



# Potomac Valley Chapter American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Summer Newsletter: July 2008

## Calendar

- \* **July 27, 2008** - Chapter Picnic, Seneca Creek State Park
- \* **September 21, 2008** - Regular Meeting, National Arboretum
- \* **October or early November, 2008** - Banquet - TBA
- \* **January 11, 2009** - Regular Meeting, National Arboretum
- \* **March 15, 2009** - Regular Meeting, National Arboretum
- \* **April 25, 2009** - Flower Show, National Arboretum
- \* **April 30 - May 3, 2009** - National Convention, Everett, WA

(Note: Unfortunately, the 2009 ARS Convention is the same weekend as the ASA Convention in Northern Virginia)

### Chapter Officers

**President:** Jon Wallenmeyer

jjjp1984@mac.com

**Vice-President:** Bob McWhorter

mcwho@comcast.net

**Treasurer:** Phyllis Rittman

prittman@erols.com

## Chapter Picnic: July 27<sup>th</sup> 1 – 5 PM

### Where: Seneca Creek State Park

Our chapter picnic this year will be held on Sunday afternoon, July 27<sup>th</sup>, at Maryland's Seneca Creek State Park near Gaithersburg, MD. The time will be from 1:00 – 5:00 PM. We have rented the "Fawn Pavilion" for the afternoon. This covered picnic facility is situated on the shores of 90-acre Clopper Lake. It has a charcoal grill, parking area, and restrooms nearby. Try to car pool where feasible.

We are holding our picnic at a park this year rather than Margaret White's garden since she has had to modify some living arrangements this spring following a fall. She is doing well though, and we all wish her a speedy recovery.

For the picnic, the chapter will be providing hamburgers, hotdogs, and buns, plus standard items like drinks, plates, and eating utensils. However we ask you to bring some other picnic type food to share with others. Remember that there is no refrigeration so try to bring items that will not spoil quickly on a warm day. Since there are no trash cans, visitors are expected to collect and remove their trash to a dumpster afterwards.

The park does charge an entry fee of \$2 per person for Maryland residents and \$3 for out of state. We hope that won't deter you from joining us.

### RSVP by Wednesday, July 23:

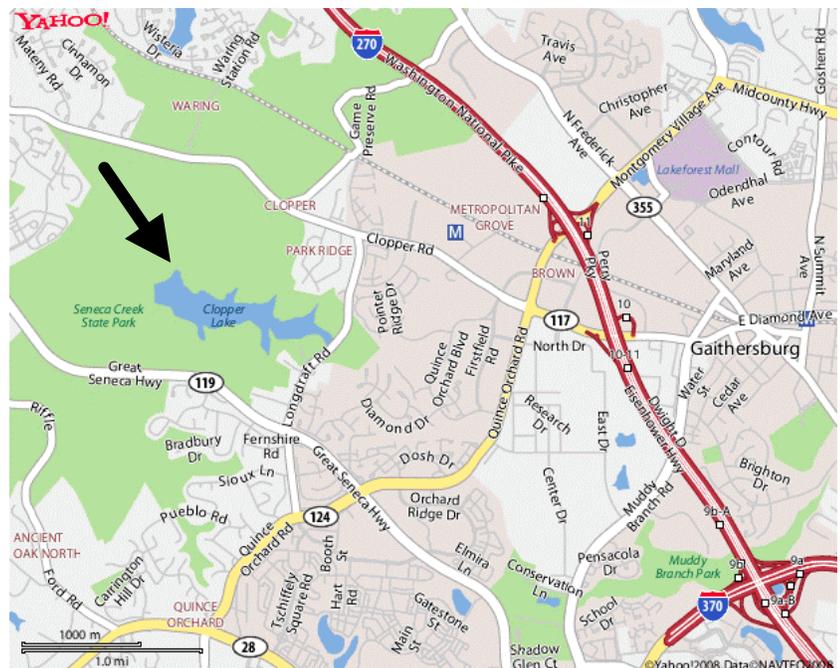
Since we need to purchase supplies for the picnic, please RSVP to either Jon Wallenmeyer or Bob McWhorter by Wednesday, 7/23, so we know how many people to expect. Hope to see you there!

#### Jon Wallenmeyer:

(301)-871-8007 jjjp1984@mac.com

#### Bob McWhorter:

(410)-987-3384 mcwho@comcast.net

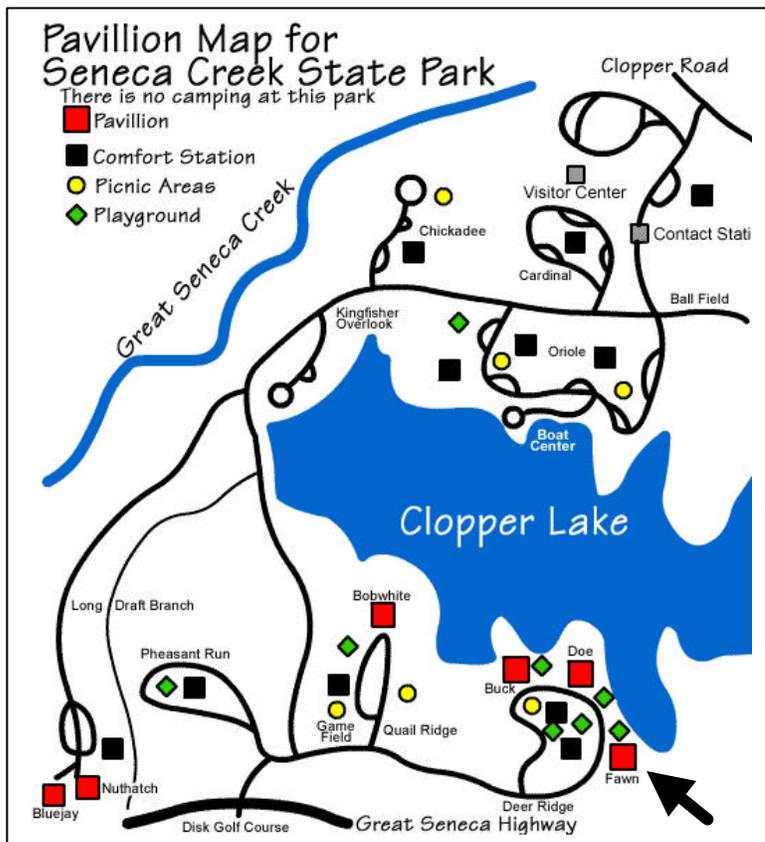


### Seneca Creek State Park - Fawn Pavilion 1190 Clopper Rd., Gaithersburg, MD 20878

#### DIRECTIONS:

1. Take I-495 to I-270N toward Frederick
2. Merge onto I-270 Local N
3. Take the Clopper Road/ MD Rt 117 West (Diamond Ave) exit, Exit #10, toward MD Rt. 124 West (Quince Orchard Road)
4. Turn RIGHT onto MD 117 West – Diamond Avenue, continue to follow MD 117W
5. End at 11950 Clopper Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20878
6. Follow signs to "FAWN" pavilion or ask park employee at entrance for directions.

Note: Travel time from I-495 is about 13 minutes



### Proposed Slate of Officers for 2008-2009

The following officers are proposed for the coming year. We will vote on this slate during the chapter picnic at Seneca Creek State Park. Nominations will be accepted from the floor.

President: **Bob McWhorter**

Vice President: **Richard Mohr**

Secretary: **Carol Segree**

Treasurer: **Phyllis Rittman**

New Board Members: **Joe Marsala, Sam Burd**

### Report of the District Director:

*By Ken McDonald*

The Tulsa, Oklahoma ARS Spring meeting was excellent, but only 112 people were registered. According to the ARS By Laws, a minimum of 150 members are required for a national meeting. It was sad that more members did not attend, as Past President Len Miller, Keith Johannson and others of the Ozark Chapter put a lot of effort into organizing good tours, speakers and entertainment in a very nice hotel.

The Board meeting was well attended by 27 persons including Ann and Bill Mangels and Sandra and Ken McDonald of District 9. The minutes are available on the ARS website (arsoffice.org).

As meeting attendance fell far below expectations; the Ozark Chapter will sustain a very large loss. ARS provides a \$3000 start up fund (Policies of the

Board 14.0) for conventions and will absorb up to a \$5000 loss (POB 11.4). To help get the immediate bills paid, the Board approved a loan to the Ozark Chapter of an additional \$5000.

A slight deficit budget was again approved with the hope that memberships, up grades of memberships, fund earnings and donations might increase. In December 2007, Treasurer Bill Mangels and OARS Laura Grant sent an "end of year" appeal to about half of ARS members who are Life or who joined before 1990. The response was over \$9000 in contributions. This is a great help for the current fiscal year budget. Donations in memory of Ed Reilly should be sent to Laura Grant at OARS for the ARS General Fund marked for Educational Purposes.

Karel Bernardy is replacing Hank Schannen as chair of the ARS Research Foundation. Shirley Rock is the new Membership Committee chair. A Long Range Planning Committee chair, Secretary and Journal Editor will be needed. Sonja Nelson is retiring at the end of this year. June Walsh wishes to end her term next summer.

Costs of a printed ARS member roster in addition to the present on line chapter lists will be investigated. If you are interested in such a publication, make your thoughts known.

Wing Fong continues to expand the DVD Library and welcomes contributions. A motion to set a goal of 50% "how to" articles in the Journal passed by a close vote and is considered by many to be ill advised and unnecessary.

The next Board meeting will be Sept. 24th in Hilo, Hawaii. Chapter Presidents will need to nominate a new director and alternate by October. This will be Potomac Valley's turn to nominate an Alternate Director for District 9.

ARS Honors for this year were: Gold Medals: Bud Gehnrich and Bob Weissman, Silver Medals: June and Tim Walsh, John Thornton, and Marc Colombel.

### Remembering Good Friends

We have lost several distinguished members of District 9 this spring. We extend our sincere sympathy to their families and many friends. They will be greatly missed.

Ed Reiley, past ARS President and husband of Mary Reiley, passed away on March 16, 2008, after a brief illness. Ed was a superb plantsman whose horticultural legacy will remain a lasting tribute.

Paul Barchowsky also passed away unexpectedly at home this spring. He is survived by his wife, Nan. Always willing to help, Paul and Nan were indispensable during the 2006 ARS Convention.

Associate member, Wally McKay, husband of Jane McKay the Middle-Atlantic membership chair, died at their home on Friday, May 16th.

## The Asian Ambrosia Beetle: *A Bad Genie is Out of the Bottle*

By Bob McWhorter

To some in the American Rhododendron Society and the Azalea Society of America, the Granulated (Asian) Ambrosia Beetle is old news. But at Rosa Gardens, located in central Maryland, it is new news that is all bad.

On May 7, 2008 while taking a leisurely walk in the garden my wife Rosa noticed some strange ‘stuff’ on the main stem of ‘Windsor Buttercup’, a beautiful 9 year old deciduous azalea. Rosa called me to take a look. When I saw the plant I could not believe my eyes. There were over 50 light yellowish, toothpick like projections, some 1.5 to 2 inches long, all up the main stem and on a number of large branches.



*Ambrosia Beetle Frass on a Deciduous Azalea Stem*

Looking closer I found that the material was borer frass. I had seen the frass from the clear wing rhododendron borer but it looked nothing like this. It didn't take a genius to figure out it was a borer, some new pest in our garden and the future of ‘Windsor Buttercup’ was very ominous. Little did I know what lay ahead?

Looking further I discovered that two more nearby deciduous azaleas, ‘Rosey Lights’ and ‘Redletter’ had also been attacked. After this I found, 90 feet from the first three plants, that yet a fourth deciduous azalea, *R. calendulaceum* had been infested.

As chance would have it Bartlett Tree Experts were at Rosa Gardens a few days later to spray the

native dogwoods for anthracnose. After hearing a description of the frass projections the technician/applicator immediately said it sounded like the ‘ambrosia beetle’. He said he had worked in North Carolina for a while and there was a lot of it down there. He suggested I check the NC State University – Extension Service website for information. I checked every website I could find.

The Asian ambrosia beetle (hereafter AAB) is a tiny insect just 2 to 3 mm long. It attacks a host plant in large numbers. Approximately 50 had attacked ‘Windsor Buttercup’, about 20 had bored into each of ‘Redletter’ and ‘Rosey Lights’ and ten were found in *calendulaceum*, which was a small plant. The female beetles bore nearly perfectly round 2 mm holes into the stem or trunk of host plants and trees, creating a



*Adult Asian Ambrosia Beetles and a U.S. Dime*

gallery where it lays its eggs. They prefer thin-barked hardwoods or branches from 1 to 2 1/2 inches in diameter.

The AAB carries the ambrosia fungus, which infects the plant and becomes food for the AAB and its progeny. It is the fungus that kills the host plant. Once inside the plant there is nothing that can be done to control the AAB. There are no systemic or other chemicals that can kill the AAB inside the plant. The recommended course of action is to cut out all infested stems and branches and burn them.

There is no systemic chemical to control the ambrosia fungus. Left alone the female ambrosia beetles will emerge from the infested plant in about 55 days and disperse to find new host plants and start the cycle over again.

### More Bad News

There are quite a few species of AAB, some domestic, but it is the exotic Asian species that are being reported as one of the major killers of nursery and landscape plants. These include *Xylosandrus*

*crassiusculus* and *Xylosandrus germanus*. Samples from Rosa Gardens were sent to the University of Maryland Plant Diagnostic Clinic – Department of Entomology. The sample was examined and identified as *Xylosandrus crassiusculus*. Rosa Gardens was the first reported attack of azaleas in Maryland.

The AAB attacks an astounding number of ‘host plants’. The following list is probably not all inclusive but will give the reader a good idea of what the home gardener is up against: sweet bay magnolia, *Styrax*, yellowwood, dogwoods, sugar maple, holly, birch, London plane tree, golden rain tree, Oriental persimmon, flowering cherry and weeping willow.

The Asian ambrosia beetle (*Xylosandrus crassiusculus*) was first detected in the U.S. in peach trees at Charlestown, S.C. in 1974. Since then it has become widespread, but localized in many North Carolina counties and most of the southeastern, Gulf coast and surrounding states from Texas through Oklahoma and east to Virginia and Maryland. Recent reports of the AAB in Oregon and Massachusetts have also been received.

The AAB is truly a genie out of its bottle! It spreads through natural distribution and shipment of contaminated plant material. Nurserymen appear to be doing what they can to ensure that contaminated plants are not released but it is happening. Gardens and collections like those of ARS and ASA members are at serious risk. There are a few measures that can be taken but knowledge of the ambrosia beetle’s life cycle and timing of protective measures is very important.

Please attend the PVC regular meeting scheduled for September 21<sup>st</sup> at the National Arboretum for a further discussion of the AAB, its life cycle and protective measures.

### **In Our Next Issue: *Chapter Field Trips!***

In our next issue we expect to have a color page showing some of the best Dexter and Cowle’s hybrids. It will accompany a report on this year’s Sandwich Club Meeting on Cape Cod which was held at the end of May. We had a big turnout this year, and the rhododendrons at Heritage Plantation were probably the best we have seen up there in recent memory. The weather was fantastic, too.

Don Hyatt will give a report on this year’s trek to the North Carolina Mountains in June including Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald. It was the best bloom we have seen down there as well. Almost every terminal had flowers on the rhododendrons and mountain laurel, and we managed to hit that at peak condition with perfect weather, too.

## **Nature Decides it is Time to Start Over!**

**By Don Hyatt**

I guess “Murphy’s Law” applies to gardens, especially if your home is supposed to be on a garden tour. You know how the law goes: “If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong.” That means that when expecting a garden tour in the near future, some disaster will destroy your garden before people arrive. With the Azalea Society Convention planning to visit me next spring, Mother Nature decided to inflict a disaster on my landscape this spring.

I have lived and gardened on the same piece of land since 1951, a shady ¾ acre tract in McLean. Many rhododendrons and azaleas I planted when I was in my teens are quite large now, but in an April storm, the largest oak in my neighborhood took a direct hit on some prime areas in my garden.



*Before Picture - ‘Blue Ensign’ and ‘Bayou’*

Much of the trunk of this enormous tree was 3 ft. across before becoming multiple branches. When it fell, it also took down a big tulip poplar, my largest dogwood tree, a lovely ‘Blue Ensign’ rhododendron that was 7 ft. tall by 13 ft. wide, a beautiful pale pink azalea ‘Bayou’ that was 5 ft. wide, a 10 ft. ‘Cadis’, and destroyed many wildflowers, rare orchids, and other treasures. Fortunately, it missed the house and the greenhouse. However, plants that survived the blow are now trying to adjust to full sun. So am I!

I guess it is time to start over, but with just a few months until convention, I may just have to post “Before” pictures around the garden instead.



*After the Storm - Time to Start Over!*

## The 2008 PVC Fower Show

by Bob McWhorter

To make things run smoothly on the morning of the 2008 Flower Show, volunteers that included Gabriel Scott, Joe Marsala, Jean and Norman Beaudry, and Bob and Rosa McWhorter began flower show preparations on Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup>. Display bottles were filled and staged near the participant entrance and flower entry materials were organized and placed on registration tables. All this took about 90 minutes thanks to the support and efforts of these outstanding volunteers.

Three large 18" X 24" posters of the show classes were displayed to facilitate entry registration and public information. This also reduced the number of flower show brochures to be printed and reduced expenses. We have Carol Segree to thank for having the brochures printed in time for the show.

On Saturday, May 10<sup>th</sup> more volunteers and members arrived for the show while "Singing in the Rain". As you may recall, everyone's garden had been pelted with heavy rain over several days preceding the flower show. Great courage and commitment was demonstrated by members while trying to find the best entries in their gardens and landing them at the arboretum for judging.

As members arrived for the show they were met and assisted by a great group of volunteers. The chapter is grateful to the following members whose efforts greatly contributed to the success of our flower show: Phyllis Rittman, Rosa McWhorter, Jim



2008 Show Table – Top Award Winners photos by Bob McWhorter

Hayes, Gray Carter, Dan Neckel, Gabrielle Scott, Jon Wallenmeyer, Sharon Allender and Joe Marsala.

Many thanks are extended to Don Voss, who together with his understudy, Bob McWhorter, judged the show entries. With Don's glossy 15" bamboo measuring stick, this pair scrutinized and compared every entry, one class and section at a time until all classes and section awards were presented. Next came the tough job of selecting the best rhododendron and azalea in show from among all the blue ribbon entries that had been assembled on the head table. This accomplished, they then presented the Best in Show award.

Although the weather did not cooperate and great uncertainty had been expressed about the quality of the show, members came through with a fantastic group of prize winning azaleas and rhododendrons. Many compliments were received from the visiting public on the variety and beauty of flower show entries.

Congratulations are extended to the following members on their award winning entries:

## 2008 Potomac Valley Flower Show Results

Class	Entry Name	Entered by	Award(s) presented
2.2	Paul Mauney	Norman & Jean Beaudry	First Place Ribbon
2.3	Hardy Pink	Carol Segree	First Place Ribbon
2.6	Willard	Norman & Jean Beaudry	First Place Ribbon
2.7	Parker's Pink	Jon Wallenmeyer	First Place Ribbon
2.8	Ignatius Sargent	Gabrielle Scott	First Place Ribbon
2.9	Fantastica	Carol Segree	<b>First Place Ribbon, Best Rhododendron, Best in Show</b>
2.10	Mum	Carol Segree	First Place Ribbon
2.13	Nova Zembla	John Keshishian	First Place Ribbon
2.14	Unknown	John Keshishian	First Place Ribbon
2.17	Roseum Elegans	Rosa McWhorter	First Place Ribbon
2.18	Capistrano	Rosa McWhorter	First Place Ribbon
2.22	Gable's Peaches	Norman & Jean Beaudry	First Place Ribbon
3.2	Mincar	Carol Segree	First Place Ribbon
4.1	R. fortenui, op	Jane Goodrich	First Place Ribbon
5.2	Oldhami	Norman & Jean Beaudry	First Place Ribbon
6.3	Unknown	John Keshishian	First Place Ribbon
7.4	Radiance	Rosa McWhorter	First Place Ribbon, <b>Best Azalea</b>
7.5	Pink Rosebud	Phyllis Rittman	First Place Ribbon
7.6	Fashion	Jane Goodrich	First Place Ribbon
7.7	Blaauw's Pink	Rosa McWhorter	First Place Ribbon
7.10	Ben Morrison	Gabrielle Scott	First Place Ribbon
8.2	Lyric X Rose Greely	Jane Goodrich	First Place Ribbon



'Fantastica'

## A Report on Scotland

By Don Hyatt

The International Rhododendron Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland, this past May was a grand success. Attendance from the United States was lower than originally expected due to the continuing decline of the US dollar, but those who went felt it was money well spent.

The weather couldn't have been better! We had sunny skies and temperatures in the 70's almost every day. Scotland can have miserably cold and rainy weather, just like it was prior to our arrival. But summer made a surprise visit for nearly two full weeks while we were there. We never thought to pack sun block! The local residents were enjoying the warm weather, too, and soon every grassy area was dotted with sunbathers trying to get their first tans. In a few days we noticed many who had overdone the exposure: bright red with sun burns and peeling skin. They reminded me of my students returning from "spring break," all burnt and crispy.

The Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh is surely one of the finest gardens in the world, and especially their rock garden. The dwarf lepidote rhododendrons and species were in peak bloom but the whole place is a gorgeous landscape with wildflowers, companion plants, and undulating lawns like putting greens.

Although Edinburgh is noted for its collection of rare rhododendron species, they do have many fine hybrids, too. One of my favorite rhododendrons there was a huge plant of 'Susan' with its ruffled pale lavender-blue flowers. It was underplanted with a large bed of our native white *Trillium grandiflorum* that was in peak bloom, too. Such a beautiful scene!



*Edinburgh Botanic Gardens – Dwarf Rhododendrons in the Rock Garden*

the pre-conference tour and also missed one of the regular garden tours due to preparations for my talk. I was not disappointed, though, since it just gave me more time to explore the Edinburgh Botanic Garden. I could have easily spent the entire time there. Their collection is huge and there was an art exhibit, too. After spending most of my first week at the botanical gardens, I still didn't see it all!



*'Susan' with Trillium grandiflorum*

My nearly 2 weeks in Scotland went so quickly! I took 2500 digital pictures and four hours of video, and wished I had taken more. I was unable to attend



*Rhododendron 'Susan'*

As for the program itself, I know I felt intimidated when I saw the list of distinguished speakers, and one retired school teacher (me). All of the talks were excellent and I guess mine went OK, too. I spoke on evergreen azaleas but they don't grow in Scotland since summers are too cool. My favorite talk was by Ken Cox telling of his plant exploration trips to the Himalayas, with gorgeous images and high definition video clips shown on their huge theater screen.

They also had a flower show. The thing that most impressed me was that they had a separate category for entering sprays or multiple trusses of large leaf

rhododendrons. We allow spays of azaleas and the smaller lepidote rhododendrons in our shows, but we limit the larger rhododendrons to a single truss. People still entered trusses, but in this other category they entered branches of the larger leaf rhododendrons. They were beautiful!

Of the gardens on tour as part of the conference package, I really liked Branklyn Gardens, a small landscape of perhaps an acre or more that is managed by the National Trust. Some gardens we saw were grand estates but this was more like what one might expect to achieve in a private home. The garden was a serene landscape of rhododendrons and choice companion plants, including the rare and very difficult to grow Himalayan Poppy (*Meconopsis*) with its turquoise blue flowers. We can't grow them but the Scots sure can!

I particularly enjoyed seeing Glendoick Gardens, the home and nursery of famous Cox family. Peter Cox led us through their lovely garden and he took us up to see some of his son's new rhododendron hybrids that they expect to introduce soon. Ken Cox has been developing rhododendron hybrids that have dark leaves of burgundy or chocolate, and most had contrasting pink to red flowers. They were stunning! Ken just smiled when we asked about the crosses that produced those plants. Obviously a trade secret!



*Glendoick Gardens – The Cox Home*

Karel Bernady who spoke to our chapter in March and I were traveling together, so after the conference we took off on our own to tour gardens in the western part of Scotland. We were unable to attend the pre-conference tour, and neither of us had been to the first conference in Oban in 1996, so we decided to see some of the gardens people saw then. We were told not to miss certain sites like Benmore, Brodick Castle, Arduaine, and Crarae. We charted our course



*Meconopsis – Himalayan Blue Poppy*

and managed to see every one. Yes, they are incredible!

Benmore is part of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Scotland, the same as Edinburgh. It is noted for its collections of trees and big leaf rhododendrons. The rhodos had bloomed heavily in 2007 with a cold and wet summer that year as well as a lack of deadheading, most of the large species like *R. sinogrande*, *R. falconeri*, and *R. rex* were rather shy of blooms this year. We could see from the seed pods still hanging on the plants that last year must have been a spectacular season. Those large leaf rhododendron species have huge leaves that can measure up to 3 ft. in length, and the foliage alone is very impressive.

We enjoyed the many vistas to the mountains and the sea, and there were other rhododendrons in bloom like brilliant red and pink blossoms of the Himalayan species *R. arboretum*, and various other hybrids and species. Some were as big as trees!



*Benmore Castle with Rhododendron arboretum trees*



*Huge Leaves of R. sinogrande at Benmore*

We had to take several ferry trips in order to reach some locations and learned that it wise to have reservations, especially when traveling to the Isle of Arran and Brodick Castle. We were lucky, though, and managed to make it on the wait list our first try.

Brodick had lost some large trees in recent storms, and parts of the garden were closed off as workmen removed debris. In addition, other spots were closed due to the presence of Sudden Oak Death, another serious problem we may have to deal with in the years to come. They were in the process of cutting down and burning some large rhododendron specimens to try to control the spread of the disease. I'll have more to say about Sudden Oak Death later.

The garden was lovely, and we were impressed with the huge expanding leaves of their Gunnera plants, already 6 feet across and still growing!



*Karel Bernady with a Gunnera Leaf at Brodick Castle*

I guess if I had to choose my favorite garden in Scotland, it would have to be Arduaine (pronounced Ar-doon-ee). It is part of the National Trust, but it also has a small hotel with an excellent restaurant. We inquired about spending the night but rooms are often booked a year in advance. Instead, we spent the night in the nearby resort town of Oban, and returned the next day to see the gardens and have lunch.

Like most of the sheltered gardens on the west coast of Scotland, Arduaine is tempered by the waters of the Gulf Stream which provides an incredible microclimate. They seem to be able to grow everything to perfection including the tender, fragrant Maddenii rhododendrons like *R. veitchianum* and *R. lindleyi* that were scattered throughout the garden and perfumed the entire place. The use of companion plants in this naturalistic landscape made it seem like I was walking in the Garden of Eden. Perfection!



*Fragrant R. lindleyi at Arduaine*

The final garden we visited was Crarae, a recent acquisition by the National Trust. It was gorgeous, too, and ranks at the very top of my list of best gardens I have ever seen, right beside Edinburgh, Benmore, and Arduaine. It had lovely trails, some that climbed up steep hills and others that followed streams and meadows with rhododendrons in full bloom and beautiful vistas of the nearby Loch Fyne.



*Vista toward Loch Fyne from Crarae Gardens*

I vowed to return to Scotland, even if travel does remain expensive for those of us in the U.S. Join me!

**Donald W. Hyatt, Newsletter Editor**  
**Potomac Valley Chapter ARS**  
**Don@donaldhyatt.com**