



Potomac Valley Chapter American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Fall Newsletter: September 2010

Calendar

- * **September 19, 2010** – Potomac Valley Ch. Meeting, Potomac, MD
- * **September 24-26, 2010** – Middle Atlantic Ch. Meeting, Winchester
- * **October 8-10, 2010** – ARS Western Regional, Florence, Oregon
- * **October 24, 2010** – Fall Banquet, Normandie Farms, Potomac, MD
- * **February 6, 2011** – Regular Winter Meeting, Photography Contest
- * **March 4-6, 2011** – Plant Trip to North Carolina Nurseries

Chapter Officers

President: Richard Mohr

rngmohr@msn.com

Vice-President and Secretary: Open
Please offer to help if you can!

Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman

prittman@erols.com

Next Meeting: Jim Dronenburg “Growing What Shouldn’t Grow Here”

Date: Sunday, September 19, 2009

Time: 1 – 4 PM

Location: Potomac Community Center

Join us for our first meeting of the season with Jim Dronenburg who will speak on “Growing What Shouldn’t Grow Here”, an introduction to creating microclimates in the garden. Not all plants fail to grow for the same reason. Many people look only at winter hardiness levels and that may not be the limiting factor for success. For some plants like the Euphorbia pictured to the right, drainage is the key. Plants seem to come through droughts quite well, but heavy rains and wet soil can be problematic.

Jim will be addressing such factors as sun and wind exposure, drainage including the means and reasons to achieve it, slow versus rapid temperature change, seasonal water or withholding of same to match a plant’s needs, and to a small extent, soil pH. Jim will be sharing his own personal experiences from his two-acre garden surrounding his 1840’s farmhouse in Knoxville, MD. He says he may not address specific needs for rhododendrons or azaleas but his comments are certainly applicable. Remember Hank Schannen’s first five rules for success: drainage, drainage, drainage, drainage, and drainage.

Jim admits that he is “a self-taught, seat of the pants gardener” but has been a Weekend Warrior and resident expert for twenty years off and on at Behnke Nurseries. He writes for the Washington Gardener magazine, is currently Coordinator for the Four Seasons Garden Club, is the current Vice



Variegated Euphorbia ‘Glacier Blue’ – Needs drainage!

President of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society, and a member of four or five other clubs. Many of us are members of PVC-NARGS so we know that Jim is a dynamic and very knowledgeable speaker.

An accountant by day to pay the mortgage and an Irish harp player by night to help pay for the garden, Jim loves to grow “old fashioned” things, winter bloomers, and almost any plant that 100,000 other people do not also have. This will be a great time to get ideas of companion plants to buy when we take our plant field trip in March.

Directions: From **I-270 North**, stay in the **Local lanes** and take exit **#4B/ MONTROSE RD WEST**. Continue west on Montrose Rd. for **1.7 miles**. Turn **LEFT** on **FALLS RD (MD-189)**. Continue **1.4 miles** to **11315 Falls Rd on the Left**.

Refreshment Duty: Persons whose last names begin with **A** through **H** are asked to bring some refreshment goodies for the table.

Report of the District Director Ann Mangels

Notes on the ARS Annual Meeting in Ronkonkoma, N.Y. May 14, 2010



Bill and Ann Mangels

The spring meeting of the ARS was very well attended with all districts being represented either by the director or alternate. All officers were present and many committee chairs, including Ray Smith, plant awards, and Norm Beaudry, seed exchange, from District 9.

Some areas of discussion included:

- ?? Membership numbers continue to be a topic of concern, although we lost only 104 members during the year. The Chattahoochee Chapter (AL) has dissolved for lack of membership, but quite a few chapters have increased their membership by 10% or more over the past year. There are currently 3525 members primarily in Massachusetts (188), Danish (142), Portland (130), Swedish (102), and 102 non-chapter. Canada, in various chapters, has 479 members. A major expense is created when Journals are returned because of incorrect mailing addresses – membership chairs are being urged to make corrections to Laura as soon as they are notified of changes.
- ?? Chapters are reminded that they need to file an annual 990 series tax return. The tax exempt status for the society as a whole could be affected if not filed.
- ?? The proposed budget for 2010-2011 was reviewed. Current salaries will be maintained by the Journal editor, Assistant Journal Editor and Executive Director.
- ?? The ARS roster database will be available online to all members. There will be safeguards to protect the data.
- ?? The Seed Exchange showed an estimated profit of \$4000 this year. This money will be used to support future seed collecting expeditions. Seeds were donated from 70 members in 9 countries and 160 orders were filled going far and wide. A Seed Exchange China Seed Collection Expedition conducted by Jens and Remi Nielsen was funded at

\$6000 and proved successful with good participation.

- ?? The Endowment Grant Program resumed this year with the awarding of \$3500.00 funded to the Niagara Parks and School of Horticulture for the purchase of rhododendrons and azaleas. An endowment bequest was received in the spring from the estate of a former member.
- ?? The Honors Committee recommended only one Gold Medal this year and Don Voss was the recipient. Although he wasn't in attendance, Don Hyatt and I called him after the meeting to congratulate him on this happy occasion. The Potomac Valley Chapter held a luncheon in June where Don Voss actually received the medal and citation.
- ?? Other winners of Silver Medals were: Paul Anderson, California Chapter; Chris Callard, France; Werner Brack, New York Chapter.

Upcoming events include ARS Regional Conference in Florence, OR, October 8-10, 2010. Next year's Annual Meeting will be held in Vancouver, WA from May 11-15, near Portland International Airport. I was delighted to announce that the Regional Conference next fall will be held near the Richmond International Airport, hosted by Middle Atlantic Chapter on October 21-23, 2011. Other dates of importance are May 4-8, 2012 in Ashville, NC for the Annual Meeting and Western Regional in 2012 will be held in Nanaimo, BC.

Thank you for allowing me the pleasure and privilege of serving as the Director for District 9. Please let me know if you have any concerns that you would like brought up at board meetings or to chairs of committees you may have some questions for. I will be happy to communicate them either from individual members or chapters.

*Ann Mangels
District 9 Director*

Dues are Due: In order to save postage, we included your dues notice with this newsletter. Please make payment to **Potomac Valley Chapter ARS** and return to our treasurer: Phyllis Rittman: prittman@erols.com

Fall Banquet: *Normandie Farm*

10710 Falls Road, Potomac, MD 20854

Date: **Sunday, October 24, 2010**

Time: **12:00 Noon to 4:00 PM**

Speaker: **Mike Stewart**

We learned that JR's Steakhouse will be undergoing renovation in October, so we have had to change the location of our Fall Banquet to Normandie Farm in Potomac, MD. This rustic French restaurant is well known not only for its lovely décor but also for its excellent food. The time will be in the afternoon rather than the evening, which may be more convenient for our members who travel longer distances.

For our speaker, we are bringing in Mike Stewart, the past President of the ARS and 2009 Gold Medal recipient. Mike and his wife Maria run Dover Nursery, a major rhododendron nursery in Sandy, Oregon, located in the scenic foothills of Mount Hood. To the right are pictured Mike and Maria when they went hiking with us along the Appalachian Trail in 2009 to see the native azaleas on Roan Mountain and Gregory Bald. We don't have



Mike and Maria Stewart on the AT

Mike's topic yet, so he may talk about new West Coast hybrids, their trip to China, or other things of interest. I am sure he will give us a preview of the upcoming ARS Convention from May 11-15, 2011, in Vancouver, WA, just across the river from Portland, OR. Mike and Harold Greer are chairing that event so expect a super meeting.

In about a month, we will send out more details about our Potomac Valley Chapter Fall Banquet including registration materials and directions. Just be sure to save the date so you don't miss out one of the highlights of the upcoming year.



Picnic Attendees Await the Plant Exchange

PVC Picnic: Seneca Falls State Park

Even though some of our regulars had conflicts and couldn't attend, we had a good turnout for our July 18 picnic at Seneca Falls State Park. We grilled hamburgers and hotdogs over the coals, and members brought a variety of wonderful dishes to complement the meal. After everyone was full, we held our annual plant exchange.

Members brought many wonderful plants for the exchange, not only rhododendrons and azaleas but a variety of companion plants and trees. Even people who did not bring plants to trade went home with choice selections. We also sold rooted cuttings from our Plants for Members program.

We did have a short business meeting including an election where Bob McWhorter passed the gavel to our new President, Richard Mohr. We want to thank Bob, and of course Rosa, for their leadership over the last few years. Richard did discuss some

plans for the coming year including the vote to hold our Fall Banquet at Normandie Farm, and a change a winter meeting date to February 6 since we could not get a decent room at the Potomac Community Center in January. We thank Richard for agreeing to serve, and of course we appreciate the second half his team, Ginny Mohr. We still need people willing to serve in two other offices.

Electronic Newsletter: If you also want a PDF version of our newsletter, please notify Don Hyatt by email using your preferred email address.

Don@donaldhyatt.com

Variegated Plants – by Don Hyatt

There are very few variegated rhododendrons but there are a host of other companion plants that can provide foliage contrast throughout the year. I used to depend upon sweeps of hosta in my garden but the deer ate most of those. I thought I would share a few favorite variegated plants in this issue.

One of my favorite companion plants is the variegated Hakone grass, *Hakonechloa macra* ‘Aureola.’ Its drooping graceful foliage is light yellow striped with green, and it gives a cascade effect in the garden. The plant is about a foot tall and even though it spreads slowly by underground stolons, this grass is not at all invasive. Its delicate leaves turn light tan in the winter but then cleanly shed before the new growth begins in the spring. It was Perennial of the Year in 2009.



Variegated Hakone Grass – A Great Companion Plant

Another great grass like plant is the variegated sedge called ‘Evergold’ (*Carex oshimensis*). It forms a clump of narrow leaves that are striped green and light yellow and grows but a foot high.



Carex ‘Evergold’



Variegated Yucca ‘Color Guard’

A bold accent plant that I really like is Yucca ‘Color Guard’ with its long pointed leaves of green and white. I bought several on our field trip to Big Bloomers several years ago. They do need sun, but otherwise are not very demanding. Much larger now, they have become a focal point in a spot with awful soil where little else would grow.

Now that I have lost a number of big trees, my garden is getting more sun so I am trying new plants. I bought *Caryopteris* ‘White Surprise’ which is a variegated form of the Blue Mist Shrub. It grows to 3 ft and has soft blue flowers in late summer. I hoped it would bloom with my dwarf Crape Myrtle, ‘Cherry Dazzle.’ Not this year!



Caryopteris ‘White Surprise’ – Blue Flowers in Summer

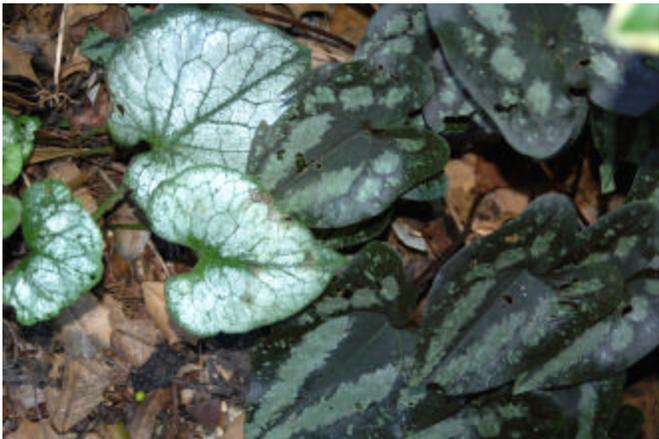
I have gotten excited about some of the new *Pulmonaria* varieties. Not only are they deer resistant, but they don’t seem to be bothered by slugs either. I am using them instead of hosta. I have not been fond of varieties with spotted leaves since they look too “busy,” but there are several

forms with nearly solid silver leaves that are particularly attractive. I picked up ‘Samouri’ on our trip to Plant Delights a couple of years ago and that has been great. Its long silvery leaves formed wonderful clump that became more beautiful as the summer progressed. I will admit that in late October of last year, some deer decided my plant just was too pretty and “tasted it” which did ruin the effect. It is not evergreen, so frost would have done the same a week later. This year I bought *Pulmonaria* ‘Diana Clare’ which is very similar. The only difference I see is a slightly ruffled leaf edge. They both have blue flowers in spring.



Pulmonaria ‘Diana Clare’ with *Hosta* ‘Summer Music’

Last October I mentioned *Brunnera* ‘Jack Frost’ which continues to be a favorite variegated plant for shade with its deeply veined silvery leaves. In the same area I planted the evergreen *Asarum splendens*, a recently introduced showy ginger from China. Its dark green leaves are heavily patterned with silvery green. Both are great companions with ferns. The only drawback is that the slugs seem to like the ginger. I will have to do a better job fighting the slugs next year.



Brunnera Jack Frost (left) - *Asarum splendens* (right)



Japanese Painted Fern ‘Burgundy Lace’

I have tried a number of forms of the Japanese Painted Fern, *Athyrium nipponicum*, but the variety ‘Burgundy Lace’ is clearly my favorite. Its delicate fronds are dark green with that silver overlay, but the dark red veins accentuate the beauty of the fronds. I have the crested form, and it may have been prettier earlier in the year but it just looks deformed and rather ratty in September.

I have tried a number of trees with variegated foliage including several Japanese maples. The variety ‘Butterfly’ has not been in a good spot and doesn’t grow very much. Many of us picked up the stunning pink, white, and green selection ‘Karasugara’ on our field trip to Acer Acres last fall. Once I had a small standard of the pink, green, and white *Acer palmatum dissectum* variety ‘Toyama Nishiki’ but the deer ate the entire top of that plant including the graft union. I’ll try again!

My favorite variegated tree, though, is *Cornus kousa* ‘Wolf Eyes.’ I had trouble with deer eating that plant, and then voles ate the roots off, as well. I got another one. The foliage is edged in white and looks stunning against a dark green holly tree.

Please share your thoughts on favorite plants so we can look for them on future nursery field trips.



Cornus kousa ‘Wolf Eyes’



Soft Pink Flowers of R. makinoi in Early May

***Rhododendron makinoi* – by Don Hyatt**

As your newsletter editor, I was trying to find something else to write about to complete this issue. As I walked through the garden this week, now early September, the weather is still terribly hot and the mosquitoes are relentless. When I passed one of my favorite plants, *Rhododendron makinoi*, I realized that it is surely the most spectacular rhododendron in my garden today.

The flowers that open in early May are a soft shade of rose pink but that is not its only asset. Its very narrow foliage is spectacular all year long. The leaves average 5 inches long by only ½ inch wide but when the new growth emerges in late May to June, the fuzzy white candles give another show. As the foliage unfurls, it keeps a heavy indumentum on the surface of its narrow leaves, a striking contrast that remains much of the season.



Foliage of Rhododendron makinoi in September

I raised this Japanese species from seed I got through the ARS Seed Exchange nearly 40 years ago. My plant now measures 5 ft tall by 6 ft wide,

but I was really concerned about it when we had all that heavy snow this winter, a total of 54 inches in my yard that fell from January 31 to February 10, 2010. After the storms cleared, there was no sign of my plant and I was certain it had been broken off by the weight of that very heavy snow.

When I finally had a chance to dig a trench over to the plant on February 21, I had little doubt it was a goner. The snow had settled by then, and I could see a few horizontal trunks poking out. I carefully dug out the plant, one branch and leaf at a time. When I cleared the last of the snow, my plant popped right up as if nothing had happened. Many azaleas broke off but *R. makinoi* was fine!



R. makinoi is still under the snow on February 21



R. makinoi is alive and well after clearing off the snow

A Correction: George Woodard let me know that I messed up the parentage of the plants Werner Brack was admiring in our last PVC newsletter. The actual cross was (*brachycarpum* var. *tigerstedtii* x *macabeanum*) x [(Orange Marmalade x Percy Weisman) x (Voluptuous x Phipps 32)]. A detail of the foliage from a typical seedling is shown in the image below. With leaves like that, who needs flowers, but the blossoms should be yellow!



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