



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Early Spring Newsletter: March 2023

Potomac Valley Chapter Calendar – 2023

- March 3 – 4: North Carolina Nursery Trip
- March 26: Joint Meeting with Northern VA Chapter ASA
- April 13 or 14: Possible Pennsylvania Nursery Trip
- April 19 – 23: Joint ARS / ASA Convention, Atlanta, GA
- April 26: Proposed Garden Tour w/ Ben Morrison Chapter – *Azaleas*
- May 10: Proposed Garden Tour w/ Ben Morrison Chapter – *Rhododendrons*
- May 19 – 21: Joint Meeting with MAC, Orkney Springs, VA

Chapter Officers

President: Carol Segree
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Joint Meeting: NoVa ASA and PVC

Speaker: Chris Schmidt

Blandy Farm - Virginia State Arboretum

Date: March 26, 2023

Time: 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Place: Kirkwood Presbyterian Church

8336 Carrleigh Pkwy, Springfield, VA 22152

The speaker for our March meeting will be Chris Schmidt, the Chief Arborist at the Virginia State Arboretum, Blandy Experimental Farm, which is near Winchester. This is a joint meeting with the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA and it will be held at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church.

Chris will tell us about the history of Blandy while she shares insight into some of their amazing collections including trees, shrubs, and flowers. Graham F. Blandy was a wealthy New York stock broker who purchased the 912-acre Tuleyries estate in 1904 for a summer home. Upon his death in 1926, he bequeathed 712 acres of land including a brick structure known as the Quarters building (pictured right) to the University of Virginia for the State Arboretum. That building served as slaves' quarters in the 1800s and is on the National Register for historic structures. It now houses offices and staff.

Blandy Farm is noted for having the largest public grove of Ginkgo trees in the United States, approximately 300 mature trees on 3.3 acres. The brilliant yellow color of the Ginkgo's fall foliage is beyond compare. In late October to November, Blandy hosts its annual "Ginkgofest" which draws admiring crowds from around the country. On page 4 of this newsletter, I have a few more comments about this unique species, *Ginkgo biloba*. It is a rare survivor from the age of the dinosaurs!



Visitors Arrive at the Quarters Building



Fall Color of the Ginkgo Tree

Meeting Details:

We will have a busy agenda on March 26. The social will start at 1:00 PM with refreshments provided by the Northern VA Chapter ASA.

At approximately 1:30 PM, we will have our speaker, Chris Schmidt, begin her talk. It will be broadcast by Zoom to those unable to attend. Details about the link will be provided later.

Plant Exchange:

After the speaker, we will hold a plant exchange. If you have extra plants, bring one or two to share with others. Please make sure pots are clean!

MAC and PVC: Joint Meeting!
Friday, May 19-Sunday, May 21, 2023
Shrine Mont Camp and Conference Center
221 Shrine Mont Circle
Orkney Springs, Virginia 22845

The Middle Atlantic Chapter and the Potomac Valley Chapter are planning a joint meeting from May 19 – 21 at Orkney Springs, VA. This area is in the Shenandoah Valley near the West Virginia border and about 2 hours west of Washington, D.C. We will be staying at the historic retreat called Shrine Mont Camp and Conference Center near Bryce Mountain Resort.

Most of you have probably received an email from Dave Banks about the conference. It has much more detail about the schedule and fees. If you have not received that email, details can be found on the Middle Atlantic Chapter Website:

<https://macars.org/wordpress/>

It looks like a very entertaining program with Doug Jolley as the speaker Friday night, tours to several gardens on Saturday, and then Sally and John Perkins speaking that evening. It will be a wonderful weekend, so we hope you will block out those dates and join us for a relaxing outing in the Shenandoah Valley in May.

Shrine Mont is busy and they require that we reserve the rooms two months in advance. That means the deadline for online registrations via the link below is March 19 but mail in reservations must be sent no later than March 10. The room rates are \$150 per night for singles and \$220 for doubles but that includes all fees including room, state and local taxes, service charges, and meals. One price covers everything except for the additional cost of the registration fee which is \$30 for each attendee.

Here is the direct link to the registration page on the MAC website:

<https://macars.org/wordpress/hotel-registration/>

It only takes a few minutes to register and pay online with PayPal or credit card. The only thing that may seem confusing is the payment says “Donation” rather than the typical “Checkout Cart” references seen in many online transactions. You are indeed registering and paying for the meeting expenses. Remember:

Registration Deadline March 19



ARS / ASA 2023 Joint Convention!

“Georgia with Azaleas on My Mind”

Marriott Atlanta Perimeter Center

Dunwoody, GA - April 19-23, 2023

Have you registered for the 2023 Convention? Don’t delay because the deadline is, March 31, just a month away! When I saw that Gibbs Garden was on the Friday tour, my mind was made up. I must go!

I toured Gibbs Garden on essentially the same weekend as the coming convention but 10 years ago. It was the first year it was open to the public. The property is nearly 300 acres with 220 acres of garden.

It was created by one of Atlanta’s preeminent landscape designers, Jim Gibbs. He started the project in 1980 on land around his new home. He wanted to view a world class garden from the manor and used his expert knowledge of plant materials, his artistic talent and landscape design skills, and considerable financial resources to transform undeveloped land into a masterpiece. It really is perfection!

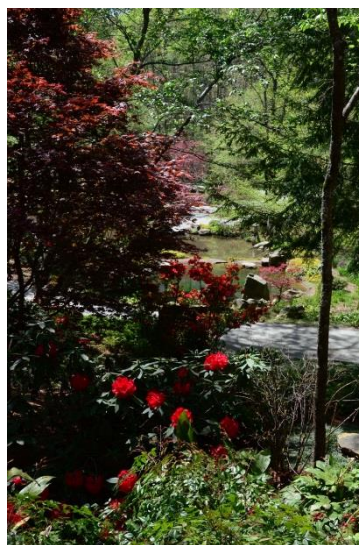
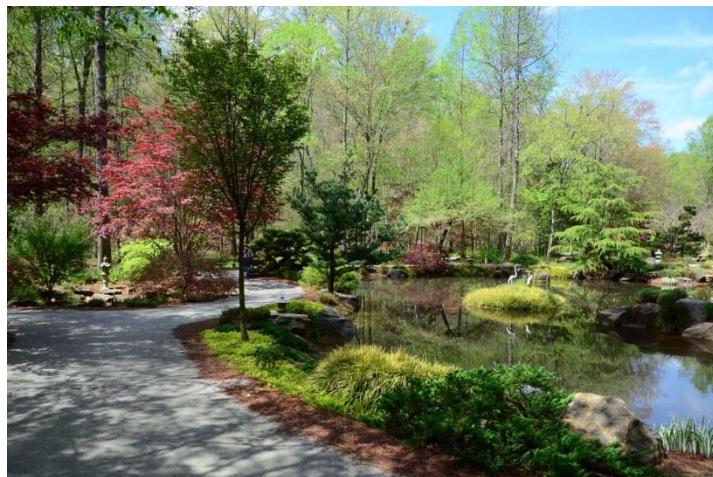
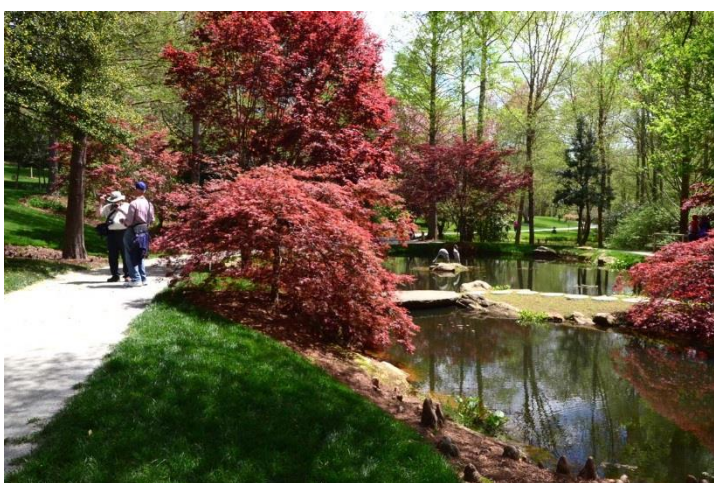
Jim Gibbs he has created a garden legacy for the ages. Gibbs Garden has the largest daffodil planting in the US, an amazing 20 million bulbs spread over 100 acres. The Japanese Garden is a record, too. It covers 40 acres and has 7 naturalistic spring-fed ponds. He has collections of many plant groups, too. The images on the next page are photos I took in 2013. You want to see this place!



Gibbs Garden



Gibbs Garden Ballpark, GA





The Ginkgo Tree: A Living Fossil

The Ginkgo tree, *Ginkgo biloba*, is a stunning tree in autumn when its leaves turn golden yellow. It is native to China and found its way into Western gardens a little more than 300 years ago. The species is one of several that have remained relatively unchanged for the past 200 million years. Fossilized leaves dating from the Jurassic Period, the age of the dinosaurs, are identical to leaves we see on ginkgo trees today. Flowering plants were just evolving during this era. The most common plants back then were ferns, cycads, horsetails, a few evergreens, and, of course, ginkgoes.

Taxonomists seem to argue where to put the ginkgo in the grand scheme of things. Some put it in a class by itself but others suggest it is a deciduous conifer. Ginkgo plants can be either male or female and most people will prefer to plant male trees. The fleshy fruit from a female plant has a very offensive odor, something similar to vomit laced with feces. Once cleaned, seeds are highly prized as a culinary treat.

The stunning fall foliage of the ginkgo is a clear, intense yellow that is hard to beat. The tree adapts to most soils and environmental stresses. It has become a popular street tree in many countries. The plant produces compounds that reject attacks by insects, bacteria, and fungi. It is hardy from Zone 3 (-30 to -40 F) and able to survive air pollution, draught, and fire. In fact, there were several trees near the epicenter of the 1945 atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Even though they were completely charred by the bomb blast, these miracle survivor trees leafed out the following spring.

Ginkgo trees are long lived and many growing in China are estimated to be from 600 to 1000 years old or more. One tree is estimated to be 2500 years old. Ginkgoes can get quite tall, too, typically over 100 ft and some are over 160 ft tall.

Many rhododendron hobbyists grow ginkgoes. There are dwarf forms that make excellent rock garden treasures, companion plants, or Bonsai subjects. The cultivar 'Chris's Dwarf', also known as 'Munchkin', only grows a few inches a year. The leaves are one fourth the typical size. It's a cutie!



Some Upcoming Activities

Jean Beaudry Memorial Garden

We have ordered the bench for Jean's memorial at London Town Gardens and are selecting plants for the landscape. If possible, we would like to have a formal dedication of the bench this spring.

Tentative Garden Tour Plans

Coordinating with the Ben Morrison Chapter ASA, we are expecting to have two garden tours this spring visiting Bob and Rosa McWhorter's garden and Carol Segree's garden. The first tour is planned for Wednesday, April 26, where we will focus on azaleas. The second one would be Wednesday, May 10, which will be to view rhododendrons. Spring is currently a month ahead of schedule so we will have to play it by ear.

Mountain Hikes in June

George McLellan and Don Hyatt are no longer trying to organize a mass exodus to the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee in early June to see the native azaleas and rhododendrons. They have passed the torch to others and will likely tag along to see the blooms. If you want to go, we will try to help you find a group.

PVC and MAC Nursery Field Trip: *March 3-4, 2023*

Some members of the Potomac Valley Chapter ARS and Middle Atlantic Chapters ARS are planning our annual overnight trip to North Carolina to visit a few mail order nurseries that have open houses. We buy some plants, socialize, go out to dinner, and have fun. Won't you join us?

People coming from long distances might skip Pine Knot and go directly to Camellia Forest. Let one of us know if you are coming so we can keep an eye out for you.

Don Hyatt donaldhyatt@verizon.net
Carol Segree csegree17@outlook.com
George McLellan gmclellan38@icloud.com

Friday Morning, March 3

Pine Knot Farms (Hours: 10 am – 4 pm)
681 Rock Church Rd, Clarksville, VA 23927
www.pineknotfarms.com

Target time at Pine Knot: 10:00 am to 11:30 am

Approximate travel time from DC: 4 hours

Wide selection of hellebores that we can purchase in bloom as well as new cultivars propagated by tissue culture. They have some other interesting plants including hardy cyclamens. They have a nice display garden.

Friday Afternoon, March 3

Camellia Forrest Nursery (closed that weekend
but will open for us from 12:00 pm - 3 pm)
9701 Carrie Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516
www.camforest.com

Target time at Nursery: 1:00 to 3:00 pm

Travel time from Pine Knot: 1.5 hours

From Pine Knot, we will return to I-85 and head south via Rt. 25 to Chapel Hill, and travel west on NC-54 to the nursery which carries camellias and many other unusual woody plants. David Parks was not planning to be open that weekend but has made special arrangements for our group. Afterwards, we will drive south to Sanford via NC-15 to avoid Raleigh's rush hour traffic. If we get away early, we usually drop by Big Bloomers to buy a few things that afternoon.

Friday Night - Hotel in Sanford, NC

Hampton Inn Sanford
1904 S Horner Blvd, Sanford, NC 27330
(919) 775-2000

Travel time from Camellia Forest: 55 minutes

We have stayed at the Hampton Inn Sanford before and have been pleased. When possible, we usually gather in the lobby in late afternoon, drink some wine and have snacks (bring your own), and then go out to dinner.



Double Red Hellebore



Hellebores in Pine Knot Farm's Garden



Camellia 'Pink Icicle'



Camellia Forest Nursery & Camellia Blooms

Saturday Morning, March 4

Big Bloomers Flower Farm (9:00 am – 5 pm)
275 Pressly Foushee Road, Sanford, NC 27330
www.bigbloomersflowerfarm.com

Target time at Big Bloomers: 9:00 – 10:30 am

On Saturday morning, we usually go to Big Bloomers first and Plant Delights Nursery next. Those who get to Sanford early enough on Friday can start shopping at Big Bloomers that afternoon and finish up the next morning. The nursery offers a wide selection of annuals, perennials, tropicals, trees, shrubs, and conifers. Good prices!

Saturday afternoon, March 4

Plant Delights Nursery (8:00 am – 5:00 pm)
9241 Sauls Road, Raleigh, NC 27603
www.plantdelights.com

Target time at Plant Delights: 12:00 – 2:00 pm

Travel time from Sanford: 1 hour

Tony Avent's Plant Delights Nursery carries premium plants but also expect to pay premium prices. However, many plants are things that you can't find anywhere else or you never even knew existed. Tony has many interesting plants and he continues to expand his botanical garden to feature them in a landscape setting. Lovely!

After Plant Delights, many of us will head directly home to avoid another day on the road. Some may choose to drop by Pine Knot Farms if they missed it on Friday.

CamToo Camellia Nursery:

George McLellan and some others will stay in Reidsville, NC, on Thursday at the Holiday Inn Express so he can pick up a wholesale order of camellias from Cam Too Nursery on Friday morning. Cam Too is a wholesale only and not open for retail sales but an impressive operation with 30 acres of hoop houses.

<https://www.reservations.com/hotel/holiday-inn-express-hotel-and-suites-reidsville>

<https://camtoocamellia.com/>



Big Bloomer's Flower Farm Greenhouses



Plant Delights Nursery Display Garden



Hoop Houses at CamToo Nursery



Camellia in Display Garden



Hardy Cyclamen



Edgeworthii

Community Zoom Meeting: “Future of the White Garden” Monday, February 27 - 7:00 PM

Several of us received the note below from the Fairfax County Park Authority about a proposed Zoom meeting to discuss the future of the White Gardens in Falls Church. More about this 13.5-acre garden given by one of members and our resistance to the county’s plans can be found here:

<http://www.arspvc.org/articles/mwhite.html>

The Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) has scheduled a community meeting to discuss the next steps in consideration of the Resident Curator Program at the John C. and Margaret K. White Horticultural Park in Falls Church. The FCPA has scheduled a virtual meeting for **Monday, Feb. 27, 2023 beginning at 7 p.m.** The meeting will be held via Zoom at:

<https://bit.ly/whitegardens022723>

Members of the public may also listen to and participate in the meeting by telephone by calling **602-333-0032** and entering the conference code **411406**.

This meeting is a continuation of an extensive public engagement process related to a proposed curator of the house and barn located in the park. The [Resident Curator Program](#) is designed to preserve historic properties by offering long-term leases to qualified tenants who agree to rehabilitate and maintain these historic resources. After receiving and evaluating extensive community input on the initial curator application, staff will be presenting recommended next steps, including the management of the horticultural gardens and natural resources at the park. The presentation will be followed by a facilitated comment period to receive feedback and respond to questions from the community.



Rhododendron ‘Cadis’ as viewed from the Garden Room



A Time Line for the White Garden

1939 – Margaret and J.C. White purchase 13.5-acre property in Falls Church and build a home

1958 – The Whites add a wrap-around garden room in order to better appreciate the garden.

1999 – Margaret agrees to sell the property to Fairfax County so it can become a public garden. Covenants are specified in the deed regarding development.

2006 – Fairfax County creates Master Plan for the White property that reinforces Mrs. White’s vision.

2010 – Margaret White passes away and County takes full title to the property. Utilities are turned off.

2012 – Citizens approve \$500,000 bond referendum in order to begin development of the park.

2014 – County establishes Resident Curator Program to manage other historically significant properties.

2015 – Without care or the ability to water since Mrs. White’s passing, the garden and its horticultural treasures are languishing. The buttercup meadow is an obvious eyesore with tall weeds and invasives.

2016 – County begins restoration of the meadow

2017 – Fairfax County Park Authority commissions \$67,000 Historic Structures Report on the property. The home and garden room do not meet guidelines. Several other expensive reports are commissioned.

2019 – The Park Authority hires a firm to plant the meadow with wildflowers. The approximate cost of is \$80,000. The company warns that the planting will take additional care and maintenance. The County wins an award for its meadow renovation plans.

2021 – Resident Curator Program has taken control of the White garden which is against guidelines in the Master Plan. They secretly offer a long-term lease on the White home and get only one applicant. It will restrict access to the core of the garden

2022 – Family and stakeholders raise objections. Resident Curator plans are put on hold. By the summer, the meadow has returned to the same invasive weeds due to lack of care and maintenance. The bond money is gone. Citizens request an audit.



What is the state of the garden?

The meadow (left) was never one of the horticultural treasures in the White garden. Margaret kept it as a field of buttercups for over 50 years by having it mown a couple of times a year. After she passed away in 2010, the Park Authority did nothing until 2016. By that time, the field was a tangled mass of trash trees and invasive weeds.

They spent \$80,000 to clear the field and plant wildflowers which looked nice in 2020. With no care, the field had returned to the weeds and invasive plants by the summer of 2022. The valuable parts of the garden (right) are in worse shape!



Are you ignoring provisions about the garden as specified in the original deed?

Deed: "The Property is being conveyed upon the express, accepted and agreed upon conditions that until September 30, 2075, the Property shall only be used primarily as a horticultural park"

Are you following the Master Plan?

MP: "The Master Plan for the White Horticultural Park will guide its development from a private residence and garden to a public garden. The plan addresses resource management and preservation, cultural resource preservation, and site improvements, and recommends strategies to enhance visitor enjoyment and experience. This document serves as a guide for all future planning on the site. It should be referred to before any planning and design projects are initiated."

What is being done to address the Master Plan's need for qualified Site Personnel?

MP: "Oversight and/or staffing by professional horticulturalists and specially trained grounds staff will be required. Managing and maintaining high quality horticultural resources requires staff with specialized education, training, and experience."

Potomac Valley Chapter ARS - Newsletter
Donald W. Hyatt, Editor
donaldhyatt@verizon.net



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, send this form with payment to:

POTOMAC VALLEY CHAPTER ARS
PVC-ARS Chapter Treasurer
rittwoman@gmail.com

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

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY
P.O. Box 43
Craryville, NY 12521

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

Email: member@arsoffice.org