



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Calendar

Winter Newsletter: January 2014

- * **January 12, 2014** – PVC Regular Meeting, Potomac Community Center
- * **February 28 – March 2, 2014** – North Carolina Plant Trip
- * **March 16, 2014** – Joint Meeting with NV-ASA, Potomac Com. Ctr.
- * **March 27-30, 2014** – ASA Convention, Charleston, SC
- * **April 16, 2014** – PVC Field trip to Pennsylvania Nurseries.
- * **April Date TBD** – PVC Flower Show, Annapolis Farmer's Mkt.
- * **May 2-4, 2014** – MAC Spring Meeting, Flatwood, WV.
- * **May 16-18, 2014** – ARS Convention, Plainesville, OH

Chapter Officers

President: Bob McWhorter
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Vice President: Dan Neckel
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Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman
prittman@erols.com

Our Next Meeting:

Photography Contest & Share Session

Date: January 12, 2014

Time: 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Where: Potomac Community Center

Chapter members always look forward to our winter meeting with our Chapter Photography Contest. The guidelines are listed on the next page but our rules are simple. We have three categories and we just ask that people not enter more than two pictures in any one of them. Attendees will vote on their favorites, and we will award prizes but no person can get more than one of those. Usually, anyone who enters will go home with a prize so please support the contest.

At this meeting, we also have a Share Session. This is a time to tell us about interesting places you visited, projects in your garden, or new things that bloomed. It is also a time to ask questions of our experts. Bring your pictures on a memory stick or CD. We do ask that you keep your presentation to 10 minutes.

Refreshment Duty: As we did last year, we will make this meeting a Winter Party, so we are asking everyone to bring some finger foods or snacks to share. If you have leftover holiday treats, freeze them and bring them with you to our meeting!

Directions: Potomac Community Center

11315 Falls Rd, Potomac, MD

From **I-270 North**, stay in the **Local lanes**

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 the Center (on the left)

11315 Falls Rd, Potomac, MD



Gardens in Germany and Denmark

There is an exciting tour planned by the ARS to gardens in Northern Germany and Denmark next spring. Bill Heller of the Seattle Chapter is organizing the event and the itinerary will include many of the gardens your editor saw in 2010 such as the above scene in Planten un Blomen, a Hamburg garden. Other gardens will include Bremen Rhododendronpark, as well as the nurseries of Hachmann and Hobbie before traveling to Copenhagen for the rest of the trip.

The dates for the trip follow immediately after the ARS Convention in Cleveland this spring. People will leave the US on May 20 and return May 31. There is a requirement that members travel as a group and leave from one of two hubs in the US so organizers can get significant savings on airfare. The expected cost per person is \$3975 but may change slightly due to exchange rates. The trip includes airfare, hotels, coach and driver fees, all breakfasts and four dinners.

Bob McWhorter can provide more details or contact Bill Heller directly: william.r.heller@boeing.com

PVC Photography Contest Rules

We have established the following rules for our local chapter photography contest.

Category I: Flowers – Close-up of flowers, such as a rhododendron truss or an azalea spray.

Category II: Scenery - Rhododendron or azalea plants in the landscape or in the wild.

Category III: Other – This category is for any photographs featuring rhododendrons or azaleas that don't seem to fit into the first two categories: pictures of foliage, creative effects, people, or whatever.

Photography Contest Rules

1. Open to chapter members or associates only.
2. No more than two entries in any category.
3. Photos must have been taken in 2013.
4. Photos must be naturally occurring, no composites.
5. Photos may be matted, but no frames or glass.
6. Maximum dimensions: 8" x 10", even if matted.
7. Put your name, the title and category on the back.
8. Photos are the property of the exhibitor but we ask permission to reproduce winners in our newsletter.

Attendees will vote for their favorites with prizes awarded at the end of the meeting. A single individual can only win one of the prizes so all those who enter usually get something. Please enter!

North Carolina Nursery Trek:

February 28 – March 2

As usual, we will be repeating our annual field trip to nurseries in Southern Virginia and North Carolina again this year. Joe Marsala coordinates the event so if you are interested in going, please let Joe know:

Joe Marsala:

joe-marsala@comcast.net

We usually stay at the Comfort Inn in Garner, NC, for two nights and use it as our base of operation. In past years, they have given us a discount comparable to that of AAA. However, as you cross the state line, you



Gathering at Big Bloomers on a prior NC Nursery Trek

might stop at the North Carolina Welcome Center and check out their Discount Coupon Books. If the hotel is listed this year, you might even get a better price.

Comfort Inn – Garner

126 Cleveland Crossing Drive
Garner, NC 27529 (919) 773-1110

The trip is very informal. People arrange their own transportation and make their hotel reservations. We just hang out together and have fun. Several of the nurseries are mail order and not open to the public except during these “Open House” weekends. The nurseries we usually try to visit are:

Pine Knot Farms – Hellebore Festival (10 am – 4 pm)
681 Rockchurch Rd, Clarksville, VA 23927

www.pineknotfarms.com

Big Bloomers Flower Farm

275 Pressly Foushee Road, Sanford, NC 27330

www.bigbloomersflowerfarm.com

Plant Delights Nursery - Open House

9241 Sauls Road, Raleigh, NC 27603

www.plantdelights.com

Camellia Forrest Nursery

9701 Carrie Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516

www.camforest.com

Sad News: *Our Sincerest Sympathy to Anne Gray Haynes*

We were extremely saddened to learn of the tragic loss of Ronald F. Kirby, the husband of PVC member Anne Gray Haynes on November 11, 2013. Ron was found murdered at the couple's Alexandria home. Ron was an internationally renowned authority on public transportation, and directed many projects here in Washington region. The two were just married in May of 2012. We extend our sympathy to Anne and wish her peace.

A murder suspect has not been identified at this time, so a reward fund has been set up to assist police in their investigation. Donations should be made payable to the “Ron Kirby Reward Fund” and sent to:

Del Ray Business Foundation

P.O. Box 2927

Alexandria, VA 22301

You may also use the form at the following link:

<https://www.mwcog.org/uploads/news-documents/A1db20131217132120.pdf>

If Alexandria Police decide that the reward funds are no longer needed to resolve this case, any remaining money will be transferred to the National Organization for Victim Assistance and the Holt International Children's Services.

Grafting Rhododendrons!

By Don Hyatt

Karel Bernady has convinced me that grafting is the way to go when propagating rhododendrons. It is not just for plants that are extremely difficult to root like 'Jack Cowles' pictured below, but even for many standard varieties that might not be as robust as we would like. Plants in our region often fail because the root systems are weak or prone to disease. If we use grafting to give them a stronger root system, they should be more floriferous. Most of the maples and conifers I grow are grafted, so why not rhododendrons? In Europe, rhododendrons are routinely grafted on 'Cunningham's White' and some are now using Inkarho® understock.



Grafting Teacher Karel Bernady at Kristoph's Nursery in NJ.

We soon realized that one of the most challenging tasks was to find enough 'Roseum Elegans' to meet our needs. Few people give space to that plant, so we really appreciate those who donated cuttings to the cause. Karel has had excellent results using 'Caroline' for understock since it has an equally tough root system. We are trying it and other robust cultivars, too.

Having the proper equipment is important, and a good grafting knife is essential. It should be very sharp and beveled only on one side. I had bought an inexpensive grafting knife but I soon realized that Karel's equipment was much better so I used his instead. We sharpened the knives on a stone prior to use and also during the day if the blade seemed to get dull. We used pruning shears and scissors to help trim leaves, and wiped down our tools

with alcohol to reduce potential spread of disease.

Preparing the Under Stock

Before making the graft, the first task was to locate a stem of 'Roseum Elegans' that had the same diameter as the scion we wanted to graft for the top. We would remove all but two top leaves in the whorl on 'Roseum Elegans' but we would not trim back those leaves.



'Jack Cowles' - Very Difficult to Root

Karel Bernady has spoken to many groups about a grafting technique using unrooted understock that he and I saw at the Fredo Schröder Nursery in Germany in 2010. Since then, Karel has been grafting plants for his chapter and kindly offered to graft some for our 2016 Convention, too. People were very generous giving cuttings, so with nearly 600 grafts to make this fall, Norm Beaudry and I have been trying to help out. We spent several days with Karel at the Steven Kristoph Nursery in New Jersey learning to graft rhododendrons. This article illustrates the process.

The late Hank Schannen once mused, "My idea of an erotic dream is 'Roseum Elegans' in 28 different colors." It is a tough plant with a very strong root system and succeeds in most local gardens. If all of our rhodies had those same qualities, they would be much easier to grow. It performs better than 'Cunningham's White' here so it became our preferred understock.



Preparing 'Roseum Elegans' for the Understock

It is very important to cut out every single growth bud in the axils of the leaves on the understock because we don't want a shoot of 'Roseum Elegans' to arise from one of them at a later date. Being more robust, the understock usually dominates when that happens.



Growth Buds Before

Growth Buds Removed

Scion Preparation

With the variety we want to propagate, no buds are removed except for flower buds. Instead of keeping only two leaves as we did with the understock, we keep three leaves and they are cut back by more than half. One major reason for trimming the scion's leaves but not those on understock is to make it easier to tell the difference between the two. Any understock above the graft will be cut off when we transplant so leaf shape helps us tell them apart so we don't cut the wrong one!



Scion – Three Leaves with Ends Trimmed



Scion and Understock Ready for Grafting

Making the Graft

We shorten both scion and understock to 3 inches and must decide how they will fit together. We make a "side-veneer" graft by removing a sliver of bark from the side of each shoot and then tying stems together. It is vital for the cambium layers of the two pieces to line up. The cambium is active growing layer between the bark and the wood, the place where the graft will form. By using a sharp knife, there is less cell damage to the cambium so it will heal faster. To keep from cutting myself, I positioned the flat side of the blade against the stem and cut downward to a block of soft wood.

The cut on the understock should be about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch longer than the cut on the scion since we want that understock to extend below the scion. We also make a beveled end on both pieces. The tip end of the understock will be dipped in rooting hormone and it will be the primary place where roots develop. Roots might form on the scion, too, but we prefer that they don't since those could be prone to disease.



Matching Scion to Understock



Removing a Sliver of Bark



Detail of Cut and Cambium Layer



Scion and Understock Tied Together



Finished Graft Ready for Rooting

Once both portions are prepared, we fit them together carefully and wrap tightly with heavy cotton string. It is important that the string is 100% cotton rather than a synthetic since we want it to rot within the year. Rubber bands work, too, but seem harder to use.

It does take longer to graft, but we feel it is worth the effort. In first attempts, Norm and I could make 3 grafts in an hour. After 4 days, I could do 15 per hour but average 10 per hour for the day. The Germans told us their best grafters could do 100 an hour. No Way!!

Once the graft is made, it is rooted in a fashion similar to normal cuttings. We dip only that short extension of the understock in a solution of Dip 'N® Grow before inserting the cutting in rooting medium.

Karel put 25 grafts in each rooting box, labeled carefully, and moved boxes to a propagation house with a mist system and bottom heat. If all goes well, over the winter the cambium layers of the scion and the understock will knit together and roots will form, too.



Norm watches as Karel dips cuttings in hormone and inserts them in a rooting box.



Karel Inspects Grafts in Kristoph's Mist House.

Next spring, we will cut apart the grafted plants and transplant them to gallon pots. Not all grafts will make it, but not all cuttings we take succeed either. However, the grafts that do survive will likely have stronger root systems than most varieties on their own roots.



Before and After Pictures of a Sample Graft

After the first summer, the grafted plants will be protected over the winter and grown for another year. Some may fail then, too, but Karel's data from several years are very promising. In the image below, Karel is inspecting two-year old grafted plants, the size we hope to have for our 2016 Convention.

I tried rooting 'Jack Cowles' but was not successful, and neither was Kathy Van Veen with cuttings I sent her. Thanks to Karel, we now have 25 grafts of that lovely hybrid on the way for 2016. Wish us luck!



Two-year Old Grafted Plants

District 9 Director's Report

By Don Hyatt

Plans for the 2016 ARS/ASA Convention in Williamsburg are well on the way. We selected the dates of April 20-24, 2016, for our event and signed with the Fort Magruder Hotel. We have a very reasonable room rate of \$119 per night which includes the buffet breakfast. The facilities are within a mile of Williamsburg's historic district and ideal for our needs with ample space for the plant sale, flower show, banquets, and speakers. "Legends and Legacies" is our theme and we have sketched out a program with workshops in the mornings, garden tours to Williamsburg, Richmond, Gloucester, or Norfolk in the afternoons, and keynote speakers and banquets in the evenings. We even have a website:

www.arsasaconvention2016.org

The convention plant sale committee has been very active, and each chapter coordinator has been gathering rhododendron and azalea cuttings to propagate. We have some wonderful plants from local and regional hybridizers on the way, some we are rooting as cuttings and others as grafts. The preceding article shows some of the grafting Norm Beaudry and I did with Karel Bernady in New Jersey. Next year, each chapter will need more volunteers to assist with plants and other details, so please help out!

Looking ahead to other District 9 activities, Harold Greer has agreed to speak to us next fall the weekend of October 11-12, 2014. Since he is such a sought after speaker, we will arrange a District 9 luncheon for our three chapters and the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA at a location convenient to as many as possible. We see this as a team building activity to help us better stage the 2016 Convention.

As for national concerns, at the ARS Board Meeting in Nova Scotia I attended on October 4, 2013, much discussion centered around two major areas: 1) financial concerns due to declining membership, and 2) bylaws and policies changes needed by the IRS for us to continue as a tax exempt organization.

We currently have only 3170 members and that greatly impacts our financial decisions.

We discussed the production costs for the Journal since that is our major expense. Rather than reducing quality to save a few dollars, the Board approved an upgrade recommended by the Editorial Committee instead. For an additional

cost of only \$350 per issue, we can increase the number of color pages from 16 to 36 in a typical issue. We hope you appreciate the additional color in future issues.

The ARS Journal is available on the web but few members are taking advantage of the opportunity. The new Student Membership category of \$10 per year is in effect now, and does require use of the online Journal, so encourage students to join. There are five Journal issues available now, but it does require that you set up a login account. You will need to pick a user name and password, and you must also enter your ARS membership number which can be found in the address field of your Journal. Once you have registered, you can login to read current issues of the Journal, view articles and images in high resolution, or access the ARS membership roster. To get to the ARS Office to access the login script and Online Journal, direct your web browser here:

www.arsoffice.org

Back issues of older Journals are housed in the Virginia Tech archives and they are used heavily. They do not require a login, but can be found at:

www.scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS

Steve Henning received approval to establish an Online Store for the ARS. We are not selling things directly, but every purchase through the ARS Store will benefit the Society. Many of our members buy items from commercial websites like Amazon.com which is a member, but what you may not realize is if the search is initiated from our site and then goes to Amazon, the ARS will receive a small commission. You support the ARS just by linking to sellers from the ARS Store:

www.arsstore.org

Significant Board Meeting time was spent modifying our policies and bylaws in order to be compliant with IRS guidelines for tax exempt organizations. These included statements on conflict of interest by board members, anti-harassment and discrimination policies, and record keeping. All officers present signed a form accepting those changes while on the Board.

The next Board Meeting will be prior to the ARS Convention in Ohio this year. The Great Lakes Chapter has set up a website for the event which runs from May 15-18:

www.greatlakesrhodies.org

As the District 9 Director, I really appreciate your strong support. If you have any concerns, please let me know. Thanks! - *Don Hyatt*

2014 Seed Exchange – Potomac Valley Chapter ARS

The following seeds are offered as a service to our members and associate members at \$0.60 per packet including postage. Due to escalating postal rates and increased packaging costs, we may have to raise prices next year. People are limited to one pack in any lot since available seed is divided among those who request the selection. Thanks to our donors: Don Hyatt (**Hy**), Paul James (**Ja**), Steven Kristoph (**Kr**), George McLellan (**Ml**), John Weagle (**We**). Please return orders to Don Hyatt with payment to Potomac Valley Chapter ARS by February 5, 2014.

Species, collected in the wild (cw)

1. *atlanticum*, white, pink bud, cw, Middlesex Cnty, VA (Ml)
2. *arborescens*, cw, Wayah Bald, NC (Hy, Ml)
3. *calendulaceum*, cw, mixed, Mount Rogers, VA (Hy, Ml)
4. *calendulaceum*, cw, bicolor, Mount Rogers, VA (Hy, Ml)
5. *calendulaceum*, cw, gold, Mount Rogers, VA (Hy, Ml)
6. *calendulaceum*, cw, mixed, Hooper Bald, NC (Hy, Ml)
7. *calendulaceum*, cw, 'Hooper's Copper' bicolor, (Hy, Ml)
8. *calendulaceum*, cw, 'Hooper Duke', deep orange, (Hy, Ml)
9. *calendulaceum*, cw, Hooper frilled red, (Hy, Ml)
10. *calendulaceum*, cw, mixed, Wine Spring Bld, NC (Hy, Ml)
11. *calendulaceum*, cw, orange, Haywood Cnty, NC (Hy, Ml)
12. *vaseyi*, cw, mixed, Haywood County, NC (Hy, Ml)

Species, open pollinated (op)

13. *adenopodum*, op, lavender pink (Hy)
14. *carolinianum*, op, white (Kr)
15. *hyperythrum*, white, op, (Hy)
16. *makinoi*, op, Hyatt form, pink (Hy)
17. *makinoi*, op, Kristoph form (Kr)
18. *metternichii* (*degronianum* ssp. *heptamerum*), op, (Hy)
19. *schlippenbachii*, op, pink (Hy)
20. *pseudochrysanthum* op (op), (Hy)

Elepidote Rhododendron Hybrids (op)

21. Donna Hardgrove (Ja)
22. Bliss, op (Scintillation x Mary Belle) (Ja)
23. (Caroline x *fortunei* LuShan), op (Ja)
24. (Dexters Spice x Dexters Peppermint) (Ja)
25. Enchanter (Anne Hardgrove x Anna Delp) (Ja)
26. Haag selection H-21, op (Hy)
27. Haag (*fortunei* x Goldsworth Orange), op (Hy)
28. Hyp-Cat, op (*hyperythrum* x *catawbiense*) (Ja)
29. Jane's Orange, op (Hy)
30. John C. White, op (Hy)
31. Martin Keister White, op (*yak* x *metternichii*) (Hy)
32. (*maximum* x *aureum*), op (We)
33. Rhodworks (Fire King x *hyperythrum*) op (Ja)

Lepidote Rhododendron Hybrids (op)

34. 24 Karat (Hy)
35. (Epoch x *augustinii*) (Hy)
36. (*keiskei* x *xanthocodon*) (Ja)

Deciduous Azaleas, open pollinated (op)

37. King's Red (Hy)
38. Admiral Semmes (Hy)

Kalmia, collected in the wild (cw)

39. Kalmia, mixed, cw, Wine Spring Bald (Hy)
40. Kalmia, pink /red stripes, cw, Wine Sprng B. (Hy)

Addendum

Peter Norris of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts has kindly sent additional seeds to us for our exchange this year. Please add these to your options:

Species, op:

41. *concinnum*, RSF 1973/071, op, (Nr)
42. *hyperythrum*, op, (Nr)
43. *fortunei*, op, (Nr)

Hybrids, Open Pollinated

44. Balva's Joy, op, (Nr)
45. Betty Hume, op, (Nr)
46. BG-28, op (Nr)
47. Calsap, op, (Nr)
48. Chaterbee, op, (Nr)
49. Dexter's Appleblossom, op, (Nr)
50. Dexter's JBJ, op, (Nr)

Hybrids, Open Pollinated (cont.)

51. Dexter's Peppermint, op, (Nr)
52. Dexter's Vanilla, op, (Nr)
53. Great Eastern, op, (Nr)
54. Hal Bruce [Dexter], op, (Nr)
55. Helen Everitt, op, (Nr)
56. HP 71-02, op, (Nr)
57. HP 15-2006, op, (Nr)
58. (Independence x *fortunei discolor* RFN), op, (Nr)
59. JD 111-2006, op, (Nr)
60. Madison Hill, op, (Nr)
61. Parker's Pink, op, (Nr)
62. Smirfort, op, (Nr)
63. Sky Fortunei [Furman], op, (Nr)
64. Todd's T-27, op, (Nr)



Hyatt's *R. pseudochrysanthum*. op

The 2014 Seed Exchange by Don Hyatt

We have a shorter list this year for our local exchange. There were a number of reasons including fewer donations, but I have also been on the road a great deal. I did cut my seed collection trip to the mountains short, too, due to a pinched nerve. Even so, we have some interesting selections and I hope you find something you want to grow.

In October, George McLellan, Karel Bernady, and I traveled to Nova Scotia for the ARS meeting and while there, I did pick up a few seed pods from a great foliage plant we saw on one of the tours that John Weagle was hosting. It is open pollinated seed from a cross of (*maximum* x *aureum*). I had admired that plant in the former garden of Walter Ostrum several years before.

Open pollinated seeds can produce some lovely rhododendrons. We know what the seed parent is since that carried the pod, but the bees crossed that plant with pollen from something else and that is the mystery. Pictured to the left is a plant I have had in my garden for over 40 years. I raised it from open pollinated seed of *R. pseudochrysanthum* I got from the ARS seed exchange but may not be the pure species. It is larger than typical and also hardier since I have killed all other forms. This is a "class act" plant for me, relatively compact and well behaved but it has reached 5 feet tall now due to its age. It blooms in early spring, usually the first week in April, and does manage to miss most of the frosts. It has rounded trusses of white flowers with red spotting in the throat and puts on a real show. There is nothing else in my garden that blooms at the same time, so open pollinated seed of this open pollinated plant will most likely be crossed with itself. Since that makes it an F2 cross, the next generation could have many variations.

Last June, George McLellan and I hand pollinated outstanding forms of *R. calendulaceum* in the wild on Hooper Bald and Grayson Highlands near Mount Rogers. We did return to those plants after the Nova Scotia trip to collect seed, but we decided not to offer it in the exchange this year and left most of it with J. Jackson and Lindy Johnson to raise for our 2016 convention plant sale. We do, however, have a number of excellent selections collected in the wild from those sites.



Bicolor *R. calendulaceum* near Mount Rogers

Seed of *R. arborescens* always seems to be scarce and last spring we tried to hand pollinate many of the open flowers we saw at Wayah Bald. We do have seed of that this year, but not as much as we would like.



Kalmia selection: white flowers with red spokes.

At nearby Wine Spring Bald, we collected seed from excellent forms of *Kalmia latifolia* including many that have white or pink blossoms with spokes of red (above).

We hope you will raise some seed this spring. Try making some crosses for the Chapter, too.

Good Luck!

