



The Azalean

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Journal of the Azalea Society of America

# President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia

As you read this message we are in prime time for our azaleas. The focus of our society is to promote azaleas. We do this through research, education, propagation, and introduction of azaleas to the general public. There are initiatives throughout the society to collaborate with nurseries and public gardens to promote specific azalea varieties, both natives and hybrids. For several years, the society has been promoting hybrids through the Legacy Project.

I'm pleased at the growth in the Legacy Project. What started out as a project in the Northern Virginia Chapter and encompassed four hybrid groups, is now a society-wide project with participation by eight chapters and the Royal Horticulture Society and now encompasses 20 hybrid groups. Most recently we added the Schroeder and Carla Hybrids to the project. There are great initiatives being undertaken throughout the society as part of the project. I detail some of them in my article in this issue.

Don Hyatt has also written an excellent article in this issue on the Marshy Point Azaleas and their hybridizer, Harry Weiskittel. Through a collaboration between the Ben Morrison Chapter and the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, they are working to create a Legacy Garden of Marshy Point Azaleas at London Town Garden in Edgewater, MD. There are many other ways in which individuals and/or chapters can promote azaleas through the Legacy Project. If you are interested in sponsoring a Legacy Hybrid group, more information is located on our website at <https://www.azaleas.org/legacy-project/>.

We have also posted two documents on the society website, one to assist chapters in running conventions and the other with ideas for running a successful chapter. They are available at [About the Society/Chapters/Resources](#). Hopefully they will provide you beneficial ideas. If you have any ideas to add to either document or additional comments, please send them to me at [president@azaleas.org](mailto:president@azaleas.org).

A word of caution. There are scammers all over, ready to cause you to part with your money. Recently the ASA and other plant societies have been beset by scammers sending out emails to members asking them to purchase money cards or send checks to fake organizations with the promise of reimbursement by the society. We will NEVER ask you to send money on behalf of the society via email. If you are ever in doubt, call the person who allegedly sent you the email.

Finally, it is with great sadness that I report the passing of Margie Jenkins, of our Louisiana Chapter. Ms. Margie was the grande dame of the society. She ran the Jenkins Farm and Nursery in Amite, LA, up until the time of her death at the age of 98. Many of us had the opportunity to visit her nursery as part of conventions sponsored by the Louisiana Chapter. Those of us who were fortunate to meet her will always remember her warmth and grace. Her passing is a true loss. Our sympathies go out to her family.



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 which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

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## On the Cover

'Pam's Passion' developed by nurseryman Harry Weiskittel at his Marshy Point Nurseries, showing the multiple colors typical of many of his azaleas. Surely, he was a talented azalea breeder. See related article on p. 7. Photo courtesy of Don Hyatt.





# 2020 Update on the ASA's Legacy Project

*Richard Bauer—Yorktown, VA*

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

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

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

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

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

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

▼ Table 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Photo Carolyn Beck

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



Photo Carolyn Beck

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

▼ Photo 3—Marshy Point Hybrid "Annapolis."



Photo Carolyn Beck



Photo Carolyn Beck

▼ Photo 4—Aromi Azalea 'Amelia Rose'.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Photo Ronnie Palmer

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

▼ Photo 5—Azalea Hill Garden and Nursery.



Photo Ronnie Palmer

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



Photo Carolyn Beck

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

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

## References and Resources

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

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

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

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



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# Reflections on Harry Weiskittel and the Marshy Point Azaleas

*Donald W. Hyatt—McLean, Virginia*

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

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

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

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



Photo Donald Hyatt



## His Nursery

Harry often said how fortunate he was to have the land where the nursery resided. That property had been in the family for quite some time. He was officially Harry C. Weiskittel III, and I don't recall if it was his father or his grandfather who originally bought the land, but it was a treasure. Marshy Point is a scenic tract that juts out into the Chesapeake Bay at Middle River, north of Baltimore. The family originally used it for hunting, but Harry transformed part of that area into his nursery. He had acres of hoop houses, fields of plants, and an extensive automatic watering system to care for them. (See Photo 2.) He also had a beautiful display garden covering many acres near the home. During the 2004 ASA Convention in Bowie, MD, hosted by the Ben Morrison Chapter ASA, Harry's garden was a prime feature on the tour. Two years later during the 2006 Joint ARS/ASA Convention in the suburbs of Washington, DC, we toured his garden again. That event was hosted by the ARS Chapters in District 9 and the Brookside Gardens Chapter ASA.

As the nursery business grew, Harry's son Austin joined the firm as its vice president. They not only sold standard azaleas, rhododendrons, and other plants, but the main attraction was always the new azalea cultivars that Harry had developed. Those beauties were not available anywhere else.

## His Azalea Legacy

Carolyn Beck looked through as many catalogs as she could find and made a list of 78 cultivars that Harry had named. We have not been able to track down all of them. Harry also renamed some plants, which has caused confusion. We do not intend to register them all. Some cultivars are quite similar, so we need to evaluate growth habit, vigor, and foliage in addition to the flowers. Our goal is to determine the best, get them registered, and preserve his legacy.

This article is illustrated with some images of the Marshy Point Azaleas we expect to register. The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist<sup>2</sup> requires that cultivar names must be unique, so we have added 'Marshy Point' in front of most of the names that Harry used in our official registration documents. That will guarantee that cultivar names do not conflict with a name that was previously used

▼ Photo 2—The Marshy Point Azalea growing fields.



Photo Donald Hyatt

for another rhododendron or azalea. For more photos and additional varieties, check out the 'Legacy Project' heading on the ASA website.<sup>3</sup>

Every year I add new favorites to my garden. 'Marshy Point Daisy', formerly known as 'Anne Harris', is a gorgeous blend of soft salmon pink and cream with a green blotch. (See Photo 3.) More recently I have been enamored by the heavily ruffled blossoms of 'Marshy Point Love Lace', a pale lavender pink single. The edges of the petals are so ruffled and ornate they almost look Victorian. (See Photo 4.) I always seek landscape companions and I thought how nice that azalea looks with some of his ruffled whites like 'Marshy Point White Goddess', or 'Marshy Point Lady Baltimore' which has a lavender blush and chartreuse flare. Harry developed some gorgeous doubles like 'Marshy Point Annapolis' which is white with a green throat and 'Marshy Point Show Girl' which is white with a pale lavender flush. The blossoms are so ruffled and frilled they look like carnations.

Some of Harry's other single azaleas have huge blossoms like the deep rose 'Marshy Point Bopalula', the white 'Marshy Point Breathless', and rich purplish-pink, 'Marshy Point Berlin'. He selected a number of bicolor singles. Some are white bordered in pink like 'Marshy Point Hanky Panky',



Photo Carolyn Beck

▲ Photo 3—'Marshy Point Daisy'.

▼ Photo 5—R. 'Carol Kittel', registered with the IRRC by Harry Weiskittel in 1998.



Photo Donald Hyatt



‘Ruth Foard’, and ‘Shannon OBaker’. Some are white to pale pink with red borders of varying thickness. ‘Marshy Point Lolly’ has a very narrow border. The striking ‘Marshy Point Pam’s Passion’ and ‘Marshy Point Soft Touch’ are slightly wider. ‘Pam Corckran’ and ‘Marshy Point Red Tape’ can be even wider. Border width can vary from flower to flower and some blossoms can be solid color.

He developed several doubles with a white to pale lavender background and a purple border. Trying to decide which is best is not easy: ‘Marshy Point Fancy Pants’ has the most striking contrast and yet ‘Marshy Point Lavender Miss’ has awesome foliage. It is hard to overlook the pale lavender edge of ‘Marshy Point Mary Ellen Thomsen’, which is so lovely and delicate. In the landscape, these plants blend very well with other pastels like the double lavender ‘Carol Kittel’ (See Photo 5.) and hose-in-hose blush pink of ‘Marshy Point Pink Sparkle’. (See Photo 6.)

He also introduced some eye-catching bi-colors like ‘Kakie’ with its striped coral and orange-red blossoms. ‘Marshy Point Superstar’ is supposedly a sport of Ben Morrison with a wider white margin.

He developed some excellent deep reds, as well, including ‘Marshy Point End Zone’, ‘Marshy Point Touchdown’, and ‘Marshy Point Red Ringer’. He found some fall bloomers,

too, like ‘Marshy Point Humdinger’ and ‘Marshy Point Autumn Glory’.

Harry did rename several plants, possibly to improve sales. He first introduced a dwarf witches’ broom mutation that he found on the variegated azalea Silver Sword as ‘Penknife’. Later he decided to call it ‘Stiletto’, since that name seemed more marketable.

For years I knew a soft pink azalea in my garden as ‘Marshy Point Betty Christopher’, but he did change the name to ‘Laurie Russell’. It has been a landscape favorite in my garden. The pale pink semi-double blossoms harmonize beautifully with my yellow deciduous azaleas, pale pink *Rhododendron* Janet Blair, and beds of the blue wildflower, *Phlox divaricata*. It is very hardy, and Harry told me it had Elsie Lee in its background. In fact, his cross, (Mrs. Nancy Dippel x Schroeders White Glory), had Elsie Lee as a parent on both sides! I did ask him about the name change. He said Betty Christopher was his former mother-in-law, so he decided to use a different trade name after the divorce.

Harry had a great sense of humor. He infused his slide presentations with his clever wit and was a very popular speaker. He was always willing to share his knowledge with local plant society groups.

He was also extremely generous. When we were preparing to host the 2006 joint convention of the ARS and ASA in Rockville, Harry offered us the use of one of his nursery hoop houses so we could raise our own plants for the convention sale. We held several ‘potting parties’ at the nursery and grew azaleas from cuttings we had rooted, primarily new varieties developed by local hybridizers. The rhododendrons were from cuttings of rare varieties we had sent to Van Veen Nursery to root for us. I also started seedlings of the ‘Red Max’, a rare red form of *R. maximum*, and a red form of *R. vaseyi*. Those became banquet favors.

During the two years prior to the convention, I would frequently travel the 65-mile trip each way to Marshy Point to check on our plants. It was also a great time to ‘talk azaleas’ with Harry. When the convention finally arrived, we cleared out the hoop house and moved our plants to the hotel. They were beautiful, and the plant sale looked like a flower show.

Harry told us we could tour his Marshy Point during the

▼ Photo 7—‘Marshy Point Sarah’s Wedding’.



Photo Harry Weiskittel



Photo Donald Hyatt

▲ Photo 4—‘Marshy Point Love Lace’.

▼ Photo 6—‘Marshy Point Pink Sparkle’.



Photo Donald Hyatt

2006 ARS/ASA Convention but as the date approached, I became worried that we might be imposing. Harry was getting ready for the wedding of son Austin and fiancée Sarah. The reception would be in the garden the day after our visit, but Harry assured us it would not be a problem. In honor of the event and Austin's new wife, Harry named a huge double white azalea 'Sarah's Wedding'. (See Photo 7.)

After the convention, Harry and Carol, his wife of 25 years, started spending more time at their second home in Naples, FL, so we didn't see each other very often. He would be there to help Austin with shipments in the spring, and he always wanted to see his azaleas bloom. Our last meeting was in 2010 as we admired some new seedlings that bloomed that spring. By that time, I think he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, but it was not evident to me. However, gradually it took its toll. Family members have requested that any memorial gifts be made to the Memory and Alzheimer's Treatment Center at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore.

We have now included Harry's Marshy Point Azaleas as part of the ASA's Legacy Project, with a proposed display garden in Edgewater, MD, not far from Annapolis.

After discussing the Legacy Garden concept with officials at London Town Gardens, in December 2019 we moved another 27 mature landscape specimens of Marshy Point Hybrids to London Town Gardens. They had been housed at Carolyn and Paul Beck's home and were among many plants Austin had given the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA to assist with propagation, evaluation, and registration of his father's hybrids. Now and for many years to come, the public will have a place to admire the beautiful Marshy Point Azaleas developed by a local Maryland hybridizer, Harry C. Weiskittel III.

## References and Further Reading

<sup>1</sup> *The International Rhododendron Register & Checklist*, 2nd Edition. Compiled by Dr Alan C. Leslie, International Rhododendron Registrar. The Royal Horticultural Society. London, England.

<sup>2</sup> Potomac Valley Chapter ARS. Summer 2019 Newsletter, p. 3 ff. <http://www.arspvc.org/articles/newsletter.2019-07-web.pdf>. This article revised by Donald Hyatt for this issue of *The Azalean*.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the ASA Legacy Project on the ASA Web for more information: <https://www.azaleas.org/legacy-project/>

Don Hyatt has been actively growing azaleas and rhododendrons for over 60 years. His primary interests have been in hybridizing, propagation, landscaping, and the study of our native azalea species in the wild.

# Recognizing Generous ASA Members

*Paul A. Beck, Treasurer*

I would like to recognize and thank the following members who made donations totaling \$3,445 to the **Operating Fund** of the Azalea Society of America in 2019 and \$3,650 to the **Azalea Research Fund**. My apologies if I missed anyone.

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### \$51 to \$100

Creech, David L.  
Harding, Douglas & Susan  
Hargroves, Herbert & Nancy  
John, Sue

Krabill, Barbara & Dan  
Stump, Barbara  
Thompson, Roger  
Whipple, Andrew & You-Ying

### \$101 to \$500

Beck, Carolyn & Paul  
Grubb, Brian, in support  
of the Legacy Project

Louisiana Chapter ASA  
McCeney, Bobbi

### \$1,000 and over

Northern Virginia Chapter ASA

## Azalea Research Fund

### Up to \$50

Brown, Stanley & Gay, Kitty  
Burd, Ginger & Sam  
Ciolino, Vincent J.

O'Dell, Jerry  
Paull, Joan G.  
Willis, Lloyd & Margaret

### \$51 to \$100

McCorkle, Kevin

### \$101 to \$500

Jones, Bill

McCeney, Bobbi

### \$3,000

Dolan Gardens (Frances Jones)



# In Memory—Margie Louise Yates Jenkins 1921- 2020

*Barbara Stump—Nacogdoches, Texas*

We've lost a dear friend: On January 29, 2020, Miss Margie Louise Yates Jenkins died at age 98, in Franklinton, LA.<sup>1,2</sup>

She had a life-long interest in growing plants, becoming a master propagator. Her early careers were in the Farmers Home Administration during World War II, then the Jenkins family dairy farm with husband Bryant Edward Jenkins from 1946 on. Along the way she developed an interest in preserving native plants near the farm. The Jenkins Farm and Nursery enlarged and prospered, and she became known as a horticultural authority. She participated in and was a featured guest speaker at work sessions and conventions of horticultural and botanical groups throughout the Gulf Coast South.

She was a master propagator of difficult species, which is how I first met her. In the early days of my assignment at the Stephen F. Austin State University Arboretum to help establish an 8-acre azalea garden, my late husband Mike and I toured public gardens across the South. We had been told to visit the Hammond Research Station in Hammond, LA. While there, we first saw the lovely lavender and purple-speckled 'Koromo-shikibu' azaleas. I asked whether they would grow in Zone 8b Nacogdoches, and the answer was "Yes, but only one person can propagate them, Miss Margie Jenkins!" We drove down the road right away to visit her. So began our many purchases of this lovely azalea, which thrives and graces 700 feet on both sides of University Drive, on the East side of the campus. For balance, we planted them on the East side frontage of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden and the West side frontage of the Gayla Mize Garden. They repeat bloom, are evergreen, and make a lovely memory for me of a very smart, kind, and talented horticulturist and friend. In fact, they were blooming in January. Her legacy lives on both here in Nacogdoches and in her native Louisiana. (See Photo 1)



Photo David Creech

▲ Photo 1—We owe our large hedges of hundreds of *R.* 'Koromo-shikibu' (also known as "The Purple Spider Azalea") to the very green fingers of Miss Margie.

▼ Photo 2—Miss Margie in the Azalea Garden at Tyler Junior College during the day-trip to Tyler, part of the 2007 Nacogdoches ASA Convention.



Photo Leon Macha

Not only this, but she also supported our educational efforts along the way... speaking at one of our early Azalea Trail Symposia (2008: "Easy Ways to Propagate Evergreen and Deciduous Azaleas") and attending both ASA conventions in Nacogdoches (2007 and 2015). (See Photos 2 & 3) What a fine role model for every gardening enthusiast.



Photo Barbara Stump

▲ Photo 3—Miss Margie in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden Council Ring in Spring 2008. She was such a supporter of new gardens and arboreta. She was a speaker at that year's Nacogdoches Azalea Trail Symposium.

Her awards included the Nursery Persons of the Year by the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen (1993), James Foret Award by the Louisiana Nursery Association (2000), ASA Distinguished Service Award (2007), Florida Parishes Arena Hall of Fame Inductee (2013), and the Don Shadow Award by the Southern Nursery Association (2014). In 2018, she became the first woman to be inducted into the Louisiana Department of Agriculture Hall of Distinction.

It is truly fitting that the Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden was established at the Hammond Experiment Station in 2006. The ASA convention visited it in 2017. The plaque at the entrance says so much about Miss Margie: “Margie Y. Jenkins... a person with a passion for plants and plant people.” There couldn't be a more appropriate way to remember her. She was certainly a standard-setter for the rest of us to not

only enjoy plants, but also to learn about them and then share that learning as widely as possible with others.

Dr. Allen Owings, Louisiana Chapter President, offers these two ways we can help Miss Margie's legacy continue:

**1. In support of Margie Yates Jenkins Scholarship Fund**

Make check payable to: Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Foundation for Scholarship and Research

c/o Cari Jane Murray  
P. O. Box 1447  
Mandeville, LA 70470

[Write “Margie Jenkins” in memo line]

**2. In support of LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station**

Make check payable to: LSU AgCenter

Hammond Research Station  
21549 Old Covington Highway  
Hammond, LA 70403

in support of the established Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden

[Write “Margie Jenkins” in memo line]

**References and Resources**

<sup>1</sup> For full information from official obituary see: *Times-Picayune Newspaper*, New Orleans, LA, January 31, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Material taken from Margie Jenkins obituary on [www.Legacy.com](http://www.Legacy.com) at:

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/margie-jenkins-obituary?pid=195230409>

**Selected References from *The Azalean***

1. Lee, Robert (Buddy). “Azaleophile Margie Jenkins.” *The Azalean*. Winter 2003. 25(4): 84-87. [Originally appeared in *Louisiana Nursery & Landscape Magazine*. As “First Lady of Louisiana Nurseries.” Fall 2002. Reprinted by permission of LN&L.]
2. Lee, Robert (Buddy). “Margie Jenkins Honored with SNA Award.” *The Azalean*. Fall 2005. 27(3): 65. Award by Southern Nurserymen Association.
3. Editor. “Hammond Research Station to Establish New Azalea Garden Honoring Margie Y. Jenkins.” *The Azalean*. Fall 2006. 28(3): 59.
4. Editor. “Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden Established at Hammond Research Station.” *The Azalean*. Winter 2006. 28(4): 89.
5. Bracy, Dr. Regina P. “The Making of the Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden.” Summer 2008. *The Azalean*. Summer 2008. 30(2): 28.
6. Editor. “Another First for Miss Margie Jenkins.” *The Azalean*. Summer 2018. 40(2): 46.



# Cutting Propagation

*Dale Berrong—Danielsville, Georgia*

There are as many ways to propagate as there are people that propagate. It is important to find out what works best for you and use it. One thing is certain, if you don't stick cuttings, they won't root. The more that you stick, the more that will be successful. It is a numbers game, and you have to figure out if changing your process is worth the potential increase in success. The key is to stick a lot of cuttings. I have never had a problem with getting rid of excess plants, and sharing plants is a great way to meet people and make new friends.

I have been asked to share my methods for propagating. I have tried a lot of things that have ended up working for me and some that have not worked so well. I have talked with many people to explore their methods and learned what works for them and incorporated some of their methods into mine. A great deal of information is available on the Internet. Some is helpful, but most is not. The key is to sort through the information to find what is useful. One of the things that I do is to examine the information to see if it makes sense and see why it works or would improve my process. I have been amazed at what I have heard or read from plant people over the years about plant propagation. It ranges from moon phases to strange practices passed down from great granddad. Examine your process to see if it makes sense. I do not present this information to say that this is the best way and that other methods are inferior. These are simply a few things that I have learned or observed. Take from it what you can use. I am very open to discussion about my methods and to learn from others' experiences. The more information the better. The following is a collection of things that I have learned that you may find helpful.

## Vernon Bush Method

Vernon Bush is an expert propagator of deciduous azaleas at the Huntsville (AL) Botanical Garden. I use Vernon's method of cutting propagation. He uses plastic storage boxes with clear lids for his propagation boxes. (See Photo 1.) The 66-quart size from Walmart works best for me. I can stick 70 deciduous azaleas, 80 elipidote rhododendrons, 120 evergreen azaleas, or 100 lepidote rhododendrons in each box. I won't go into his process because he has done an excellent job of explaining his method, both in his presentation at one of Azalea Chapter ARS meetings and in his written instructions. His system has many advantages and provides an inexpensive method that is effective, portable, and scalable. I use his system for all my cutting propagation, not just for deciduous azaleas. My recommendation to anyone is to follow his method before you make modifications. If Vernon says to mist the cuttings 3 times a day, then mist 3 times a day not 3 times a week. Don't make changes and then complain that his system doesn't work. However, I have made a few modifications to suit my needs that I will cover a little later.



Photo Dale Berrong

▲ Photo 1— Cutting boxes containing rhododendrons, camellias, and evergreen azaleas ready to be potted up.

## Hard to Root Considerations

Some plants are harder to root than others and require additional consideration for success. I have investigated existing research and have accumulated some thoughts from my personal observations and experiences.

**New growth**—Plant growth is not a uniform and continuous process in woody plants. Growth usually is produced in flushes where rapid growth occurs and is followed by a period when that growth matures and hardens before another flush will occur. Some plants can have several flushes during the growing season. This information is helpful to know so that roots can develop, or graft unions can heal before the next flush of growth. If a flush of growth occurs before roots develop or the graft union knits, the new plant is doomed. The new flush doesn't have the infrastructure available to support its needs. Timing of cuttings or grafting should coincide with the time between flushes. Roots or graft unions need 6 to 8 weeks to form. New growth on new cuttings or grafts is not a welcome sign. New growth requires moisture and nutrients that must come through the roots or the graft union.

**Producing roots is easy**—Producing roots is a necessary first step to successful cutting propagation. A cutting must also have enough strength to feed new growth. Many cuttings fail because they don't have enough stored carbohydrates to support the next flush of growth.

**Failure to break bud**—Some deciduous plants, such as deciduous azaleas, will root but fail to break bud and start new growth the next spring. I have discarded thousands of cuttings with roots and healthy buds that simply would not start new growth in the spring. Why does this happen? My belief is that the plant has used all of its strength reserves producing roots and surviving during the rooting process and doesn't have anything left for the push to generate new

food producing growth. The cutting has starved to death.

**Buildup of carbohydrates**—Plants produce carbohydrates by photosynthesis and store it in plant tissues. This is the fuel that feeds new plant growth. The question is how do we get the new cutting to produce more carbohydrates before it goes dormant? The leaves that you left on the cutting will produce while they are still viable, but probably not enough to carry it through. New growth is required to produce new fuel-manufacturing leaves. Light in sufficient strength is required for the photosynthesis process. Lux of 1000 to 1300 is required for best production. A light color spectrum in the range of 6500K is best. Increasing photoperiod to 20 hours a day will also help. I have found that adding fertilizer and minerals to the water that I use to mist helps to encourage new growth.

**Cultivar differences**—Some cultivars root better than others. ‘Aromi Sunrise’ is easier to root than ‘Aromi Radiant Red’. ‘Admiral Semmes’ is easier to root than ‘Robert E. Lee’. That is why it is easier to find certain cultivars and other cultivars are always out of stock. When growers select new plants to introduce, they select not only the best flowers, foliage, growth habit, etc., but they must be easy to propagate. There is no need to introduce a new plant if you can’t propagate it successfully. The old standard cultivars are easy to propagate, or they would not have become so common. A new selection or seedling may be a great plant but be difficult to propagate. My experience from taking cuttings in the wild is that there are great differences in success rates from cuttings from one plant to the next, even taken on the same day and stuck at the same time, prepared the same, and stuck in the same propagation box. Cuttings from one plant will root with almost 100% success, while cuttings from a plant just a few yards away will not root at all. Genetics definitely plays a part in determining which plants will generate new rooted plants and which ones will not.

**Juvenility**—Juvenility plays a role in rooting success rates. Cuttings taken from younger plants root better than those from older plants. Juvenility is not just an age: some parts of a plant are more juvenile than others. New growth closest to the root crown tends to be the most juvenile. You can see the differences if you look closely. American beech, *Fagus grandiflora*, will drop leaves from areas that are not juvenile in the fall, yet retain leaves through the winter on juvenile growth. Some growers will drastically cut back stock plants so that they will produce juvenile growth for cuttings. Juvenility certainly plays a part in the differences in success rates of cuttings taken from wild plants.

Many growers take cuttings from last year’s plants to stick for this year to get the most juvenile cuttings. One of the reasons that tissue culture works so well is that plantlets are produced that are very juvenile and produce roots much more easily than older tissue. That is the same reason that stem cells are so valuable in bio research. One take-away is that very juvenile tissue roots very easily. In working around newly rooted cuttings, I occasionally knock off a new branch or shoot. Rather than waste the new growth, I will stick it, no matter how small or soft. I have had 100% success in rooting

those cuttings no matter what time of year. I have thought about taking cuttings from newly rooted cuttings, but as of yet have not had the heart to do it.

**Timing**—Timing of taking cuttings can be critical for some hard-to-root plants. Usually we think of a particular date or range of dates, but the start of spring growth can vary greatly from year to year. Research that I found while I was trying to root *Magnolia* x ‘Butterflies’ had a better approach: The timing was expressed as weeks from bud break. Yellow flowered magnolias are difficult to root, and timing is critical for success. For ‘Butterflies’, the best time is between 5 and 7 weeks after bud break. Bud break can vary by weeks from year to year, and you could easily miss the window if you depended on a certain date. My success with ‘Butterflies’ increased significantly when I started sticking cuttings between 5 and 7 weeks after bud break.

I have taken *Kalmia* cuttings in June when the plants are flowering and had success, but it takes 6 months or more for roots to form. Last year I was given cuttings from a plant the first of December and found that the cuttings rooted in 4 to 6 weeks and new growth started in February. The new plants had three flushes of growth this summer, and now at just less than a year old are well branched and over a foot in height. All those cuttings were from the same wild plant. More research is needed to see if the same results can be achieved from different plants.

I believe that success with deciduous azaleas could be improved with more research on timing of taking cuttings. The research needs to examine the differences in species and extend to specific cultivars.

## Basic Propagation Components

**Rooting Medium**—Rooting medium recipes are a balance between air space and moisture retention. It is important that the soil mixture drains well for most of the plants that we deal with. In general, harder-to-root cuttings require more air space to root successfully.

**Peat Moss**—Peat moss is excellent for moisture retention, but very low in air space and drainage. It is very low in harmful pathogens. Peat moss when dry, is very hard to wet. If a soil mixture high in peat moss is ever allowed to dry out, it is next to impossible to get wet again. When wet, it will not drain and can cause problems for the roots of most of the plants that we work with. I try to use as little peat moss as possible in my soil mixes. I never use peat moss in any mix that I am going to use in pots larger than four inches and never in the landscape. The soils that most of the plants that I grow need to have good drainage to prevent root diseases, and peat moss doesn’t allow proper drainage.

**Soil Conditioner, Nature’s Helper®**—Soil Conditioner or Nature’s Helper® are some of the names that are used to market decomposing wood chips and other organic material in bags at big box stores. The EPA has created an industry for the disposal of plant waste from construction sites. In days gone by, the material would have been burned on site, but now must be dealt with without burning. The material is chipped up into small pieces and composted in a process that involves mixing with older material and turning on a regular



basis to prevent spontaneous combustion. After a time, it is bagged and sold in big box stores as a soil amendment. Decomposition is encouraged as part of the manufacturing process to break down the organic matter, but this allows bacteria, mold, and fungus to accumulate in the mix which actually assists in decomposition of wood chips. Yet the same bacteria and fungi may be detrimental for propagation soil mix. This material should not be used around seedlings or cuttings unless you put it through a process to sterilize it first. The only time that I have had problems with mold and fungus was when I used this soil conditioner in my rooting mix. There are much better choices for propagation soil mix.

**Compost**—Compost certainly has its uses around the garden but should be avoided around propagation. As in the above paragraph, the process of composting encourages growth of organisms that decompose organic matter. These organisms don't know the difference between your newly stuck cutting and a discarded weed; they will go about their job of decomposing organic matter. Keep compost away from your propagation.

**Pine Bark**—Pine bark is very different from wood chips and hardwood bark. The decomposition is different, as is the result of decomposition. The pine bark in this area is sourced from pine timber, which are healthy trees. The bark is stripped prior to the lumber sawing process in the sawmills. Many of the mills sort the bark by size of pieces and sell it as a byproduct of the lumber process. The pine bark that I use for soil mix is classified as pine bark fines and is composed of pieces that are about one inch and smaller. I screen the fines using a quarter-inch soil screen to remove the larger pieces to make it more uniform for small roots when I root cuttings or sow seeds. I use the pine bark fines as is without screening for three-inch and larger pots without adding any other components, just 100% pine bark fines. The pine bark is relatively free of harmful bacteria and fungus, provides air space, and retains moisture fairly well.

**Perlite**—Perlite is a naturally occurring amorphous volcanic glass. After expanding during the firing process, it is light weight, does not absorb much moisture, and drains very well. The coarse grade used for agricultural purposes is excellent for providing air space in soil mix. The standard mix is 50% perlite. In general, the harder a cutting is to root, the greater the percentage of perlite the soil mix needs. My standard is 50% perlite, but I increase it to 70% when I am rooting yellow flowered magnolias and other very hard to root species. I have heard of increasing this to 100% for some very hard to root plants. One word of caution is that perlite doesn't retain moisture, so you must increase the frequency of watering and or misting in mixes with high percentages of perlite to compensate for the lack of moisture retention.

**Vermiculite**—Vermiculite is a hydrous phyllosilicate mineral that is expanded by firing. Sometimes it is used in soil mixes and retains more moisture than perlite. I don't use it. I have found that over time it decomposes into fine particles and no longer provides the drainage and air space that it was intended to provide. It should not be used in any soil mix that is going to be used for more than several months. Seed starting is its best use. Some vermiculite has

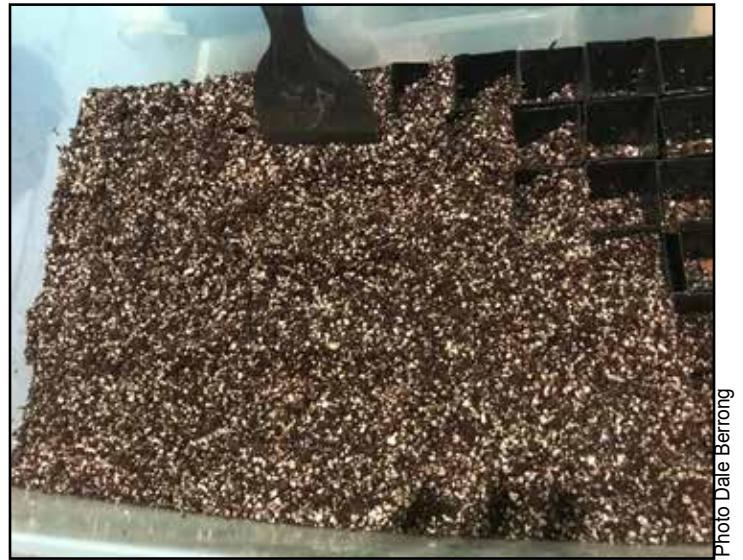


Photo Dale Berrong

▲ Photo 2—Preparation of cutting box for deciduous cuttings showing individual cells being filled with rooting medium.

also been found to contain asbestos; just another reason to avoid using it.

**Sand**—There are many grades of sand that vary by grain size and shape. Very coarse sand or fine gravel, like aquarium gravel, can be used to provide air space. Other than for bonsai, I do not use it in soil mixes. In general, all sand does is add weight. I will pick a potted plant up to feel the weight to judge the moisture content of the soil to determine whether I need to water. Adding sand to the soil mix would make this determination more difficult. Plants in containers become heavy enough without adding unnecessary weight. Perlite provides the necessary air space without adding weight.

A standard mix of 50% peat moss and 50% perlite is suggested in many publications and is a good start for most propagation. My standard mix for deciduous azaleas and *Kalmia* is composed of 25% peat moss, 25% screened pine bark fines, and 50% perlite. I deviate from the standard mix of 50% peat moss and 50% perlite. Adding the screened pine bark fines increases the drainage and air space in the mixture and makes it much easier to add moisture if it dries out. I decrease the use of peat moss whenever I can.

For yellow flowered magnolias, I increase the ratio of perlite to 70% with good results. I should probably try this mix with the more difficult-to-root deciduous azaleas.

For easy-to-root evergreen azaleas and camellias, I have gone to 100% screened pine bark fines as my rooting mix and have had good results. (See Photo 2.)

**Misting**—Vernon Bush suggests misting about three times a day for the first six weeks after sticking. I follow his recommendation. I keep the tops on the boxes for the first six to eight weeks and continue to mist on this schedule for about four weeks after the tops are off. I will back off to once or twice a day from that point on. At first, I used a hand mister bottle that held 32 ounces. I have since moved to a one-gallon pump sprayer that has made the job much easier.

**Fertilizing**—A wise man once told me that fertilizer doesn't do you any good in the bag. That man was Earl

Sommerville, and I have heeded his words with very good results. I add a small amount of fertilizer and Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate) to my mist water, and it has increased my success rates. I was never a fan of foliar feeding, but it is the only way that cuttings can intake nutrients and minerals until roots are formed. I started using it when I started rooting *Kalmia*, which can take six months or longer to grow roots. I don't know if the Epsom salt does any good, but it does no harm. I use the same mix when I water seedlings as well. I think that having access to low levels of nutrients on a constant basis is better than being exposed to high levels on a periodic schedule. I experimented with increased amounts of fertilizer to see the plants' response. After all, I am an old hotrodder and our mantra was if a little is good, a lot has got to be better. I increased the amount of fertilizer until the new leaves started coming in yellow showing that I had gone too far. I watered the containers very heavily with plain water to flush the fertilizer out of the soil mix, and the problem went away with no permanent damage. It is essential that new growth is encouraged, especially with deciduous azalea cuttings, and higher rates of nutrients help with this.

### Individual Cells—Variability in Growth Rates

One problem that I encountered with deciduous azalea was that some cuttings respond and grow better than others. Even though the cuttings are from the same plant, stuck in the same way, and in the same box, some will start growing sooner and will grow at a faster rate. This presents a problem when they are in the same box and some need to be removed and potted up and others need to be left undisturbed. To solve this problem, I have started creating individual cells within the cutting box. This allows me to remove individual cuttings to check roots, separate them based on growth, or pot them up, without disturbing adjacent cuttings.

Another change that I have made to the cutting boxes is that I no longer make holes in the side of the boxes. I found that the cuttings in the center of the boxes did just as well as the ones around the edges where the additional holes were. Now I only put holes in the bottom of the boxes.

### Lighting

I had trouble finding a place to put my cutting boxes that got enough light yet was never in direct sunlight. Direct sunlight on the boxes, when they have the lids on during the first six to eight weeks, can increase the temperature inside the box enough to cook the cuttings. My solution was to move the boxes into my basement under lights. This had additional benefits of providing temperature control that allowed me to extend the growing season and increase the growth the first season. (See Photo 3.)

**Background**—My first experience trying to provide outdoor lighting indoors was in the mid-1960s. One of my first hobbies was saltwater tropical fish. This led to the desire to keep corals and other invertebrates in the aquariums. To keep corals and some other invertebrates alive, you need to duplicate the sunlight that hits a coral reef in the tropics. This is still difficult today, but in the 1960s it was close to impossible. I did learn a lot about sunlight though. For us,



▲ Photo 3—Rooting deciduous cuttings spending first winter under lights.

our advantage is that we are trying to duplicate partial shade in the subtropics which is much easier than full sun in the tropics.

Also, with the passage of time and the industry of recreational drugs, the technology has greatly improved, and the costs have reduced drastically.

**Produce Carbohydrates ASAP**—Our goal is to enable the cuttings to produce enough carbohydrates to replenish what was used when they were producing roots and to provide enough strength to make it through a dormancy period and push out new growth and leaves the first spring. This is best done by encouraging the new cuttings to push out new growth as soon as they have enough roots to support it. If new growth is not produced along with new food producing leaves, the cuttings will not have enough strength to break bud and push out new growth in the spring.

One of the keys is to provide enough light to the new cuttings without providing too much heat. Using natural light is best but be careful especially when there is a clear cover over them. Direct natural light will produce enough heat inside the box to cook the cuttings in a very short length of time. Shade cloth must be used if you are using natural light.

Deciduous azaleas need more light than most people think for vigorous growth. They will survive in heavy shade for years, but growth is very slow, and flowering may stop completely. Observing plants that are planted in different sites with different light levels will show you all that you need to know about the light levels that you need to provide your plants. In nature, compare the plants that are growing in deep shade with the ones that are growing on balds, on the edge of fields, or along roads where they can get several hours of direct sun. The ones in deep shade are waiting and hoping for the large trees that are shading them to die or get blown over to open a hole in the canopy so that light can come in to them. Most of them started life in a clearing or hole in the canopy that was later filled in as trees around them outgrew them and blocked their light.

**Lumens/Lux—1000 to 1300 lux**—The amount of light



that your plants receive is also a consideration. We are fortunate that most of the plants that we propagate grow well in part shade or dappled sun. I have found that 1000 to 1300 lux works well for most of the plants that I propagate. If you are growing plants that need full sun in the tropics, you will need to increase the lux that you provide. Lux is the measure of the strength of light and can be measured with a light meter. These were used in the olden days when cameras used film. You will need to adjust how close your light source is to your plants and the number of lights that you use to achieve your targeted amount of light. One note is that 20 hours at 500 lux does not equal 10 hours at 1000 lux. Plants need a certain minimum level of light to function properly. I have seen people try to root deciduous azaleas with light levels of 500 lux or less. At these low light levels, the cuttings may survive, but they do not prosper. The higher light levels are critical to produce new growth that will produce carbohydrates.

**Photo Period**—Photo period is another factor that should be considered. It is best to increase to length of light that the cuttings will receive to about 20 hours a day. Some people leave the lights on 24/7. I prefer to give them 4 hours of darkness. I have read that some plants need a period of darkness. I don't know if this is true. More work should be done to determine the optimum photo period. If you are using natural light, providing artificial light to increase the day length will improve the growth. One thing to consider

▼ Photo 4—Ten-week-old deciduous azalea cutting.



Photo Date Berrong

is that lengthening the day length will not make up for light levels that are too low. Twenty hours of 500 lux light does not equal ten hours of 1000 lux light. The plants need certain light levels to produce proper growth.

**Use of “Grow-lights”**—Flourescent lights are used to help replicate normal daylight. They are available in several sizes and efficiencies.

**T12** flourescent tubes. These 1-1/4-inch tubes that have been around since the 1950s and maybe before. They are not as efficient as the newer types and do not produce the lumens that are needed to produce the proper lux (lumens or light) levels, but they are still used.

**T8** flourescent tubes. These 1-inch tubes are newer in design than the T12 tubes. They are more efficient and produce more lumens than the T12 tubes.

**T5** tubes. These are the newest flourescent design, in 5/8-inch tubes. They are more efficient and produce more lumens, especially in T5HO form, than the previous designs.

Flourescent tubes produce light in a 360-degree pattern and require reflectors to focus the light in the desired direction. Flourescent tubes produce heat, with the newer designs producing less than the previous design.

**LED Lighting**—LED lighting is now available and has become much more cost effective. LED has an advantage that it is much more energy efficient than older forms of lighting. The cost per lumen is much lower than even flourescent lighting. Another advantage is that LED produces very little

▼ Photo 5—Ten-month-old deciduous cutting.



Photo Date Berrong

heat and emits light in one direction in a 120-degree pattern, so no reflectors are necessary.

**Color Temperature/Spectrum**—We are trying to replicate natural light. Plants use certain wave lengths of light for photosynthesis. Trying to replicate these wave lengths with artificial light is a science in itself. Color temperature is a way to describe the appearance of light. It is measured in degrees of Kelvin from 1000 to 10,000. For our purposes, using light around 6500K is best for vegetative growth and florescent tubes and LED lights are available in this color spectrum. For reference, incandescent bulbs produce light around 2700K, cool white florescent around 3300K, daylight florescent around 5000K, and sunlight or bright white around 6500K. The color spectrum of the light does matter, and cool white florescent tubes at 3300K do not produce wavelength light necessary for healthy plant growth.

Light spectrum is important to consider when choosing artificial lighting. Lights that produce light of 6500K are about the best for plant growth. The spectrum of natural light changes throughout the day and time of year due to the amount of atmosphere that the light must pass through. Noon on the summer solstice produces light of 10,000K or more, while light near the winter solstice will be reduced to 3000K due to the angle of the sun and the increased atmosphere that the light must travel through. The same changes occur during the day as the angle of the sun changes. Light of 6500K is the best compromise to simulate natural light during the growing season. Cool white bulbs produce light of about 3300K, which simulates light in the fall of the year. These lights are readily available now due to the recreational drug industry. The pot growers use bulbs of 6500K during the growth phase of their crops and change the bulbs to 3300K to simulate the fall of the year to stimulate bud and flower development that enhances the crop. The lights are available in many different forms and the choices are increasing all the time. Although there are others that can be considered, the easiest and most common are florescent and LED. (See Photos 4 & 5.)

## Leaf Lifespan

Deciduous plants have leaves with a short lifespan. The useful lifespan of a leaf is only about 6 months. The leaves are productive when young, producing food for the plant, but as the leaves age their productivity diminishes due to wear and tear. By the end of summer and early fall, those early leaves are barely producing any food for the plant at all. I mention this to emphasize the importance of encouraging new growth with new leaves as soon as possible to produce food for your new plant. The plant will store food in its tissues to be used to fuel the dormancy period and the required new growth that follows. By moving the new plants into a protected heated environment with artificial light, the growing period can be extended through the first winter. This will allow the plant to increase strength, and it will be well on its way the following spring. I have had deciduous azalea cuttings taken and stuck in June attain a height of 30 inches and a caliper of 3/8 inch by March, by having them indoors under lights during that first winter.

**Dormancy Period**—I have had people tell me that the plant must have a dormancy period the first winter. I have found that this is not true. The plants continue to grow during the winter and continue the following summer with no ill effects. Many are 36 inches tall, well branched, and ready to be put into the landscape at 18 months of age. Most are full of flower buds and will bloom by 24 months of age. Some even have a few flowers on growth from the first year at 12 months.

**Rooting Hormone**—I use rooting hormone when I stick cuttings. My hormone of choice is Hormodin. I use 1, 2, or 3 depending on what I am sticking. It is true that many plants will root without hormone, but the quality and quantity of roots produced is superior with hormone. IBA (indole-3-butyric acid) is the active ingredient in most rooting hormone that is a powder. The powder is talc and contains various amounts of IBA. Hormodin 1 and most basic rooting hormones contain 0.1% IBA. Hormodin 2 contains 0.3% IBA, and Hormodin 3 contains 0.8% IBA. Some of my research has indicated that levels of IBA as high as 1.6% or more could be helpful in rooting some of the very hard to root plants. I have added making batches of 1.2% and 1.6% concentrations to my to do list. Research has shown that liquid preparations such as Dip'N Grow can be more effective than hormones in talc. Research has also found that some plants are very susceptible to damage by alcohol which is the solvent used in most liquid hormone formulas. I have used both and have found that hormone in talc is much easier to use and seems to be quite effective for azaleas and rhododendrons.

Some people do not like to use hormones because some research has shown that hormones can migrate throughout the plant and sometimes may have an effect of inhibiting budbreak in the spring after dormancy. That is one reason to have deciduous azaleas avoid dormancy and continue to put on new growth during the first winter. This gives the plant more than 18 months for any residual hormone to dissipate before budbreak and after dormancy.

Rooting hormone has a shelf life of 2 to 3 years and should be replaced even though few of them are labeled with an expiration date. Both IBA and NAA (Naphthaleneacetic acid), the active ingredients, are effective for only about 2 years according to the available research.

## Basic Propagation Techniques/Considerations

**Wounding**—I double wound pretty much everything that I stick. I have tried with and without wounding and have found that rooting and subsequent growth is better with wounding. I tried doing half a rooting box of the same cultivar without wounding and the other half with wounding. The results were noticeable. The wounded cuttings were about 25% larger than the ones without wounding.

**Sticking**—I use a nail or dibble to make a hole in the rooting medium before I insert the cutting. I do this to avoid rubbing off the rooting hormone. I leave the terminal bud on the cutting unless it is very soft, and I use small scissors to remove the lower leaves rather than stripping them off. Stripping the leaves can damage buds under the leaf petioles.



I prefer to keep the petioles to help protect the new buds. The less damage to the new cutting the better.

I use a very sharp knife to cut the base of the cutting at a sharp angle and double-wound the cutting. I use an 8000 grit water stone to sharpen my knife. I want to cut rather than tear the plant tissue. The cuts are to expose the cambium layer inside the bark to the rooting hormone; the less damage to that tissue the better. Roots will form at the exposed cambium.

**Mold and Fungus**—I have read a great deal about problems with fungus that people have in their rooting beds. It seems to be a big problem for many people. I have never had a problem with fungus in my propagation containers with the one exception when I used bagged soil conditioner in my medium. It may just be dumb luck or the fact that I use higher light levels than most people. The higher light levels may discourage mold and fungus, I don't know for sure. Having less peat moss in my rooting medium may also help with the drainage around the roots.

### Rooting Other Plants

Most of the above information relates to rooting deciduous azaleas. I thought that it might be helpful to cover other plants that I root. I hope that you find this information helpful.

**Evergreen Azaleas**—I stick evergreen azaleas during the summer when the new growth has firmed. I usually stick 120 to 150 per cutting box, depending on the size of the leaves. I take cuttings with 4 to 6 inches of terminal growth. I remove lower leaves with small scissors, cut the base at a sharp angle and double-wound. I use Hormodin 1. I mist several times a day and keep the lid on the box for about 6 weeks. I have gone to 100% screened pine bark fines as a rooting medium, but adding perlite works well. The cuttings are ready to be potted up in about 12 weeks but can be left in the box for longer. The cuttings need protection for the first winter. Sometimes I just leave them in the box over the winter and pot them up in the spring.

**Elepidote Rhododendron**—I stick big leaved rhododendrons in November and December. The reason that I wait so late is that if I take the cuttings in September or October, they grow so fast under the lights that they grow above the lights and outgrow the boxes before it is warm enough outside to pot them up and avoid frost. I take cuttings that are about 4 to 6 inches and only the ones with no flower buds. These cuttings have thinner stems and root better than ones with thicker stems. I remove lower leaves with scissors and cut the top leaves in half, due to their large size. I cut the base at a sharp angle and double-wound. I use Hormodin 3. I can put about 70 in a box. Sticking common named cultivars results in success in the 90%+ range. I stuck a box of 73 wild collected *R. catawbiense* last year and I only got 5 to take. The others were still green, just no roots. My conclusion is that named cultivars are not only selected for their appearance, but their ease of propagation. Rooting hormone containing higher concentrations of IBA may be helpful for the harder to root selections. I hope to try 1.2% and 1.6% concentrations.



Photo Dale Berrong

▲ Photo 6—Rhododendron at about 16 weeks after sticking, March 10. Still a month away from being able to pot up and move outside.

**Lepidote Rhododendron**—I stick lepidote rhododendrons mid-summer much like evergreen azaleas. Many of them bloom in the fall and have so many flower buds that occur even several nodes down from the tip that I leave them on when I stick them to avoid damaging vegetative buds. The cutting box is covered with blooms in the fall. I usually wait until spring to pot the cuttings up, and they bloom again that spring. (See Photo 6.)

**Camellia**—I stick camellias in late June when the new growth is beginning to firm up, just as it starts to turn from green to brown. I remove the lower leaves with scissors, and if the top leaves are large, I reduce them by as much as half. They will root using IBA at 0.1%, but the root quality will be better with Hormodin 2 or 3. I usually leave the cutting boxes outside under high shade during the summer being careful to see that they don't get direct sun until after the top is removed at about 6 to 8 weeks. I bring the boxes inside under lights in September. They must be protected during their first winter. I lost all of my first crop by potting them up in early fall and leaving them outside during the winter. I now overwinter them inside the first winter and pot them up in the spring.





Photo Dale Berrong

▲ Photo 7—Eighteen-month-old deciduous cutting ready to be planted into the landscape.

**Kalmia**—My first experience with rooting Kalmia was with cuttings that I took in late June while the wild plants were in full bloom. I was told that you can't root Kalmia and I was wasting my time. The cuttings were firm, but still young. I stuck the cuttings in the same manner as deciduous azalea cuttings. The cuttings did not start to root until December, started to put out new growth during the winter, and were ready to pot up in June. I took cuttings of named cultivars in late June of that year and had the same results on the second try. I had a friend send me cuttings of a wild selection on December first, so I tried that one,

thinking that it was probably a waste of time. To my surprise, the December cuttings rooted within 6 weeks, started new growth in 8 weeks, and were ready to be potted up in April. The cuttings put on three flushes of growth during the first season and were almost a foot tall at 12 months. I am now trying more December cuttings from other selections to see if I can duplicate the results.

There are several take-aways from that story. One is that it appears that you can root Kalmia most any time of the year. The second is that you should take cuttings when you can get them. The third is that you can't always believe what people tell you, and that you need to try for yourself.

## Conclusion

I am sure that this information is nothing new to the commercial growers and some of my methods may not be cost effective for people that make a living propagating plants. Heated and well-lighted greenhouses are expensive, and the growers that need to produce thousands of marketable plants probably can't cost-justify the added expense and labor to implement some of these methods. I am a hobbyist and don't need to cost-justify my basement or my time. People already think I'm crazy, so I don't need to worry about the PR impact of my actions.

These are a few things that I have learned over the years from working with my plants, learning from others, reading on the subject, and searching the Internet. I have never had formal training on these subjects. I may have misinterpreted some of the information and have some of it just plain wrong. I am interested in learning more and am sure that there are many among the readers that have more information and might be willing to share and have open discussions on some of these topics. I would like to suggest that we have round table discussions on some of these topics or better yet, meet over drinks and share our war stories and experiences. (See Photo 7.)

Dale Berrong has been a member of the ASA since 2016 in the Central Carolinas Chapter. He was elected as a national ASA Board of Directors member in 2019. He is a past president of The Maple Society, North American Branch, and is vice-president of the Azalea Chapter/ARS. He gardens in USDA Zone 8a.



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# Chapter News and New Members

## Arkansas Chapter

### Jan Rensing—Secretary

The winter meeting was held February 11, 2020, at Salem United Methodist Church, Benton, Arkansas, with 16 members attending.

**Old Business**—The Lonoke County Master Gardener Expo & Plant Sale: Jan Rensing gave an update to everyone about the Expo that is scheduled for April 18, 2020 at the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Cabot, Arkansas from 8:00 to 4:30. Jan called for volunteers to work the expo booth to sell the plants that were purchased by Ronnie in accordance with the motion passed at the October meeting. Ronnie brought a sample of the azaleas purchased for the sale. Eleven members volunteered to man the booth during the time allotted for the sale. Ronnie will deliver the azaleas to Jan Rensing the day before the sale and Jan will deliver them to the Expo the next day for set up. Jan indicated that she would pay the booth rental fee of \$25 for her commitment to the Chapter, since she will be unable to help with the sale. Additionally, Mitch Mortvedt, chapter member and owner of Woodland Wonders Nursery will bring native azaleas to sell. Ronnie said that Mitch has indicated that he would be donating 25% of his sales to our Chapter.

**New Business**—National ASA Brochure: It was discussed that having a supply of the National ASA brochure with a label on the back of the brochure with chapter contact information would be beneficial to have at the sale to pass out to anyone who may be interested in joining. Donna Peebles offered to help with the stickers. Another suggestion was to include a membership application inside the brochure.

2020 Calendar – Ronnie brought up garden tours for this year. He suggested that there were several close to our area that would be good for tours: Honor Heights, in Muskogee, OK, and Dr. Leonard Miller, Lendonwood Gardens, in Grove, Ok. It was suggested that a committee be formed to explore garden tours.

Ronnie stated that he received an email from the LA Chapter inquiring if our chapter wanted to hold a joint meeting sometime in the future. There was some discussion on this, but nothing was decided. There will be a combined meeting

Phyliss shared some of her secrets with us so that we too can enjoy beautiful gardens with less work. She purchases the garden supplies she mentions from SiteOne Landscape Supply located in Maumelle, AR.

- In early spring and late fall, she broadcasts Aloft throughout her beds; this is an insecticide that she purchases. She uses approximately ¼ cup for a 4' x 4' azalea. If she has time, she will do a third application at some point during the winter, but she always makes certain she applies in both spring and fall to avoid lace bugs.
- Next, she broadcasts Heritage (a granular fungicide) throughout the entire bed.
- For weed control, she broadcasts Snapshot throughout the beds.
- She uses plant markers throughout the beds to identify the various plants
- She uses pine bark mulch throughout all beds with a narrow band of Roundup to maintain the rock border surrounding all the beds.

with the Ozark Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society at Larry Coleman's garden, Batesville, AR, in late April. None Opposed.

Ronnie reminded us of the cutting party scheduled for June 20, 2020 at 9:00 am. Ronnie asked all of us to bring cuttings if we had them for sharing. He also told us that he is planning a special sale at Azalea Hill to take place during April. Ronnie will provide more details. Business meeting was adjourned.

The chapter welcomes new members: Joe Nealey, Benton, AR and Joe and Terri Moore, Jacksonville, AR.

**Program**—Phyliss Kirtley presented a visual tour of her display garden in Benton, Arkansas. Phyliss grows plants for display for the Daffodil, Iris, and the Daylily Societies as well as growing azaleas. Her gardens cover a 3-acre plot of wooded rolling ground and are open for tours at any time.



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There is no charge for a tour, and they are strictly at your direction. She asks only that you leave the clippers at home, and you don't pull any weeds. In other words, look but don't touch, and only leave with pictures and memories.

Phyliss told us that when she purchased the property 15 years ago, she planted a lot of azaleas because of the woods, and She uses "Knock-Out" Roses. Today, her azaleas have grown very large and she said that she has had to expand her beds away from the azaleas because of their size. She said that this year, after the blooms have faded, she will be cutting back her azaleas, and digging up volunteer plants. She offered any plants that she will not replant to anyone who wanted to take the chance on these "rescues from the back 40", as she put it. If you tour her garden you will notice the rocks surrounding her raised beds, all of which came directly out of her garden. The amount of work that Phyliss has put into her gardens over the years is evident when you tour the grounds in bloom.

Phyliss shared some of her secrets with us so that we too can enjoy beautiful gardens with less work. (See Page 21.)

Next Up – Ronnie introduced us to the Holly Springs Azaleas that were hybridized by Colonel Pete Vines and are featured at Azalea Hill. Many of these varieties feature longer petals.

The meeting ended with a live auction to benefit the chapter. The azalea was donated by Carden Harris Nursery and had been growing in their greenhouse. The azalea named "IGA" because it was purchased as a florist azalea at an IGA grocery store. Bidding started out at \$10.00 and it became evident that it was a crowd pleaser. Ultimately it was sold to Debra Carpenter for \$44.

## Ben Morrison Chapter

*Diane Reinke—Secretary*

Chapter members and guests gathered on Sunday, December 1, 2019, for a very enjoyable holiday party at Hidden View Farm, the beautiful home of Richard Bradshaw in Crownsville, Maryland. The many rooms of Richard's home were colorfully decorated and featured several fresh flower arrangements. Everyone enjoyed an assortment of tasty dishes for an early afternoon meal and friendly conversation. Some folks exchanged gifts with a gardening theme. The chapter presented Richard with a lovely orchid in gratitude for hosting the event.

Those in attendance included Joe Miller, Halit Kardak, Carol Segree, Bill and Gabrielle Scott, Harold Belcher, Dave and Leslie Nanney, Paul and Carolyn Beck, Brian Washburn, Rosa and Bob McWhorter, Richard Bradshaw, Maria and Martin Nowakowski, Don Hyatt, Lois and Jim Duffy, and Diane and Budne Reinke.

Future chapter activities might include tours of public and private gardens, speakers, and a spring plant sale.

## Central Carolinas Chapter

*Kevin McCorkle—President*

Planning continues for our chapter's hosting of the 2021 ASA Convention in and around Charlotte, NC, in early April of next year.



Photo Kevin McCorkle

▲ Photo 1— A side path through mature deciduous azaleas at the Bartlett Research Arboretum, which will be a tour site or the ASA Convention in 2021.

▼ Photo 2— Re-elected President Lars Larson leads the Northern Virginia Chapter social meeting.



Photo Barry Sperling

We're very excited to be partnering with the R.A. Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories & Arboretum near Charlotte for a memorable exploration of their 350-acre outdoor classroom during one day of the convention. As a sustainable and thought-provoking living museum, the property is an accredited level IV Class Arboretum with an extensive collection of tree and plant species from around the world. With over 21,000 accessioned plants, including over 5,000 ericaceous plants, the Arboretum highlights include one of the best collections of oaks and conifers on the East Coast, the largest collection of magnolia cultivars in the world, the third largest collection of Holly in the United States, and an extensive collection of rhododendron species. (See Photo 1.) In addition to the collections, display gardens and research areas, the many ponds and woodlands throughout the Arboretum provide a home to a variety of wildlife and serve as a bird sanctuary. Best of all, the accessioned plants are all geolocated, inventoried and LABELED!



The Bartlett Research Arboretum is not open to the public and access is by invitation only, so we are very fortunate and excited for the rare opportunity to share this hidden jewel with all 2021 Convention attendees. More information to follow on this and other 2021 Convention venues and activities in upcoming Chapter News.

## Northern Virginia Chapter News

### *Barry Sperling—Corresponding Secretary*

The enjoyable 2019 azalea year ended with our annual Holiday Social, this year at the invitation of Jean and Lars Larson. Their fine home allowed space for all to move around, converse, eat and view the meeting. Potluck and club-purchased food was plentiful and covered every variety.

The meeting provided reports on activities, including the continuing work on the Klimavicz Legacy Garden at Meadowlark Gardens in Vienna, VA, and its official dedication this spring.

The current officers agreed to continue for the coming year: Lars Larson as president, Diane Marcus as Vice President, Paul Beck as Treasurer, and Joanne Neckel as Secretary. (See Photo 2.)

Chapter plant sales provided a good profit for the continuation of the newsletter *The Clipper*, and a series of donations: \$2000 to Meadowlark Gardens in support of the Klimavicz Legacy Garden, \$1500 supporting the Greenspring Garden's Title I program of gardening experiences and education, and \$1000 to the ASA General Fund.

Activities this year will feature:

- A joint meeting with the ARS Potomac Valley Chapter on March 29th at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in West Springfield,
- The Klimavicz Legacy Garden Dedication in late April
- Tours of member gardens from late April to early May
- The Cutting Exchange on July 12th
- The Auction/Sale on September 12th
- The fall meeting on October 25th. The above three meetings will be at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church.
- The 2020 Holiday Social on December 5th at the home of the Becks.

Join us and enjoy a busy azalea year!

## Texas Chapter

### *Caryl Hall—Secretary*

Two weeks after the 2020 Convention in Houston, the Texas Chapter will hold its' annual plant sale on March 28, 2020, in Tyler, Texas. In conjunction with the Tyler Azalea trail, we will be advertised in the trail's publicity. Plants will be from our own stock and profits will be used for horticulture scholarships.

## Vaseyi Chapter

### *Aaron Cook—President*

A meeting of the Vaseyi Chapter of ASA was held on February 2, 2020. Seventeen members attended at the invitation of Aaron Cook, newly hired Dean of Arts and Sciences at Blue Ridge Community College. Aaron welcomed members to the campus and gave a brief overview of how the College and Chapter could work together for mutual benefit. Members toured the greenhouse on the hill behind the campus. Afterwards, we drove through the campus to the horticulture classrooms. Vaseyi members were delighted to see each other and catch up on news.

Dr. Augie Kehr, geneticist and a founding member of Vaseyi Chapter and his wife Mary Louise were friends of the college and established an endowment to be used by the college to bring in "Speakers on Environmental and Botanical Subjects". The Kehr Lecture Series has been part of Blue Ridge Community College for many years. For more info, visit <https://www.blueridge.edu/foundation/kehr-lecture-series>

Vaseyi members reminisced about Augie and other past members of the chapter. I said that along with the Lecture Series, their plants need to be preserved as well. "Plants have a story for us". Special azaleas and other plants hybridized by members of the Vaseyi Chapter and the Southeastern Rhododendron Chapter need a public home.

Several former and current ASA and ARS members who are not currently part of the existing ASA Legacy group need to have as much of their plant material as possible preserved for future generations. With a thriving Horticulture program and an ideal location, Blue Ridge Community College could provide a future home for Legacy Project gardens.

Going forward, the Vaseyi Chapter elected the following officers and plans to hold a program planning meeting to establish speakers and programs for 2020.

President—Aaron Cook; Treasurer—Doley Bell; Secretary—Suzanne Medd

Board members: April Sanborn, John Brown, Leon Pace, Andy Whipple, Audrey Stelloh.

## New At-large Member

Welcome, Tom Tierney, Stamford, CT.





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**let nature be your teacher.**”

- William Wordsworth

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