



# Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Fall Newsletter: September 2015

## Calendar

- \* **September 19, 2015** – Chapter Plant Sale, Green Spring Gdns, Alexandria
- \* **September 20, 2015** – Chapter Picnic, Seneca Creek Park, Gaithersburg
- \* **September 26, 2015** – White Garden Work Day, 9 AM to noon
- \* **October 16-17, 2015** – ARS Fall Conference, Long Island, NY
- \* **October 23-25, 2015** – MAC Fall Meeting, Richmond, VA (*correct date!*)
- \* **November 7, 2015** – PVC Chapter Banquet, Wildfire Restaurant, Tysons II

## Chapter Officers

**President:** Dan Neckel  
vaneckel@verizon.net  
**Vice President:** Ginny Mohr  
rngmohr@msn.com  
**Treasurer:** Phyllis Rittman  
prittman@erols.com

## Chapter Picnic and Plant Exchange

**Where:** Seneca Creek State Park  
11950 Clopper Rd, Gaithersburg, MD 20878  
**Date:** Sunday, September 20, 2015  
**Time:** 1:00 – 5:00 PM

We moved the date for our annual picnic from July to September this year, but we are returning to popular Seneca Creek State Park near Gaithersburg for the location. The date is Sunday, September 20, from 1 – 5 PM.

We will be at the Fawn Pavilion, the large covered picnic facility we have used for many years. It is located on the south side of Clopper Lake. Follow the signs, or ask for directions at the gate. The park does charge a nominal entry fee per person that they will collect at the gate.

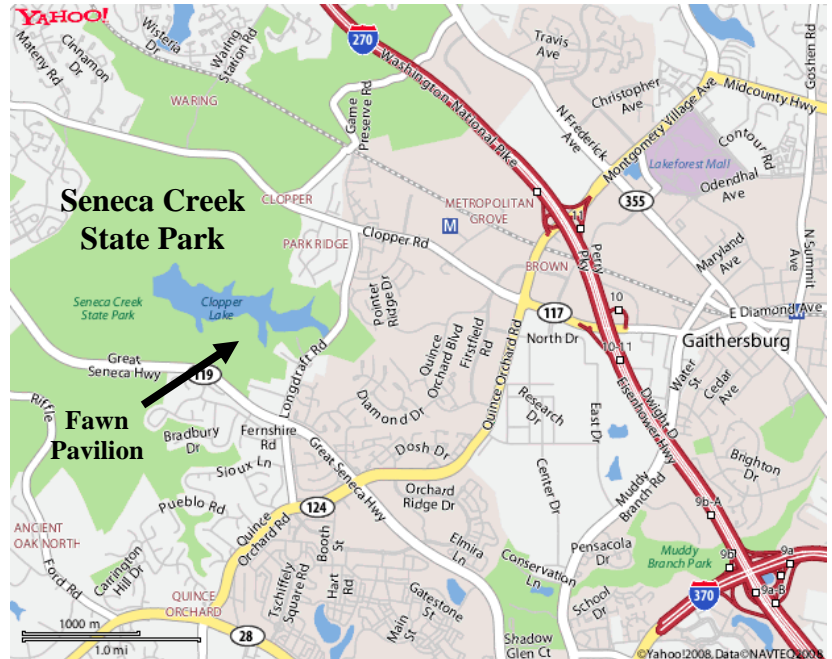
The chapter will provide hamburgers, hotdogs, and buns. We will also have standard items like drinks, ice, condiments, plates, and eating utensils. Please bring some other picnic type food like salads, sides, or desserts to share with others. Our chapter picnic is a great venue for trying out new recipes. Experiment on us, and then tell us how to make it, too. We always have a lot of fun.

Alcoholic beverages are not allowed. There are no trash cans so we will collect and remove our trash.

**Plant Exchange:** A popular part of our annual picnic is a plant exchange. To participate, just bring a plant worth about \$5 to trade with others. Many chapter members have excess plants and bring extras. Those who didn't bring a plant to exchange are usually able to get something after the first round.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Take I-495 to I-270N toward Frederick
2. Merge onto I-270 Local N
3. Take the Exit #10 West, toward MD Rt. 124
4. Turn RIGHT onto MD 117 (Clopper Rd)
5. Turn LEFT into the Park: 11950 Clopper Rd



## Chapter Plant Sale!

**Date:** Saturday, September 19, 2015

**Time:** 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

**Location:** Green Spring Gardens  
4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria, VA 22312

Our chapter will be selling plants at Green Spring Gardens during its annual Fall Garden Day. This event is sponsored by FROGS (Friends of Green Spring), and it is not as hectic as the spring sale. Many plant societies and vendors participate, and there are other activities including a silent auction, live music, and a bake sale. Please join us!

A portion of our sale proceeds will go to support Green Spring but the rest will help supplement our chapter treasury. If you have some extra plants to donate or can assist at the sale table for a few hours, please let Dan Neckel know. We will set up around 7:30 to 8:00 AM, and will take down the tent and haul away unsold plants after 3:00 to 4:30 PM.

## Dues are Due!

With this issue of your newsletter, we are also sending your 2016 renewal notice and an envelope. Please return your payment to our Treasurer, Phyllis Rittman and make checks payable to:

### Potomac Valley Chapter ARS

Membership categories:

Category	Cost
<b>Regular</b> - (one or two people in the same household)	<b>\$40</b>
<b>Commercial / Corporate</b>	<b>\$90</b>
<b>Sustaining</b>	<b>\$75</b>
<b>Sponsoring</b>	<b>\$150</b>
<b>Student</b> – (under age 25) Access to online Journal only	<b>\$10</b>
<b>Life Member – Single</b>	<b>\$1000</b>
<b>Life Member – Family</b>	<b>\$1500</b>
<b>Associate</b> – must already belong to another ARS Chapter	<b>\$10</b>

Mail renewals to our treasurer:

**Phyllis T. Rittman, Treasurer**  
**prittman@erols.com**

## Errors in the Summer Newsletter:

I apologize for not proofreading your last newsletter well. I made some mistakes. The date of the MAC Fall Meeting is October 23-25. The ARS Fall Regional Conference on Long Island is the prior week. Somehow I misspelled Andrews in the hiking article. Sorry Charlie!

## ARS Fall Regional Conference

**“Autumn in New York”**

**Date:** October 16-17, 2015

**Location:** Islandia Marriott, Long Island, NY

The New York Chapter is hosting the Fall Regional Conference and ARS Board Meeting at the Islandia Marriott on Long Island. Details and registration forms are available on the ARS Website:

<http://www.rhododendron.org/>

## Potomac Valley Chapter Fall Banquet

**Date:** Saturday, November 7, 2015

**Time:** 11:30 AM to 3:30 PM

**Where:** Wildfire Restaurant at Tysons Galleria

Be sure to save the date for our fall banquet. We will be returning to the Wildfire Restaurant in Northern Virginia to repeat the wonderful meal we had at our District meeting last fall, the surf and turf entrée with filet mignon and grilled salmon. Our speaker will be Steve Kristoph from New Jersey who teaches landscape architecture at Rutgers University. He also owns a nursery where we have been grafting rhododendrons for the Williamsburg convention. The meal will be \$42 including tax and tip. Details and registration form are at the end of this newsletter.

## White Garden Work Day

**Date:** Saturday, September 26, 9:00 AM to noon

**Location:** 3301 Hawthorn Lane  
Falls Church, VA 22042

We hope some of you can come out to the White Garden to help clean up and fight invasive plants. This lovely property needs our support!

Stay for a few hours and then head over to the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA Plant Sale and Auction. Proceeds from their plant sales and auctions have allowed them to make generous contributions to the White Garden the past two years which have gone to support student interns working there.

## Azalea Sale and Auction: NV-ASA

**Date:** Saturday, September 26, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

**Location:** Kirkwood Presbyterian Church

8336 Carleigh Parkway, Springfield, VA 22152

Our friends in the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA are having their annual sale and auction of rare and unusual azalea varieties. A silent auction will start at 1:00 PM and the live auction will begin at 2:30 PM. For more information, contact Lars Larson or Carolyn Beck.

## Jim Gears - Nursery Open House

**Dates:** September 11-12 & 18-19, 9AM to 3 PM

One of our Associate Members, Jim Gears from West Chester, PA, is holding his annual fall open house days where he will be selling wildflowers, ferns, rhododendrons, native azaleas, and evergreen azaleas. His nursery is called Pennsbury Gardens, LLC, and he is located in West Chester, PA 19382. Contact Jim for more details:

[jdgears@verizon.net](mailto:jdgears@verizon.net)

## “Thoughts on an Aging Garden”

by *Aging Gardener - Don Hyatt*

Having lived and gardened on the same piece of land for nearly 65 years, I have watched my garden go through many stages. It has given me much enjoyment over the years and at one time, I did think it was pretty. It is clearly past its prime now, but so am I. We could both use a serious makeover, but I think it is too late for me.



**The Hyatt Homestead in 2009**

When I planted my first garden here at the family home, I was only 3 years old. My parents built our house on a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre lot in McLean, in 1950, and we moved in on February 22, 1951. The property was heavily wooded, but the builder cleared an area in the forest for our house. We had no grass or landscaping. What wasn't woodland with mature oaks, hickories, and dogwoods was mud. My father brought his favorite rose bushes and a clump of red peonies from our former house. Mom brought perennials including iris and chrysanthemums.

My parents planted their flowers but I wanted a garden, too. They gave me a spot at the side of the yard for my very own. I planted my flowers and added more every year. I was hooked!

I am not exactly sure when I first saw the azalea display at the National Arboretum, but it was certainly by age 5. All of my grandparents lived in Washington DC near the Arboretum, so when we visited them, we often included a trip to the Arboretum, especially in azalea season.

I loved azaleas, and wanted varieties like the ones I had seen at the Arboretum. I saved my

allowance to buy plants and there was no doubt what to give me for my birthday. I was a serious azalea collector by the fourth grade.

My interest in plants intensified through high school and college. By that time, the entire yard was my garden. My mother and grandfather were commercial artists, and I had an art talent, too. Landscape design was a natural merging of my interests in art and flowers. I was always trying to harmonize flower colors in the garden, but that meant that as soon as something bloomed, I often decided it was often in the wrong place so I dug it up and moved it. Eventually, some plants became too large so they stopped traveling.

Every garden is usually a work in progress. Looking back on my garden, it probably reached its peak 15 to 20 years ago. I had created garden rooms connected by winding paths. Most of the colors blended well, and the mature azaleas and rhododendrons covered themselves with flowers every year. I had sweeping beds of companion plants like *Phlox divaricata* with its lovely light blue flowers. I had wildflower accents like my *Trillium grandiflorum*, and my prize, three clumps of yellow lady's slippers I got in high school. They could boast over 100 flowers!



**Hyatt Garden in 1995: Rhododendrons, Azaleas, & Phlox**

As my garden aged, the rhododendrons and azaleas grew taller. Narrow paths soon became tunnels, and many of them disappeared completely. I used to tell people I had 90 acres worth of plants on  $\frac{3}{4}$  acres, but as the more robust plants got bigger, they choked out smaller garden treasures. The garden had changed. I used to have a large collection of small plants,





**The Author with 'Caroline'**

but it was now a small collection of large plants.

After 40 years, three cuttings of 'Caroline' I stuck in my vegetable garden had now become a huge mound towering 18 ft high and 33 ft wide. The mass of lavender pink is gorgeous but it has killed many plants in that time.

The brilliant pink Glenn Dale azalea 'Dream' near my deck now measures 25 ft wide and 10 feet tall. It would be much larger if I hadn't been cutting it back regularly so I can see off the deck.

Plants of such stature are spectacular in grand settings like huge estates and public parks, but they are really out of scale in a suburban garden. Nurserymen give the size of rhododendrons at 10 years, about the time they reach their prime for a home garden. Rhododendrons don't stop growing and do become trees. I now have trees!

I have lost some older plants for various reasons including winter kill, drought, borers, and the Asian Ambrosia Beetle. Deer have done significant damage, too. My entire garden is due for an overhaul, and of course, a deer fence.

I will keep some of those big specimen plants, but I may cut back others severely. That is best done over a period of several years. Some will need to go entirely. I want space to grow choice new cultivars like the varieties we have on the way for 2016 Convention. If I plant them now, in 10 years they can be putting on a new show.

Having watched my own garden age, I have become more aware of other old gardens in need of renovation. When we visited Cape Cod this spring, we went to the Dexter Estate, Heritage Plantation. People who had never been before were elated but those of us who have been visiting for many years were disappointed. The rhododendrons in many areas have become so huge that most of the bloom was way above our

heads. Vistas where one can appreciate the scale of large plants in bloom were quite rare.

A few years ago, Heritage did lay off their chief horticulturist, Jeannie Gillis, and I think the lack of attention to the rhododendron collection is taking its toll. Many paths like the one called the Campfire Trail are getting completely overgrown or have disappeared. There were so many wonderful Cowles hybrids that grew in those areas, but many of them have already died. The pink and white bicolor 'Mary Collins' got choked out several years ago, but now oak tree seedlings, vines, and briars are threatening many other rhododendrons. In a few years, hybrids growing in the woods like the soft salmon pink 'Campfire Peach' and strikingly spotted pale lavender 'Rhody Gus' could be gone, too.



**Bill Bedwell beneath 'Consolini's Windmill' in May 2015**

At the 1980 Convention on Cape Cod, I still remember my feeling of awe when I saw the original 'Consolini's Windmill' for the first time. The plant was probably only four feet tall but was a beautifully rounded shrub covered in those red and white bicolor trusses. It was a real showstopper! The plant is still there, but it is easily missed. Other nearby plants have grown up, so it lies hidden in a narrow clearing reaching for the light. The plant is about 6 feet wide but leans out, reaching at least 15 feet high. The base is far back in the shade. There is little foliage and almost no bloom at eye level. In time, a nearby 'Bellringer' will probably choke it out. Heritage would be wise to start another planting of those same hybrids. In 10 years, they could be in prime condition for visitors to enjoy.

Not only do public and private gardens tend to decline as they age, it happens in the wild, too. The mountain hike to Roan and Gregory this June was my 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary trip to the area. I remember walking through the rhododendrons on the trail from Roan to Grassy Ridge many years ago, and we could admire the vistas on either side of the trail for the entire stretch. Some rhododendrons have now grown quite tall so the trail has become a tunnel and many vistas are obscured. This year, I twisted my knee as I tried to step aside in one of those tunnels to allow a group of younger hikers pass me. The Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy does try to keep the bald clear, so maybe they can trim back some plants to restore those scenic views.



**Tunneling through *R. catawbiense* on Roan Mountain**

I had not been to Gregory Bald for at least three years due to inclement weather as well as a knee injury. Seeing how much it had changed in that time was really a shock. We hit peak azalea bloom this year, but I was disappointed that many parts of the bald were very overgrown.

Some paths that I used to take to visit favorite plants on the bald had actually closed off entirely. In places, I had to decide whether to try to tunnel through the thick shrubbery or find a different route around a dense thicket. Since those who got to the bald before me reported seeing four rattlesnakes, I wisely decided not to be a trail blazer this time.

A number of my favorite plants like ‘Gregory Fuchsia’, ‘Gregory Blush’, and ‘Gregory Candy Stripe’ were getting shaded out by nearby trees or by some rather ordinary azaleas. They had sparse bloom this year, but if that continues, they could be gone in a few years.



**A Disappearing Path on Gregory Bald**

One azalea we called ‘Gregory Purple’ grew along the path at the entry to the bald. Many of us had admired it for years but we knew it was threatened by nearby but more robust ordinary orange azaleas. I futilely looked for some sign of it this year but I am sure it is already gone.

The plant we call ‘Big Yellow’ has been competing with some ordinary orange azaleas for several years. I couldn’t find it either but it could still be alive. The deep red we call ‘Christmas Red’ was still there, but access to it was getting more difficult since the path at the perimeter had closed over. Its only access is now via a narrow, winding maze through a jungle of tall shrubs.

I realize that our National Parks are dealing with budget cuts, but I will say I was shocked at the condition of the road we usually take to the parking area for the Gregory hike. This year, it was barely passable with 4-wheel drive vehicles. I will never attempt it with standard cars and we will have to use a longer trail from Cades Cove.

The last time I was on Gregory, the Park Service had been keeping the grass mowed regularly on the bald so it looked like a park. This year, some of the grass had been cut but many places were very overgrown. I doubt that those areas had been cut for at least two years. For first time visitors, Gregory was spectacular, but for me, the place had lost some of its charm.

Yes, we all get old. An aging garden can be rejuvenated by heavy pruning, removing inferior plants, and adding new ones. To rejuvenate me, I could use some pruning, too... plastic surgery, liposuction, knee replacement, and age spot removal. Instead, I’ll likely just take down all my mirrors and retouch pictures with Photoshop.





# Potomac Valley Chapter Fall Banquet

## Steven Kristoph: "Observations"

November 7, 2015

**When:** Saturday, November 7, 2015, 11:00 AM - 3:30 PM (*Registration deadline November 1*)

**Where:** Wildfire Restaurant at Tysons II, 2001 International DR, McLean, VA 22102

**Price:** \$42.00 per person (*including tax and tip*)

**Menu:** Surf & Turf Combo (Grilled Salmon *and* Filet Mignon) or Vegetarian

We are returning to the Wildfire Restaurant for their premium surf and turf entrée combo. Each table will receive platters of both cedar planked grilled salmon and filet mignon, and diners can take a serving of each one. A vegetarian option is available, too. The meal will include appetizer, salad, side dishes, and dessert. Coffee, tea, and soda are included with the meal. A cash bar will be available.

### Our Program: Steven Kristoph: "Observations from a Life Spent with Plants"

We are really looking forward to this lively talk from Steve Kristoph. He is a very busy man since he not only owns and operates the nursery in New Jersey where we have been raising grafts for the 2016 Convention, he also teaches Landscape Architecture at Rutgers University. A very knowledgeable and entertaining speaker, Steve has been observing plants and their relationships with people for over 35 years. As both a nurseryman and educator, he will talk about trends in the green industry, the people behind new plant introductions, and how information about plants is disseminated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Directions to the Wildfire Restaurant:

From the Capital Beltway, I-495, take the Chain Bridge Road exit onto Rt. 123 toward Tysons Corner. Near the top of the hill, turn right onto International Drive and take the second right into the upper parking area for Tysons Galleria. The restaurant is located on the third floor between Saks Fifth Avenue and Macy's, but look for the convenient outside elevator that goes directly to the restaurant.



### 2015 PVC Fall Banquet Registration

#### "Observations" by Steve Kristoph

**Registration Deadline: 11/01/2014**  
Please register early since the seating capacity at the restaurant is limited.

Mail to: Phyllis Rittman, prittman@erols.com

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Print the name of each attendee and indicate entrée choice: Enclose a check to cover the cost for each meal (\$42)

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_ Combo or Vegetarian Cost: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_ Combo or Vegetarian Cost: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_ Combo or Vegetarian Cost: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Potomac Valley Chapter ARS  
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