



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Updated Spring Newsletter: March 2020

Potomac Valley Chapter Calendar – 2020 (Most activities are canceled)

- **March 29, 2020** – Joint Meeting with NV-ASA (*canceled*)
- **April 16, 2020** – Tentative Pennsylvania Nursery Trip (*canceled*)
- **April 29-May 3, 2020** – ARS 75th Anniversary Convention (*canceled*)
- **May 9, 2020** – PVC Flower Show/Plant Sale, Annapolis, MD (*canceled*)
- **May 17, 2020** – White Nursery Open House, Germantown, MD (?)
- **June 10-21, 2019** – Tentative Mountain Hikes - Roan Mountain (?)
- **September 25-27** – ARS Eastern Regional, Gettysburg, PA (?)
- **October 4, 2020** – PVC Chapter Picnic (?)
- **November 9, 2020** – PVC Fall Banquet, Normandy Farms, Potomac, MD (?)

Chapter Officers

President: Ginny Mohr

rngmohr@msn.com

Secretary: Diane Reinke

isabelle49@aol.com

Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman

prittman@erols.com

Joint Meeting - ARS and ASA

**Potomac Valley Chapter ARS and the
Northern Virginia Chapter ASA**

When: Sunday, March 29, 2020

*****CANCELED*****

As I am sure you are aware, the pandemic from COVID-19 has disrupted most of our lives. Both the ARS and ASA conventions were canceled. We have canceled our chapter activities this spring but we may be dealing with disruptions into the summer and fall. On a positive note, the ARS Convention in Portland has been rescheduled for 2022. Please try to minimize your potential contact with others and stay healthy!

We hope we can reschedule our March joint meeting with the ASA at a future date. Rick Bauer had planned to discuss the evergreen azalea hybrids of Dr. Sandra McDonald. This issue has some images of her lovely introductions. Your editor would have been giving a version of a humorous talk I prepared for the joint convention in Germany in 2018, “The Crazy World of Rhododendrons.”

We normally send everyone a hard copy version of our newsletter as well as the email version. I have been experiencing printer problems, so for the time being, we will be sending only the email newsletters except for those who do not have Internet access. This is actually a revised issue which has our schedule changes, the membership roster with corrections, and a new article I wrote, “How to Make a Rhododendron Cross.” In the Late Spring 2012 Newsletter, had another article about how to make a cross. I want to encourage our members to try other activities while



Sandra McDonald Hybrid, 'Venus's Baby'

dealing with isolation.

Another activity you can do is to try to root some cuttings. Our Spring 2018 Newsletter there is an article I wrote on “Rooting Dormant Cuttings.” Azaleas root easily any time of year. Some of those photos were taken in 1972, of I am going to do repeat that process this coming week and take new pictures.

Check out these and other past articles in the Newsletter Archive on our chapter website:

www.arspvc.org/newsletter.html

Personally, after a couple of extreme weather years, I have lots of garden renovation to do. I haven’t cut down dead plants or planted anything I bought at the 2016 ARS Convention we hosted in Williamsburg or the 2019 Philadelphia Convention.

The Evergreen Azalea Hybrids of Sandra McDonald

I have long admired the evergreen azalea hybrids developed by Sandra McDonald, Ph.D. As I have shared with many of you before, I like to grow plants that remind me of the people I like. As I stroll through my garden, I will not only admire the plant in the landscape but I also think about the person. It is a method of remembering good friends. The late Austin Kennel, an endearing icon from the Middle Atlantic Region and past ARS President, would often remind us, "People are more important than plants." How true, how true!

Many of us admire Sandra McDonald's azalea hybrids. The Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) has an entire section devoted to the McDonald Azaleas, which you may have seen on our 2016 Convention Tour. Rick Bauer is the lead person in the ASA Legacy Project on the McDonald Hybrids so expect to learn much more about them at our joint meeting on March 29. These are a few images of her many lovely evergreen azalea hybrids.



Sandra McDonald at the NBG



'Hampton Ruby Red'



'Rosy Frills' in the McDonald Azalea Garden at the NBG



'Sandra's Green Ice'



'New Generation Red' at NBG & Ken McDonald



'New Generation Red'



'Blushing Angel'



'Sandra's Dwarf White'



Hyatt Gdn: 'David's Choice' & Lady's Slippers



Sandra McDonald among azaleas in her private garden



'Dreamsicle' in the Beaudry Garden



Sister seedling 'Dream Sherbet' has similar coloration

More McDonald Azalea Hybrids



Norfolk Botanical Garden sign in the McDonald Garden



Strong coral of 'Dreamsicle' when it first opens



Delicate coloring of 'Dreamsicle' as the flowers age



Sandra's azalea garden at her waterfront home in Hampton, VA



'Springtime Blush'



The McDonald Azalea garden at the NBG



'Dainty Angel'



'Sandra's Harlequin'



'Tidewater Firecracker'



Sweeping vistas in the McDonald Azalea Garden at the NBG

Congratulations to our PVC Photography Contest Winners!



1st in Category I & Best in Contest – Don Hyatt
‘Marshy Point Lolly’



2nd in Category I – Rosa McWhorter
‘Rivermist’

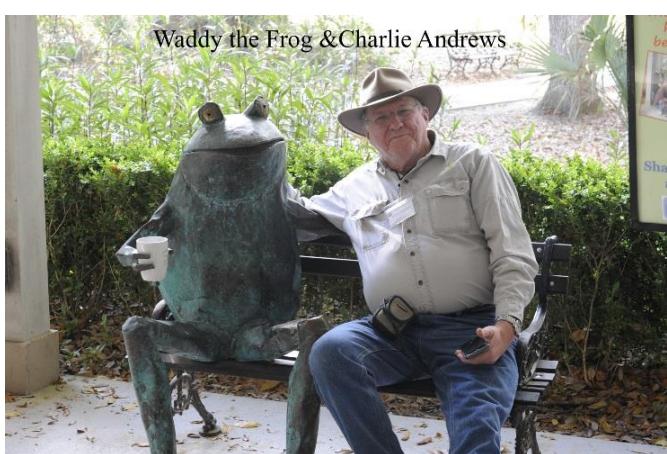


1st in Category II – Dan Neckel
“2019 Azalea Convention”

Categories
I. Flowers
II. Scenery
III. Other



2nd in Category II – Don Hyatt
“Red *R. calendulaceum* at Engine Gap”



1st in Category III – Bill Miller
“Waddy the Frog and Charlie Andrews”



2nd in Category III – Rosa McWhorter
“Can You Find the Butterfly?” Hint →



How to Make a Rhododendron Cross

by Don Hyatt

Since most of us will be spending this spring at home rather than traveling to conventions, it could be a good time to make some rhododendron crosses. Making a cross is not hard to do and can be very rewarding.

Hybridizers try to imagine new plants that will combine desired characteristics from two different parents. Some want to improve flower color, enhance fragrance, or enlarge the size of flowers. Others may be looking for awesome foliage. Many are seeking heat or cold tolerance.

When hybridizers know details about a plant's parentage, they may realize that it might have hidden genes or "recessive traits" that do not appear in the current form. By crossing two plants containing the same recessive trait, that characteristic could be expressed in some of the progeny. For instance, in humans, blue eye color is a recessive trait whereas brown eye color is dominant. It is possible for two brown-eyed parents to have a child with blue eyes if both parents carry that recessive gene.

Bees and butterflies make crosses all the time. As they fly about, they transfer pollen from the stamens of one flower to the pistil of another. In the wild, that is wonderful for guaranteeing genetic diversity of a species. However, when plant breeders are making the crosses, they prefer to choose the two parents. They have specific goals in mind.

To be sure the pollen comes from a desired plant, one method for preventing contamination by insect pollinators or self-pollination is to "emasculate" the flower that will carry the cross. It keeps insects from landing on the flower and



Cowles Hybrid: 'Pastel Perfume'



'Pastel Perfume'



'Apritan'

stops wind-blown pollination, too. We take a fresh flower on the plant and then remove the corolla and stamens, leaving only the pistil.

To make the cross, dab some pollen from stamens of the other flower on the end of that pistil.



Emasculating the Flower



Making the Cross

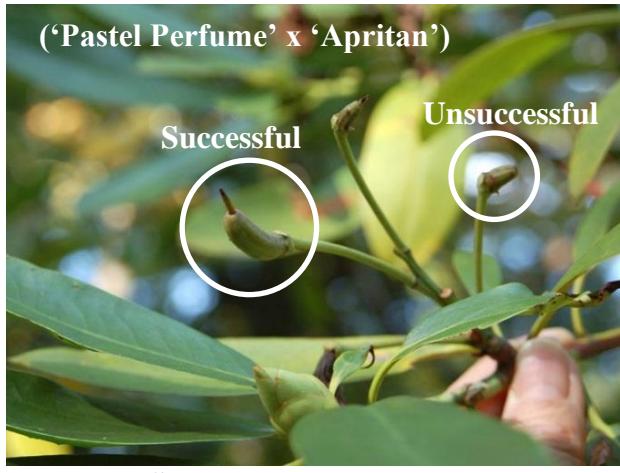


Protecting the Pistil

It is important to protect that pistil from rain or other pollen contamination, at least until the pollen we put on the stigma, that sticky surface at the end of the pistil, has had a chance to germinate. Each pollen grain should grow a tube that tunnels down the long style of the pistil and when it gets to the ovary, the future seedpod, it will try to fertilize an immature seed or ovule. Some people will cover the end of the pistil with a piece of aluminum foil, but I prefer to cover the whole truss with a plastic bag for a while.

Be sure to label the cross so you remember which two plants were used. It may seem obvious in April and May but by October, memories begin to fade. The proper way to list a cross is to put the seed parent (female) first and pollen source (male) second. Tie something bright on the branch so you can easily find the seedpods. That also helps identify the truss so you don't accidentally deadhead your crosses by mistake.

The seedpods on successful crosses will usually be larger than those that did not take.



Seedpod Development

I like to see those big "banana" type pods because I know that there will be many seeds inside. Don't give up on small pods, though. Some plants may be practically sterile but there may be a couple of seeds in those little pods. It only takes one winning hybrid from a difficult cross to make it all worthwhile.

Collect the pods in the fall before cold weather sets in and let them dry in an open paper bag or a paper cup. Don't enclose them in a plastic bag since they can easily develop mold and that could kill the seeds.

When dry, crack open the seedpods and remove the seeds, trying to eliminate as much dust and chaff as possible. That debris can aid in mold development which can cause problems during germination.

Sow the seeds inside during the winter and grow them under lights until spring. When warm weather arrives, transplant seedlings into flats or individual pots. They will take several years to reach maturity, but don't pamper them. Survival of the fittest will help eliminate the weaklings. Azaleas can bloom in 2 to 3 years from seed but rhododendrons can take 4 years or more. First blooms are exciting since every plant is different.

What are my goals? I am anxious to work with blue lepidotes like *R. augustinii*. They are very difficult in our East Coast gardens. 'Blaney's Blue' and 'Rhein's Luna' do well but I want more blues that take our weather extremes. I also would love a hardy version of my *R. veitchianum*, a tropical species from Southeast Asia with large, fragrant white flowers. I plan to cross it with hardy lepidotes like *dauricum* or *carolinianum*. Yes, I will have plenty to do!



R. augustinii



R. veitchianum

Update on the White Garden

By Don Hyatt

I am so happy our members are involved with public garden improvements. Some may not be aware of a wonderful gift from one of our original members, Margaret K. White, but I wanted to give an update on the John C. and Margaret K. White Garden.

In 1939, Margaret and her husband John C. White, or "J.C." as we called him, purchased a lovely 13.6-acre tract of land in Falls Church off of Annandale Road. They built a lovely home, raised five children, and over the years created a beautiful garden featuring rhododendrons, azaleas, and many wildflowers.

They added a large glass room on the home that provided a commanding view of the garden. Margaret spent most of her time out there and our chapter used the room for picnics and meetings.

It bothered Margaret to think that their gorgeous estate would likely be razed by real estate developers when the property was sold. In 1999 at age of 92, she made arrangements to transfer the title to the Fairfax County Park Authority. They gave her a life estate in the property so she could spend her final years there.

Margaret was brilliant and very independent. Her body did become frail in her final years but her mind was sharp as ever to the end. She had a remarkable memory and shared many stories with us. One that seemed amusing is that as a young woman, the doctors told her she had a bad heart and probably would not live very long. They warned her to limit exercise and not play basketball. She decided they were wrong and led an active life anyway. Margaret did not suffer an early demise. She passed away on January 6, 2010, just a few weeks before her 104th birthday!

Management of the White Garden is now under the jurisdiction of Ms. Nicole Connors, the new Director of Green Spring Gardens. They intend to repair the house so it can become a resident curator site but they are now focusing on restoring the garden. The current plan is to maintain existing collections but add native plants.

On February 24, I walked the property with Nicole and some staff from the award-winning Larry Weaner Landscape Associates. They were hired to handle the garden restoration and are experts on native plant designs: www.lweanerassociates.com

Some trees have fallen in storms but I was happy to see that most large rhododendrons and azaleas have survived our recent weather extremes. 'John C. White' was huge and very happy. 'Albert Close' has



Rhododendrons and Azaleas in the White Garden



Original Meadow of Buttercups at the White Garden



Margaret at age 26



Jean Beaudry with Margaret on her 103rd Birthday

taken over the tennis court and must be 50 ft. across now. There was some dieback on 'Cadis' but it is OK.

They paved the driveway and the historic barn has been repaired. They have been removing invasive plants and are getting ready to plant the meadow with native grasses and wildflowers. That area had been neglected for many years and had become a thicket of scrubby trees, weeds, and brambles. It looks good!

Nicole will need volunteers to assist with garden maintenance and could use monetary donations, too!

The John C. & Margaret K. White Garden – *Garden Renovations Underway!*



Nicole Connors, Director
Green Spring Gardens



'John C. White' - Plant



'John C. White' - Flower



The White Garden with 'John C. White' (right)



Rhododendrons and azaleas are still dormant



Some staff from Larry Weaner Design Associates:
Robyn Lomenzo, Ian Caton, and Jenna Webster



The Meadow is cleared and ready to plant



Potential meadow wildflowers?



Azaleas at the edge of the meadow are dormant



Azaleas will bloom at the meadow edge in spring

Pennsylvania Nursery Field Trip Planned for April 16, 2020 (on your own)

The target date we had selected for the annual nursery field trip to some of the Amish nurseries in Pennsylvania was supposed to be Thursday, April 16. We do not plan an organized trip and we do not know if the nurseries will even be open. These nurseries may be open in the summer, so proceed on your own.

Below are the nurseries we intended to see and approximate times we expected to be there. These nurseries have unusual plants at reasonable prices. You may be able to visit them later this spring or summer, assuming they have plants to sell. It might be wise to call first.

Groff's Plant Farm: 9:30 – 11:45 AM
(travel time from I-495/I-95 in MD, 1 hr. 40 min)
6128 Street Rd., Kirkwood, PA 17536
717-529-3001
www.groffsplantfarm.com

Groff's sells annuals, perennials, wildflowers, hostas, tree peonies and other shrubs. They do not take credit cards so bring cash or your checkbook.

Conestoga Nursery: 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM
(travel time from Groffs, 50 minutes)
310 Reading Road, East Earl, PA 17519
717-445-4076

Conestoga Nursery is a smaller outlet that carries choice trees, dwarf conifers, shrubs and some tree peonies. They are closed on Tuesdays and Sundays.

Black Creek Greenhouses: 2:35 – 4:30 PM
(travel time from Conestoga, 5 minutes)
211 E. Black Creek Road, East Earl, PA 17519
717-445-5046

Black Creek Greenhouses offers an enormous selection of bedding plants, house plants, hanging baskets, and various other annuals and perennials. Their prices have been very reasonable.

Meals: We did not work in a time for lunch but there are options including fast food restaurants in East Earl. Some of us prefer to take a sandwich or grab light lunch rather than waste too much time.

Restaurants are problematic, and we used to dine at the Maple Smorgasbord. It is just a few minutes away from the last nursery. Dinner hours were: 4 – 8 PM.

Shady Maple Smorgasbord
129 Toddy Dr, East Earl, PA 17519
www.shady-maple.com/smorgasborg/

Sad News: We recently learned that long time PVC member Don Moen has passed away. He was an avid participant in our chapter seed exchange. He is survived by his wife Lyn.



Camellia 'Frank Houser'

I Had to Have It! *by Don Hyatt*

On the nursery trip to North Carolina at the end of February, I spied the camellia pictured above at Camellia Forest Nursery. The flowers were huge, bordering on the obscene and measured nearly 8 inches across. The color was a rich coral pink with ruffled petals and a tuft of yellow stamens in the center. Some might say it was gaudy but I loved it. It reminded me of my tree peonies and I had to have it.

The variety is 'Frank Houser' and it is a hybrid between the familiar *Camellia japonica* we admire in our spring gardens but crossed with the more tender *Camellia reticulatum* which has larger flowers. I am sure it will not be winter hardy, so I'll keep it in my greenhouse and look forward to those huge blossoms in future years when it is still cold and dreary as late February and early March can be. It was in a gallon pot and cost only \$20 which is less than one might spend for a restaurant meal. Buying plants is therapy!

I'll be looking for large flowered tree peonies on our PA Nursery trip. I do like Big Blooms!



Tree Peonies have huge flowers, too.

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



Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

The Potomac Valley Chapter ARS is one of three American Rhododendron Society chapters located in District 9 which represents the Middle Atlantic region of the United States. Some of our chapter activities include:

- Regular Meetings with Speakers
- Annual Chapter Banquet
- Garden Tours
- Field Trips to Nurseries or to Wild Stands of Native Azaleas and Rhododendrons
- Local and National Seed Exchanges
- Plants for Members Program
- Flower Show
- Informative Chapter Newsletters
- Annual Photography Contest
- Access to Chapter Library Books

Our regular chapter meetings are usually held four times a year at the Potomac Community Center in Potomac, MD, on Sunday afternoons. However, we do hold occasional meetings at other locations in nearby Maryland, Virginia, or Washington, DC.

We encourage you to check out our chapter website which includes at least 16 years of previous newsletters that contain interesting articles, more color pictures, and examples of past activities:

www.arspvc.org

As a member of our local chapter you will also become a member at the national level of the American Rhododendron Society. This entitles you to a year's subscription of their outstanding quarterly **Journal** filled with information and many color pictures. You will also be invited to attend national conventions or regional conferences.

The cost of ARS membership is \$40 per year and includes membership in a chapter of your choice, such as our Potomac Valley Chapter. If you are already a member of another ARS Chapter, you may join the Potomac Valley Chapter as an Associate Member for only \$10 per year but you will need to identify your home chapter.

For more information about the American Rhododendron Society, check out their website:

www.rhododendron.org

Membership Application *American Rhododendron Society*

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip/Country _____

Telephone _____

E-mail: _____

Memberships are on a calendar year basis and include the local chapter membership:

Individual/Family.....	\$40.00
Student (proof of age required).....	10.00
Commercial/Corporate.....	90.00
Sustaining	75.00
Sponsoring.....	150.00
Life, single	1,000.00
Life, family.....	1,500.00
Associate Membership*.....	10.00

*Associate Members must identify home chapter

I would like my "home" chapter to be the
Potomac Valley Chapter

To join our chapter, please contact our treasurer:

POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER ARS
prittman@erols.com

You may also send this form with US Funds payable to the national organization:

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 214
Great River, NY 11739

To pay online by credit card, follow the link to "Membership" on the ARS website:

www.rhododendron.org

More ARS National Contact Points:

Phone (631) 533-0375, Fax (866) 883-8019
Email: member@arsoffice.org