in bloom now. Why don't you come by on your way back home?"

Hmmmm, I thought. Should I extend my trip and make a pass through Southern Louisiana? I had promised to visit **Margie Jenkins** for several years, and I would like to see **Buddy Lee's** operation as well.

Without much input from me, the plan was quickly formulated before the banquet and meeting were over Saturday night. I would drive to Amite, Louisiana, (pronounced A-meet) on Sunday and spend the night at Margie's, visiting her nursery Monday morning. In the afternoon, I would visit Buddy and John.

After the business meeting Sunday, I corralled **Tom Milner** on the hotel steps to consult his atlas and plan my route to Amite. He and **Saletta Compton** were planning on taking the southern route around the Sabine reservoir. I chose the northern route and left to take a few more pictures at the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden.

At the garden I ran into **Dr. David Creech** and **Bart Brechter**. Bart is from Houston and the president of the reorganized Texas Chapter. He is one of our newest members and already very active. Dr. Creech was giving away more plants and so I took a few 'Nanjing Beauty' taxodium and Amur maples to try back home in my zone 6 climate. After taking a final walk through the garden and a dozen more pictures, I headed east toward Interstate 49.

I hadn't been on I-49 long when I realized that I was hungry and stopped at a McDonalds for a bite to eat. As I was standing in line, I looked outside and saw Tom and Saleta coming across the parking lot.

As we ate our meal and conversed about the convention, Tom mentioned that he would have liked one of Dr. Creech's 'Nanjing Beauty' taxodium. Since I was currently in possession of four, Tom and Saleta added a 'Nanjing Beauty' and another Amur maple to their plant collection. I have always adhered to the philosophy that if I have two of any plant, you are welcome to one of them.

The rest of my trip to Amite was uneventful. I enjoyed retracing a trip I had made with students across Interstate 10 years before.

I arrived at Amite about 7:30 p.m. and headed out Hwy. 16 to Margie's nursery and house. Once in Margie's driveway I remembered that 19 Boy Scouts were depending on me to schedule a summer camp merit-badge class online. The scheduling process was due to go live at any minute, so I quickly returned to Amite and checked into the Comfort Inn to work.

I had just checked into the room and was preparing to call Margie when the phone rang. Guess who? It was Margie calling to find out why I was not staying at her



Photo: Aaron Cook

▲ Jenkins Farm & Nursery, Amite, Louisiana

▼ Gardens at the home of Robert "Buddy" Lee in Independence, Louisiana



Photo: Aaron Cook

house. I explained the situation and made plans to meet her at the nursery at 7 a.m. the next morning.

When I arrived at the nursery, Margie was backing the golf cart out, and we wasted no time heading out to tour the nursery. For a plant person, her nursery is as close to heaven on earth as you can get. I had a good time looking at plants and talking to Margie, and before I knew it half the day was gone.

We went into the office, and she called Buddy to let him know I was on my way to his place. We said our goodbyes, made future plans for sharing plants, and I headed out.

Driving in rural Louisiana is quite an adventure. I thought driving a loaded school van to Copper Bald with no brakes during the 2001 convention had prepared me for anything; but I was wrong. Here's an important tip. If the sign says curve ahead 15 mph, you had better slow down because the road is going to turn abruptly in a 90-degree fashion.

Someone later referred to these curves as dog legs. If that's the case then that dog had a broken leg. I didn't slow

down enough for the first one and never made that mistake again.

I finally arrived at Buddy's after one wrong turn and backtrack. He had given me instructions to turn onto Highway 442 after passing through Loranger and then take the second paved road to the right. I noticed that the first paved road to the right was named Cook Road, so I knew he lived in a good neighborhood.

Buddy met me in the front yard and gave me a wonderful tour of his place. It is covered with azaleas and it seemed like they were all blooming. I was astonished to discover that all of the plants at Buddy's are his seedlings.

After touring his place and talking plants, I can only conclude that there are many more new plants coming out of Buddy's ambitious breeding projects. He is also working on other plants, including lilies, hollies, loropetalums, and crape-myrtles.

On the way over to John Thornton's place, Buddy and I stopped at a very interesting café. We had a delicious meal of fried catfish, greens, red beans, rice, and candied yams. I didn't tell Buddy, but for a good ole North Carolina boy, this was just like home to me.

Buddy called ahead and John was waiting for us when we pulled into his yard. John's neighborhood used to be shaded by large live oak trees; since Hurricane Katrina it has been in full sun. Even in full sun the azaleas and rhododendrons at John's house and nursery appear to be thriving.

We saw many plants that were hybridized by John using *Rhododendron hyperythrum*. Buddy and I agreed that several of them have commercial viability.

We walked the entire nursery site where plants of all types are planted. John knew the parentage of every plant. I was amazed at the variety of plants grown there. He even had a *R. prinophyllum* 'Marie Hoffman' growing and blooming in full sun. I can't grow this plant in North Carolina less than 75 miles from where it occurs naturally. I asked John how many people he knew who grew elepidote rhododendrons in Southern Louisiana. He held up a single finger and then pointed at himself.

It was a day that I will always remember. I would like to thank Margie, Buddy, and John for going above and beyond in gracious hospitality, and providing me with my own special version of Southern Louisiana lagniappe.

Aaron is a biology and landscape gardening instructor at Caldwell Community College in Hudson, North Carolina. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a Master of Arts degree in Biology Education at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. He is an active member in the North Carolina Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, American Rhododendron Society, Azalea Society of America, and International Plant Propagators Society.

More Flowers, More: A Summary of the 2007 ASA Convention

Carol Flowers—Washington, D.C.

I had looked forward to the 2007 convention in Texas. Having been born and raised around the New York City metropolitan area and having lived pretty much all of my adult life around Washington, D.C., my main knowledge of Texas was J.R. Ewing and the television show *Dallas*.

Going to the 2007 Azalea Society of America convention in Nacogdoches, Texas, gave me the opportunity to see a different part of this rich and varied land we call the United States of America. Too soon the convention was over.

My husband and I were spending one last day in Nacogdoches, making one final visit to the Ruby M. Mize garden for a few more pictures. Families strolled along the pathways. One little girl dressed in her Sunday best was being rushed through the garden. “Mommy, more flowers, more,” she said. I understood. I, too, wanted to linger amongst the flowers a little longer.

We came to Texas a day before the convention started. I had a new camera and wanted to have some practice with it before events unfolded. The hotel courtyard immediately beckoned. In full bloom were large azaleas plants with big Texas-sized flowers. Already, better photo ops did not exist.

After settling in, we went for a walk on the main street of Nacogdoches. More spectacular azaleas in the town square made me take my camera out once again. Small picturesque shops, art galleries, and restaurants greeted us. Looking for a small souvenir to take back, we stopped at a shop containing artworks created by the artists connected with the local university. I loved what I saw and found a small piece of turned wood to buy.

Early Thursday morning we found our way to the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. Serious photographers were already taking advantage of the early morning light to capture pictures of this beautiful sight. As beautiful as I knew their pictures would be, I also knew the beauty of the garden photos would never truly substitute for actually being in it and seeing the flowers first hand.

The convention finally began. Friendships were renewed, beautiful private and public gardens toured, great speakers heard, and the opportunity to purchase beautiful and unusual azaleas provided. All of our Texas hosts in Tyler and Nacogdoches made us feel welcome and special.

The two Barbaras (**Barbara Stump** and **Barbara Wagner**) did a great job in picking spectacular area gardens in both Tyler and Nacogdoches for us to see. During the day we toured Tyler gardens. **Buddy Lee** and **Joe Schild** presented the people of Tyler with the plaque that made this town an official “Azalea City.” The town’s mayor greeted us and said a few words of welcome. The special East Texas



▲ Texas-sized azaleas bloomed in the courtyard of the Fredonia Hotel in Nacogdoches, Texas.

gardens we saw had been created for many special reasons. In Tyler we saw the “Rose Garden,” built to showcase many roses grown in the city. Tyler also had their “IDEA Garden” created by the Master Gardeners, and the Ina Brundett Azalea Garden at Tyler Junior College created to bring nature’s beauty to everyone connected with the college. Buddy Lee’s Encore® azaleas were in bloom. These have been mystery plants to me.

In Tyler we also had the unique opportunity to see two private gardens created so the owners could enjoy the beauty gardens provide. These included Guy and Joan Pyron’s garden of beautiful azaleas and colorful companion plants and Ravenwood, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Ellis. The last garden gave me the fun of photographing myself as I explored the garden’s mirrored garden room. The Children’s Garden, created in memory of a child that died too soon, brought smiles and great photographic opportunities.

Saturday was the day to see Nacogdoches. Azaleas in both the private and public gardens were at their peak. Once again my husband and I got to visit the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, this time complete with **Dr. David Creech** entertaining us with his many stories concerning the history and design of this eight-acre garden.

Barbara and **Michael Stump** hosted a Texas barbeque lunch at their Nacogdoches home. Their historical home and their developing gardens provided more photo opportunities. The tour continued during the afternoon, driving through streets where the houses were landscaped with flowering azaleas. More visits to private gardens took place and finally a stop at a local plant nursery to buy plants.

Since I came by plane, I was limited in the number of plants I could bring home. I did however succumb

and bought a small companion plant. It is now in a bigger pot at home and growing very nicely. As with so many of the plants I have bought over the years, maybe someday I will find that special place for it in my yard.

The day was over too quickly, and we were suddenly back at the hotel with enough time to visit the plant sale room and get ready for the convention banquet.

I always marvel at the varied backgrounds of the people that make up the plant world. Planners of the 2007 convention took advantage of these backgrounds when selecting convention speakers. Dr. David Creech, regents professor of horticulture at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA), provided opening night information on the university's arboretum, its history, its diverse plant collection, and the many connected activities which keep the public coming back to the gardens again and again.

Greg Grant, horticulturist with the SFA Piney Woods Native Plant Center, kept the audience entertained and laughing with pictures of garden sculptures made with some rather strange materials (soda bottles, tires, etc.—no bronze or marble in this art).

Friday night we heard from folks whose original day jobs had involved the medical field. **Buddy Lee**, the past president of the ASA and creator of the multi-season-blooming Encore® azaleas, spoke about his favorite part of the plant world: azaleas. I had finally seen a blooming Encore® azalea and so loved it. **Len Miller** was our second speaker. He spoke of his love of Japanese gardens and the many he has designed and built over the years he has studied landscaping.



▲ An East Texas garden sculpture.

Photo Carol Flowers

Our banquet speaker was **Tom Spencer**, a Texas-based television producer, freelance writer, photographer, and radio personality. In his speech, "The Soul of the Garden," he discussed the spiritual side of gardening. He ended by showing video clips. There was something magical that had been captured in these garden scenes. Words did not have to be used. His Web site, www.soulofthegarden.com, captures more and expands that magic.

During the Society's annual meeting life-time achievement awards were presented to **Margie Jenkins** and **Joe Schild**. A garden rocker was presented to **Barbara Stump** in recognition of her many years of hard work as editor of *The Azalean*. Results of the election of officers for the Society were announced. **John Brown** is our new president, **Aaron Cook** is vice president, and **Dan Krabill** is treasurer. The three new directors were elected to the ASA board: **Vincent Ciolino**, **J. Jackson**, and **Dave Nanney**.

As with all ASA conventions, opportunities to acquire new plants were plentiful. Both my husband and I won plants at the opening night raffle. The plant-sale room was well stocked, a plant nursery was visited on the tour of Nacogdoches, and a plant auction was held after the annual meeting. I discovered that large two-and-a-half gallon clear plastic bags exist. Filled with my plants they fit well in the overhead luggage compartments of the airplane. My plants made it safely home.

Sunday came and our plane would leave for D.C., the next day. We drove around the azalea trails and visited some of the historic Nacogdoches buildings. There was one last trip to the Ruby M Mize Azalea Garden. Long shadows and the late afternoon sun made the garden even more breathtaking than the first day we saw it.

The people from Nacogdoches are proud of their credentials as an "Azalea City" and rightly so. That night I thought of all the gracious and wonderful people we met in Tyler and Nacogdoches. The azalea blooms were rapidly fading but the happy memories would continue.

On Tuesday morning back in D.C., I was in withdrawal. That morning's Washington Post had an article on the cherry blossoms. They were at peak bloom. With my now not-so-new camera in tow, I headed down to the tidal basin. It was early morning. Serious photographers and broadcasting network people were working to capture the ephemeral beauty of the flowers.

I re-read the plaque that explained that the trees were a gift to Americans from the Japanese people. I thought of all the contributions the Japanese have made to the azalea world and Tom Spencer's speech, "The Soul of the Garden." May the Japanese, Americans, and all people continue to plant flowers, work for peace, and cherish our plant world. As the little four-year-old said, "...more flowers, more."

Before retiring, Carol Flowers managed a computer help desk for the U.S. Census Bureau. Her interest in azaleas came from her many childhood visits to the Planting Fields Arboretum in Oyster Bay, New York. She has been a member of the Azalea Society of America for 25 years.



▲ The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden provided a multitude of photo opportunities.

Photo Carol Flowers

Society News

Jenkins, Schild honored at annual meeting

By Allen Owings—Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Two Distinguished Service Awards were conferred during the ASA annual convention in March.

Ms. Margie Y. Jenkins of Amite, Louisiana, was recognized for her lifetime contributions to the landscape and nursery industry.



▲ Margie Y. Jenkins

Ms. Jenkins' generous efforts to promote the proper use of azaleas and their companion plants to home gardeners and, more importantly, the commercial horticulture industry have had a significant impact on the industry.

The increased use of azalea hybrid groups (such as the Robin Hill cultivars) not commonly available in significant numbers several years ago in the southeastern United States can be attributed to her interest in growing and distributing the plants prior to other wholesale producers. She has inspired and educated countless numbers of green-industry professionals by unselfishly sharing her love and knowledge of azaleas and other interesting plants.

Friends everywhere know of Ms. Jenkins' desire to seek new plant information and her generosity in sharing plants. She has contributed greatly to numerous nursery and landscape associations such as the International Plant Propagators Association, Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association, Southern Nursery Association, and the American Nursery and Landscape Association.

Ms. Jenkins has been instrumental in distributing and promoting many plants used in the industry today. We value her contributions to the Azalea Society of America.

A Distinguished Service Award was also presented to nurseryman, hybridizer, highly respected lecturer and author **Joseph E. Schild, Jr.**

Schild's lifetime of outstanding achievements merited the special award.



▲ Joe Schild, Jr.

Through his countless presentations to plant enthusiast groups and his plant explorations of the Appalachian gorges, plateaus and mountaintops, new selections, seed, and desirable natural hybrids have been introduced widely into aza-

lea cultivation. He has ensured a broader appreciation and knowledge of the value of these living jewels among our membership and supporters. He provided an extensive exposure to and knowledge of the uniqueness and value of native azaleas and their interspecific hybrids.

As part of his azalea education mission, Schild has been a dedicated supporter of the Azalea Society of America, authoring many articles for the journal. His leadership to develop the new Azalea City official accreditation for communities across the nation is a superb example of his dedication. In addition, establishing and organizing the Tennessee Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society shows his great devotion toward ericaceous plants.

Schild's missionary work continues to include a project to establish as complete a collection of the Glenn Dale azaleas as may be possible for a public display garden at Reflection Riding Arboretum in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

ASA members have benefited from his inexhaustible support and work on behalf of the society. This special recognition acknowledges his tireless work of promoting azaleas, particularly our native azaleas found in the southeastern United States.

Letters to the Editor

I was delighted to see a photo of 'Spirit of Valdosta' on the cover of the Summer 2007 issue of *The Azalean*. However, I was disappointed there was no recognition given to the plant hybridizer and donor which, by the way, is one in the same.

I'd like to rectify that omission because I was somewhat involved during the whole process, and I know some of the players who deserve recognition. Joe Klimavicz, a long time member of the North Virginia Chapter, was the hybridizer and donor. The plant is Joe's hybrid LP 93-3 which is a cross of 'Elsie Lee' x 'Gay Paree'.

But recognition shouldn't stop here. Joe's wife and daughter, Caitlin, attended the Valdosta Azalea Festival to present the 'Spirit of Valdosta'. Caitlin spoke about the plant and the hybridization process at the dedication ceremony. The speech was broadcast by several radio stations across the south. You might remember Caitlin from her (high tech) article in the Fall 2005 issue of *The Azalean*.

This brings me to my final point. Joe did something that should be incorporated into the ASA Azalea City program. We should engage our member hybridizers to provide plants to be registered in the name of future Azalea Cities. Hey, why not make it retroactive?

We have a treasure in our hybridizers and, at the very least, we should recognize them. They are hard to come by these days.

James Thornton
Conyers, Georgia