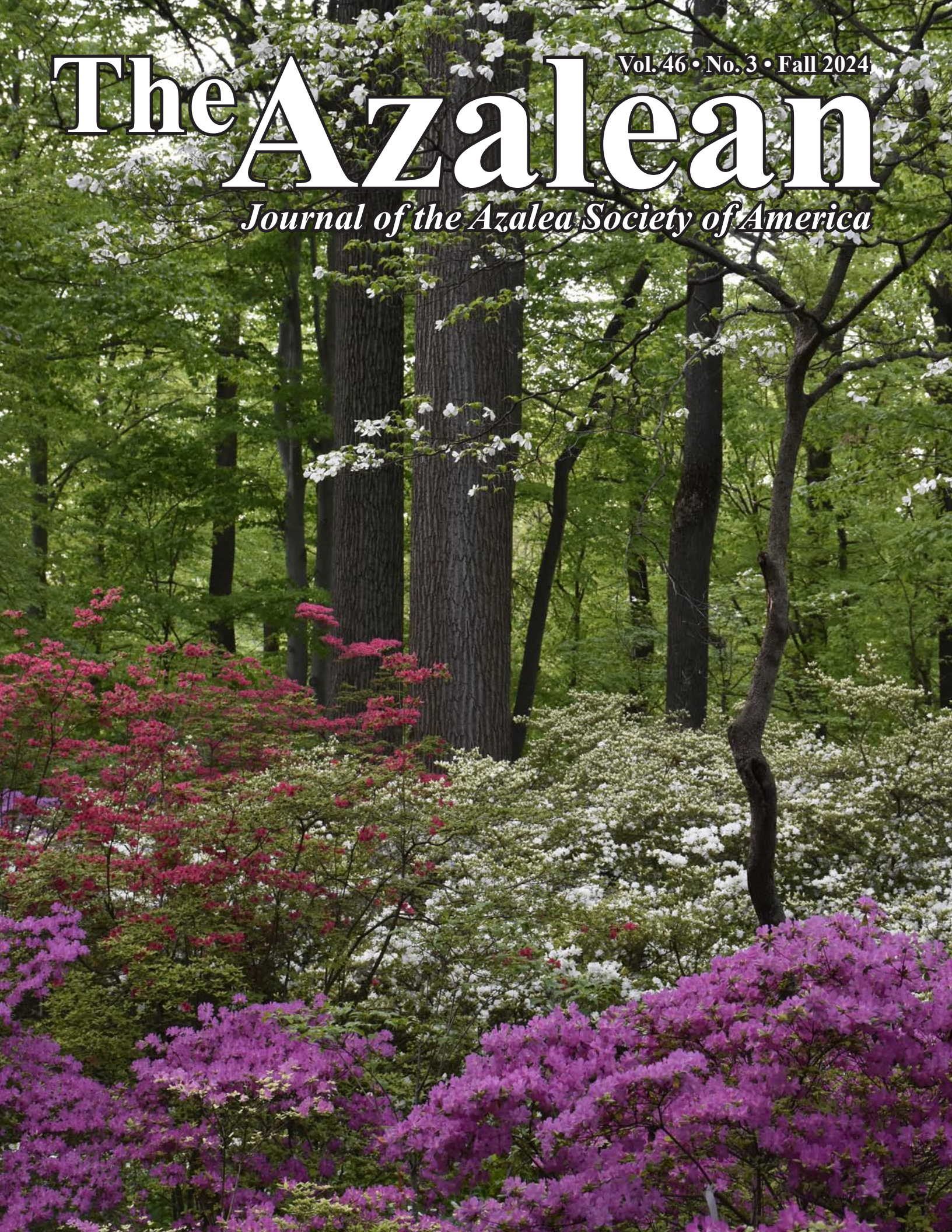


The Azalean

Vol. 46 • No. 3 • Fall 2024

Journal of the Azalea Society of America



President's Letter

Charlie Andrews—Cumming, Georgia

We know azaleas are part of *Rhododendron*, a large, highly variable and wonderful genus of over 1,000 species. Carl Linnaeus originally created separate genera, first creating an *Azalea* genus in 1735 and a *Rhododendron* genus 18 years later in 1753. He defined separate species because he thought, incorrectly, that all azaleas had five stamens while all rhododendrons had 10 stamens. In his first six *Azalea* species, he included both evergreen and deciduous plants, including what is now *Rhododendron indicum* and *R. viscosum*.

The complexities of botanical rules prevented the name “Azalea” from being used as a subtaxa under *Rhododendron*. But there are no rules for common names, and the term “azalea” has been firmly associated with both the Asian evergreen species and the deciduous species, primarily from North America. In addition, as a common name, “rhododendron” to a non-botanist is often thought of as a large-leaf evergreen plant. Many books written about rhododendrons include the word “Azaleas” in the title, for examples, Clement Gray Bowers, (1936, rev. 1960) *Rhododendrons and Azaleas: Their Origins, Cultivation and Development* and H. Edward Reiley, (1992) *Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas*. Even though redundant, the title lets the reader know these popular plants are included.

Gardeners and horticulturists know that both types of azaleas, evergreen and deciduous, are distinctive and characteristically different from the large-leaf evergreen rhododendrons. Further, they recognize that evergreen azaleas and deciduous azaleas are quite different themselves. In fact, they are so different that while one can sometimes cross a deciduous azalea with an elepidote rhododendron, it is almost impossible to cross one with an evergreen azalea. It is unfortunate that the evergreen type and deciduous type are both called azaleas. When some books discuss azaleas but lump both types together without identifying which are deciduous and which are not, the reader may be misled.

The culture of azaleas is somewhat easier than rhododendrons in general. Azaleas are more tolerant of habitat than other rhododendrons. Once established, azaleas can tolerate more sun, more drought, more water, more fertilizer. In the United States, azaleas can be successfully used as garden plants in more areas of the country than other rhododendrons. While the maritime climate of the northwest coast of North America is ideal for many *Rhododendron* species, we in the eastern portions have better success with the part of *Rhododendron* commonly called azalea.

~ *Charlie*



The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation, and appreciation of azaleas which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (Ericaceae).

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Deadlines for *The Azalean*:

- Winter 2024 issue is due October 15, 2024
- Spring 2025 issue is due January 15, 2025
- Summer 2025 issue is due April 15, 2025
- Fall 2025 issue is due July 15, 2025

On the Cover

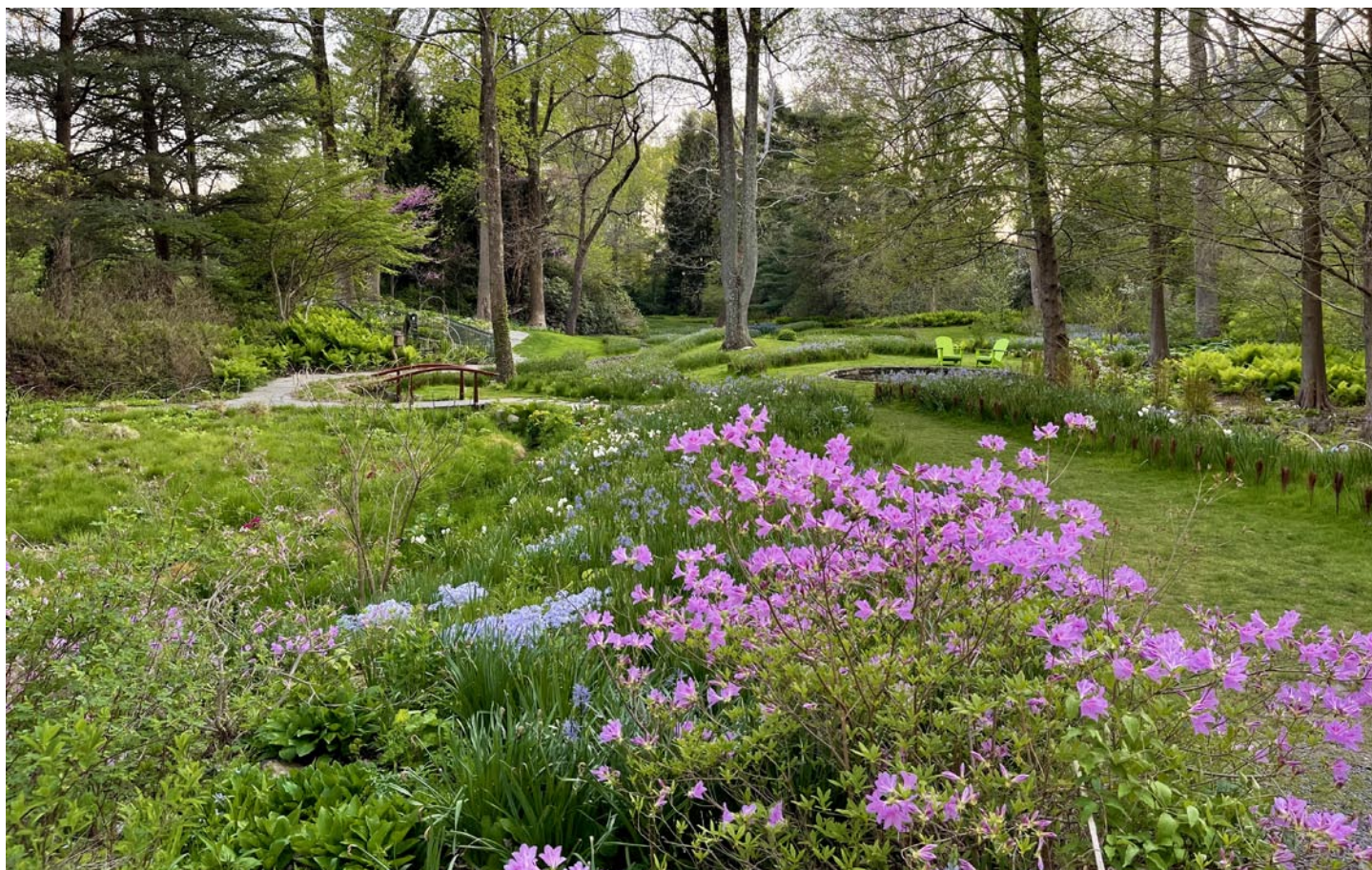
Evergreen azaleas and flowering dogwood at Winterthur in Delaware.

Remember, you too can write for *The Azalean*! To submit your articles and photos for publication, contact: theazalean@gmail.com.



Preview of the 2025 ASA Convention: History and Horticulture

By Steve Wright—Devon, PA



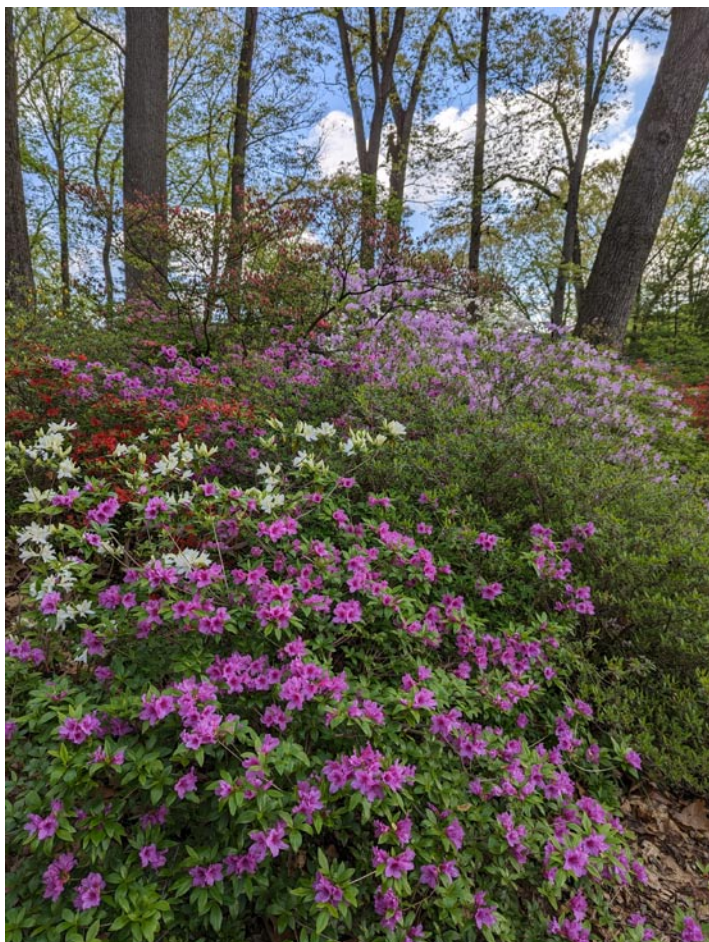
Chanticleer Garden.

The 2025 ASA National Convention will be held in the Philadelphia, PA region from May 7 through May 9. The tag line “History and Horticulture” could not be more appropriate as the region is loaded with both. The historic sites go well beyond Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. In fact, there are more than 1,200 properties and districts on the National Register of Historic Places in Philadelphia and its four surrounding counties! Philadelphia is also the birthplace of American botany and home to John Bartram’s garden, created nearly 300 years ago. Bartram’s legacy lives on as the Philadelphia countryside is now peppered with dozens of beautiful gardens—both public and private. With more than 35 public gardens within 30 miles of Philadelphia, the region has been dubbed “America’s Garden Capital.” As the host of the convention, Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens is excited to invite you all for a few days to explore some of these great destinations.

The Convention Hotel

The Desmond Hotel in Malvern, PA, will be our home base. This beautiful, award-winning hotel sits in the middle of Philadelphia’s historic countryside with easy access to Valley Forge National Historical Park and Brandywine Battlefield. It is a short distance to all our trip destinations. Reservations will include free parking, a local shuttle, complimentary Wi-Fi, and a free hot breakfast each morning.

We have reserved 80 rooms for this event with the special convention rate of \$169. In addition, 20 rooms have been blocked with that rate for Tuesday night for any early arrivals as well as Saturday night for those wishing to extend their stay. Please contact the hotel directly at 1-800-575-1776 or reservations@desmondgv.com to make your reservations. Be sure to let them know you are attending the convention and use the three-letter code “ASA”. **Blocked guest rooms will be released**



Evergreen azaleas at Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens.

Tuesday, April 8, 2025, so be sure to make your reservations by then.

Wednesday Activities

Convention registration will open at noon and continue until 8:00 PM. Early arrivals might enjoy visiting nearby attractions or one of the area's many public gardens. You might also take advantage of opportunities to visit small private gardens during their "open house" hours. A list of those gardens will be available at the registration desk. Dinner will be on your own before we come together for a welcome social from 7:00-8:30 PM. There are three dining options at the hotel with several others within walking distance.

Thursday Activities

The first full day of the convention will be one filled with horticultural delights. We first visit a garden that has been called "the most romantic, imaginative, and exciting public garden in America." **Chanticleer** is a study of textures and forms, where foliage trumps flowers, the gardeners lead the design, and even the drinking fountains are sculptural. It is a garden of pleasure and learning

yet filled with ideas to take home. This "pleasure garden" draws visitors from all over the world, and for good reason.

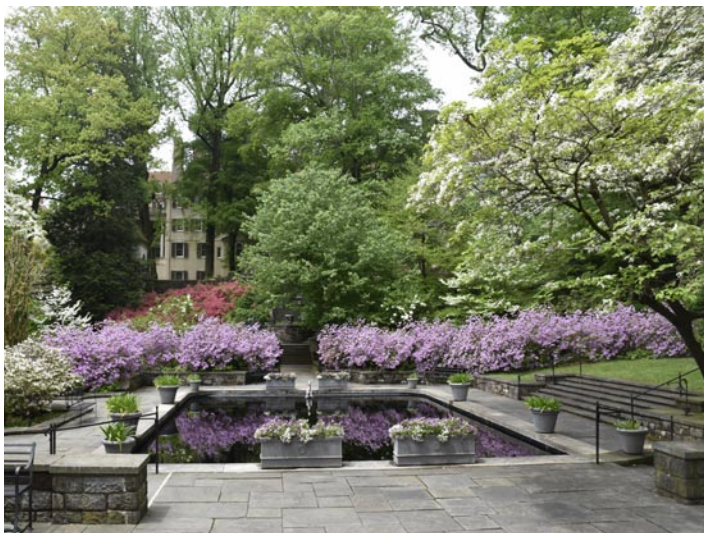
From there, we take a short drive to **Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens** with its nationally accredited collection of rhododendrons and azaleas. In addition, the garden displays a remarkable collection of native companion plants that not only add beauty, but also significant ecological value. Thousands of plants have been added in the past few years and Jenkins will be in its fifth year of collecting for its Native Rhododendron Germplasm Repository. Many plants collected for that project will be on display.

There will not be a sale at the hotel this year. Instead, **Jenkins will be hosting the convention plant sale** and we have planned extra time at Jenkins to allow for shopping. Sale plants will include a large selection of azaleas and rhododendrons, including some rare selections propagated over the past few years. There will also be hundreds of other native trees, shrubs, ferns, and wildflowers.

We end our travels on Thursday with a trip to **WynEden**—the garden of celebrated horticulturist Wayne Guymon—which is widely recognized as one of the premier private gardens in the Mid-Atlantic. This superb, 10-acre garden features an extensive collection of azaleas, rhododendrons, and hosta. Wayne celebrates form, color, and texture with a richness of plant material carefully managed to emphasize order and serenity. This lush oasis is filled with many horticultural surprises. WynEden is a unique achievement of artistic vision, horticultural skill, and sustained effort—it is not to be missed.



Overlooking the pond at Wyneden.



Reflecting Pool surrounded by evergreen azaleas at Winterthur.

We will arrive back at the hotel for dinner and a presentation by **John Lonsdale**. John is the owner and creator of Edgewood Gardens, a small private garden and nursery situated 35 miles west of Philadelphia. John has grown a wide variety of alpine and woodland plants and bulbs for more than 40 years and has traveled extensively to study plants in situ, especially *Trillium* species in the Southeastern United States. John's garden is chock full of rare and unusual botanical wonders and his presentation will showcase a selection of bulbs, perennials, and small trees and shrubs he grows as perfect complements to azaleas. As an added bonus, John will be bringing a selection of plants from his nursery that will be for sale after the presentation.

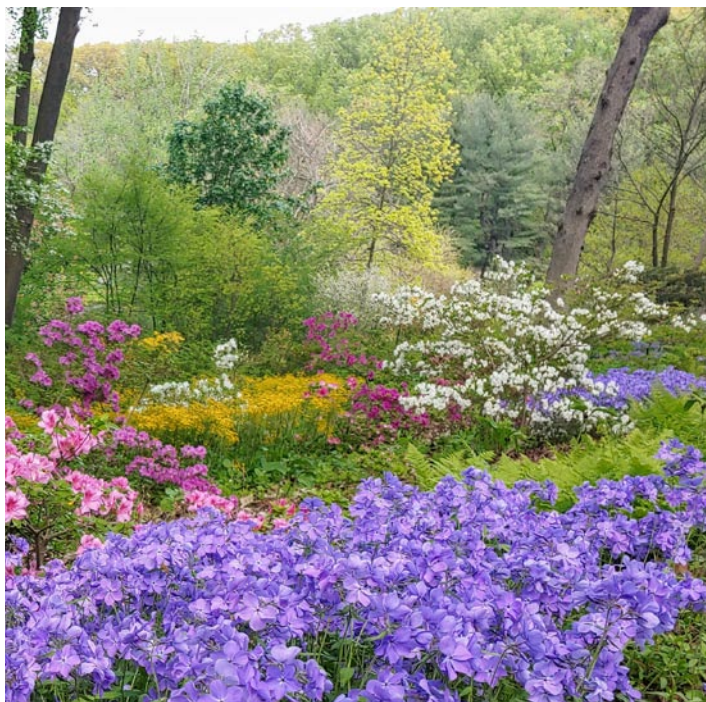
Friday Activities

We will spend Friday exploring two of the region's du Pont gardens. First, we head to **Winterthur**, a spectacular, 60-acre public garden surrounded by over 1,000 acres of farmland, meadows, and waterways. Winterthur stewards a large collection of flowering trees, spring ephemeral wildflowers, and an extensive collection of evergreen azaleas. The beautiful garden we see today is the result of the artistic vision of its creator, Henry Francis du Pont. The views in every direction were carefully designed and important to the visitor experience. The paths are an integral part of the overall design, curving rather than straight, following the contours of the land, passing around trees, drawing walkers into the garden. Mr. du Pont's 175-room mansion holds a world-renowned art and furniture collection of more than 90,000 objects. Though most of this collection is unavailable to the public, visitors can enjoy a small

museum containing a sampling of items from the collection.

We will then travel to **Mt. Cuba Center**, one of America's premier native plant gardens. The collection focuses on plants native to the Eastern Temperate Forests of the United States with a particular emphasis on the Appalachian Piedmont. Their North American *Hexastylis* and *Trillium* collections are of national significance and have been accredited by the American Public Gardens Association's Plant Collections Network. Mt. Cuba also has one of the most extensive collections of eastern native azaleas in the country, displaying almost every species and their various naturally occurring forms.

We end Friday with our banquet and speaker, **Karel Bernady**. Karel has been a mainstay in the *Rhododendron* world having filled many high-level leadership roles on the local (Philadelphia), regional, and national level for nearly 40 years and earning the ARS's Gold Medal in 2015. Karel's fascination for rhododendrons and azaleas has led him on many botanical adventures. While he frequently joins others to explore wild populations in the southern Appalachians, he has also spent considerable time exploring the native azaleas in the northeast. Throughout his travels, he has discovered many exceptional specimens and noteworthy populations closer to home. His presentation will feature many of these native azalea "hot spots" in the northeast.



Azaleas and wildflowers at Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens.

Saturday (Post-Convention)

We hope you will have an opportunity to continue exploring on your own, but have also organized some post-convention activities.

For anyone interested, we have planned a hike in nearby **French Creek State Park**. French Creek is an 8,000-acre natural area in the Hopewell Big Woods—the largest contiguous forest in southeastern Pennsylvania. We will be hiking part of the Mill Creek Trail, a moderate, five-mile loop through natural forest with lots of opportunities for stops and photographs. Along the way, you will see many Pinxterbloom azaleas and hundreds of woodland wildflowers including seven different species of native terrestrial orchids, most of which should be in bloom.

You might also consider heading back to Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens to continue shopping and to see the annual **cut flower competition** (aka “truss show”) hosted by the Delaware Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

Or use this opportunity to visit one of the many other public gardens or historic sites. And, of course, no trip to Philadelphia would be complete without an authentic Philly cheesesteak! You will receive a long list of options for all these things in your registration packet.

Registration Information

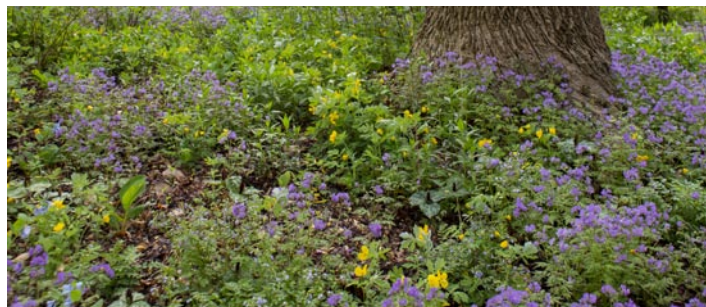
A registration fee of \$350 will cover all expenses, including meals. Registrations must be received no later than April 7, 2025, after which time an additional \$50 fee will be requested. Refunds are available for cancellations made before March 7, 2025. You can print the registration form from the convention website and send it with your payment to Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens, 631 Berwyn Baptist Rd., Devon, PA 19333.

Convention Website

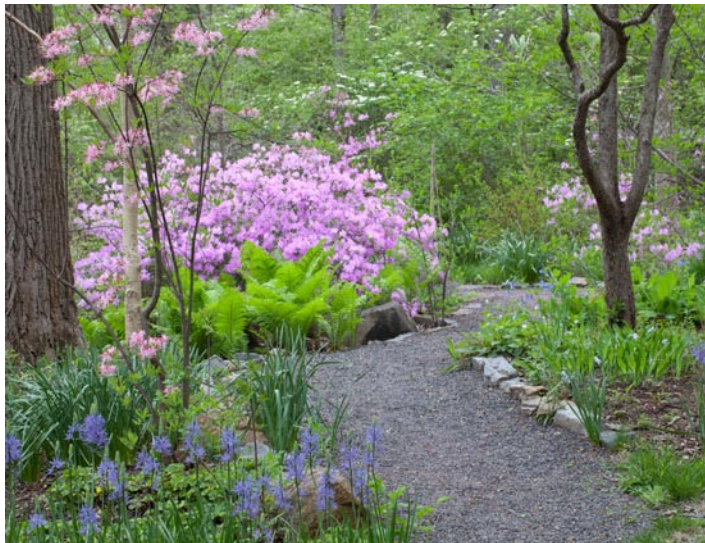
More details including registration forms can be found on the ASA website at <https://azaleas.org/convention-2025/>.

About the Author

Steve Wright is the Director of Horticulture and Curator at Jenkins Arboretum & Gardens. He is co-chairing the convention with Tara Spears, Jenkins' Curatorial Assistant, and can be reached at steve@jenkinsarboretum.org.



Woodland gardens at Mt. Cuba Center.



Azaleas, rhododendron, camassia, and ostrich fern line a path in Bell's Woodland at Chanticleer.



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2024 Distinguished Service Award Winners: Patrick Thompson and Denise Richard Lanclos

*By Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia
and Charlie Andrews—Cumming, Georgia*



Patrick Thompson receives the ASA Distinguished Service Award from Charlie Andrews at the 2024 ASA annual convention.

Patrick Thompson was honored with the ASA's Distinguished Service Award at the banquet during the 2024 ASA annual convention. This was in recognition of his work in breeding native azaleas.

The text of the award reads:

Patrick Thompson, you are the sole proprietor of a company offering surveys, consultation, landscape design and installation, habitat management, and arborist work. You are a certified arborist, firefighter, and the coordinator of Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance. Your heart, however, lies with native azaleas and the Azalea Society of America.

You have been breeding deciduous azaleas since 2010. You often go on field trips to locate new populations and expand our knowledge of them. You write about them and are often invited to meetings and workshops to share your knowledge of native azaleas. You earned your master's degree at Auburn with a research thesis entitled "Rooting Response of Deciduous Azaleas ... Stem Cuttings to Mist Regimes and Media Mixes."

You are curator of Auburn University's Donald E Davis Arboretum. Starting from a collection of

oaks, about 150 tree species, and only a few native azaleas, through your efforts, the arboretum now has more than 1,000 taxa and an outstanding collection of native azaleas. From these native azaleas, you developed the colorful Auburn Series. You are a past president of the Alabamense Chapter. In 2013, you helped revive the chapter and have continued in its support as one of their main leaders.

We greatly appreciate your efforts to promote azaleas and your many contributions to the society. You are indeed a distinguished member of the Azalea Society of America.



Denise Richard Lanclos receives the ASA Distinguished Service Award from Rick Bauer at the 2024 ASA annual convention.

Denise Richard Lanclos was awarded ASA's Distinguished Service Award. She has supported and promoted our society for several years.

The text of the award reads:

You have made numerous contributions to our society and to the promotion of azaleas. In your hometown of Lafayette, Louisiana, you have promoted the planting of azaleas throughout the city, and you were the driving force behind the city being designated as an "Azalea City." You showcased the beauty of the azaleas in Lafayette by

organizing and conducting the Society's convention in the city in 2022. Running a convention is a challenging task and you performed superbly.

At the Society level, you served on the executive committee of the board of directors as society secretary. Your attention to detail and follow-up is second to none. Once again, you did a stellar job.

Finally, you served for several years as the Society's advertising manager for our journal, *The Azalean*. This is an important position which not only adds needed revenue to the society coffers,

but also helps promote azaleas and those vendors providing them to the public. You were extremely proactive, generating more advertisements than we had previously experienced. In addition, you created a shared spreadsheet of all your contacts to pass on to your successor. While this is a paid position, you generously refused remuneration from our society.

Denise, we greatly appreciate your contributions to our society and your efforts to promote azaleas. You are a distinguished member of the Azalea Society of America.

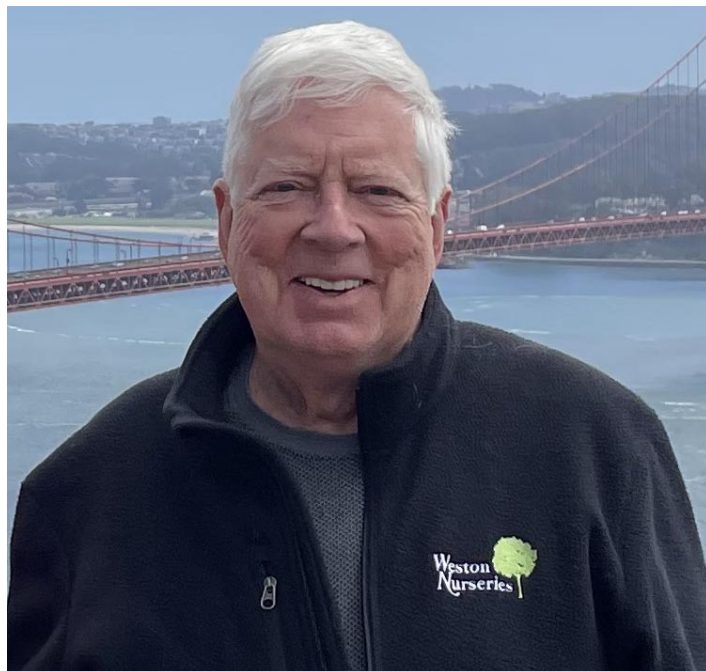
In Memoriam: Wayne Mezitt

By Sally Perkins—Salem, New Hampshire

Wayne Mezitt, 81, of Hopkinton, Massachusetts, passed away peacefully on July 18, 2024, after a brief illness and surrounded by his family. Sadly, he died from complications of babesiosis, a deer-tick carried disease found in southern New England.

Wayne left a legacy of horticultural knowledge as the third in four generations of nurserymen. He was chairman of Weston Nurseries and owner of "Hort-Sense," a horticultural advisory business. His grandparents, Peter J. and Anna Olga Mezitt, founded Weston Nurseries in 1923, and his parents, Ed and Wally Mezitt, moved the business to Hopkinton in the 1940s. Wayne headed the nursery from the 1980s until the early 2000s. He carried the legacy of his father's breeding program in rhododendrons and azaleas and now with Peter and Karen Mezitt, his family's fourth generation, assuming leadership, it carries further.

As an icon to New England plant world, he was a mentor to many and a steward of responsible horticulture. Despite the long list of leadership posts across regional and national horticulture groups with awards to match he never stopped caring for his acres of gardens, tests plots, and vegetable gardens. The azalea world will remember his quiet enthusiasm for all things horticultural but particularly Weston Nursery's summer blooming deciduous azaleas—mostly of native species parentage. He extended the color range, the bloom time and fragrance in New England from 'Frank Abbott' (*× prinophyllum*) to 'Weston's Lollipop'



(*× viscosum*) to 'Henry's Triumph' (*× prunifolium*). New England always had less variety of evergreen azaleas to choose from but Wayne promoted his father's locally developed hybrids for their hardiness with selections such as 'Abigail Adams', 'Majesty', and 'Bixby'.

He leaves behind his wife Beth, four children, and nine grandchildren.

"For the Love of Gardening," is the title of the book Wayne and his wife Beth wrote in 2023 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Weston Nursery. It also could be the title of their life together.

Chapter News



Many of the Louisiana Chapter members gathered at their summer meeting. Photo courtesy of Denise Lanclos.

Louisiana Chapter *Denise Lanclos, Board Member*

Louisiana Chapter members gathered for their summer meeting at James Campbell's beautiful woodland gardens for a potluck lunch and a hiking tour. Members enjoyed seeing his many varieties of azaleas, camellias, and the historic cypress trees in the ravine and several varieties of bamboo. Members took cuttings of azaleas home to propagate. We enjoyed Southern fried chicken, dilled peas, carrot salad, Mirliton casserole, and macaroni and cheese. The desserts included Chantilly cake, cheesecake, and raspberry cookies.

Northern Virginia Chapter *Rick Bauer, Corresponding Secretary*

The Northern Virginia Chapter conducted our first plant sales of the year at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens in Vienna, VA, on April 27 and May 11. Bad weather caused us to close the first sale early and to postpone the second from May 4 to May 11. We did sell 189 plants over both sales.

On July 14, we held our annual cutting and plant exchange. This is always a great opportunity for our members to share their extra plants and to provide cuttings for those members who propagate azaleas. In addition to the exchanges, Rick Bauer and Joanne Neckel gave presentations on their gardens. These member garden presentations were originally scheduled for our meeting last October, however we ran out of time and had to reschedule.

We had a very good turnout of members in person with some additional attendees online.

Our next function is another plant sale on September 14 followed by a meeting with speaker on October 6 at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church.



Lars Larson and Ralph Habegger unload azaleas for sale. Photo by R. Bauer.



NV Chapter members listen to garden presentations. Photo K. Jentz.

Vaseyi Chapter *Aaron Cook, President*

On Saturday, June 29, the following Vaseyi Chapter members met to start the planning process for the 2026 Azalea Society Convention: Lisa and Aaron Cook, Pam and Jackson McCarter, Carson Ellis, Charlie Andrews, April Sanborn, John Simmons, Michael Bamford, Suzanne Medd, and Andy and You-Ying Whipple.

The dates for the Convention have been set for Sunday, May 3, through Tuesday, May 5, with a possible Post-Convention Tour on Wednesday, May 6.

The 2026 Convention will be held in Hendersonville, NC, with possible field Trips to Biltmore, the NC Arboretum, Bullington Gardens, and the Western NC Horticulture Research Station—along with several nurseries and private gardens.

On Sunday, July 14, a joint Picnic Meeting of Southeastern Chapter, American Rhododendron Society and Vaseyi Chapter, Azalea Society of America, was held at Flat Rock Park Pavilion. Aaron Cook, President, convened the meeting. Nineteen members and guests attended. Aaron offered a prayer of thanksgiving to grace the meal. Attendees enjoyed a sumptuous meal. Ray Head, Southeastern Chapter past-president and current board member, thanked Aaron for his more than five years of service as joint president. He then presented a slate of officers to serve the Southeastern Chapter of the ARS for the next two years. Officers are Charles Van Rens, President; Michael O'Hara, Vice President; Jackson McCarter, Treasurer; Pamela McCarter, Secretary.

Aaron will continue to serve as President of the Vaseyi Chapter of the Azalea Society and we will continue to have joint meetings. In 2026, during the first week in May, the Vaseyi Chapter, is planning to host a national convention of the Azalea Society of America in Hendersonville. Members of both groups are encouraged to participate in planning and assisting with the convention. The 2025 Azalea Society convention is to be held in Philadelphia, PA, and will be hosted by the Jenkins Arboretum.



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LEGACY PROJECT OVERVIEW

A large number of hybridizers, including members of the Azalea Society of America, have developed beautiful hybrid varieties of azaleas. Many of these varieties have not been introduced to commercial markets and have not been widely distributed.

The Legacy Project is a means of increasing the knowledge of these hybridizers and their hybrids. It also encourages the propagation and introduction of these hybrids to a wider population.

An overview to the Legacy Project itself, which describes the project and the suggested actions to be taken, and artifacts to be created or acquired, is available at <https://www.azaleas.org/legacy-project/> in the attachments section. Also available is a PowerPoint™ presentation on the overall Legacy Project.

Member Profile: Aaron Cook

Could you please tell us about yourself and your background?

I grew up on a small farm south of Morganton, NC. In my childhood, we raised most of what we ate. My earliest influences were my grandmothers. All over the surrounding hills and along the creeks and rivers we could find various types of rhododendrons and native azaleas. My grandmother Denton was one of the few people in the area that referred to *Rhododendron calendulaceum* and *R. periclymenoides* as azaleas and not honeysuckle bushes. She also grew many evergreen azaleas and had a small sand bed down along a creek that she used to propagate azaleas from cuttings.

As a youth, I participated in 4-H and won several demonstration events showing how to plant and care for azaleas. I went to Appalachian State University and graduated with a BS in Biology and an MA in Biology Education. I did my graduate research on *Hudsonia montana*, a native plant found on the rim of Linville Gorge.

Upon graduation, I spent the next 33 years teaching in the community college system. I taught classes in General Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, Plant Identification, and Plant Propagation. Over that same period, I became actively involved in the NC Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Boy Scouts of America, and many different plant societies.

In my retirement, I volunteer at a local public garden where I teach Plant Identification and Plant Propagation. I also help out with their spring and fall plant sales, and offer plant information to interested buyers during the sales. I am married to Lisa Ann Hooks and we have two adult children and a grandson.

Who are your influences/heroes?

I have been extremely fortunate to meet many positive influences in the Azalea Society. I would have to say that some of my greatest influences were Margie Jenkins, Dr. John Thornton, Buddy



Aaron Cook relaxing during a garden tour.

Lee, Dr. Augie Kehr, Bob Stelloh, Ed Collins, and John Brown. I consider myself lucky indeed to have gotten to know so many fellow azalea enthusiasts through the Society.

Other than azaleas, what other plants do you like to grow, collect, or hybridize?

In general, I have a fondness for most plants except maybe *Toxicodendron radicans* and *Smilax glauca*. Although I do find the fall color of Poison Ivy to be attractive and I have frequently munched on the tender new shoots of cat briar as I walked through the woods.

I grow and hybridize daylilies, hosta, gladiolas, hollies and calycanthus. At any given time, I usually have about 350 to 1000 seedlings of various species in the garden. I am not in the business and rarely sell plants; but do have one weekend each year that I sell seedlings for \$5 each. This frees up space in the garden for new plants and raises enough money for soil amendments and fertilizer. Many people want to know why I sell plants so cheaply. I tell them that I have killed many \$50 and \$100 plants, but never kill the \$5 plants.

What got you started on collecting/raising native azalea?

When I was growing up there were many wildcrafters in our area who made their living digging native plants out of the wild and selling them. At a very young age, I realized that if this practice continued, along with habitat destruction, that the native plants I had grown to love would be lost to future generations. So, instead of harvesting native plants directly from the wild, I choose to propagate them from seeds as well as root and stem cuttings. As a newlywed spouse working in Chapel Hill while my wife attended UNC for her graduate degree, I took several classes on native plant propagation at the UNC Botanical Garden.

What is your favorite of all the azaleas that you grow?

That is a little bit like asking me which child is my favorite. If I was forced to pick one, then *Rhododendron calendulaceum* would have to be near the top of the list. It is a vigorous grower with large blooms. It has a high degree of variability ranging in color from near white all the way to brilliant

red. It covers a large geographic range and I have even found several over the years with fragrance.

What advice would you give to beginner azalea collectors?

Join the Azalea Society of America. That is the best advice I can give you. You will have access to some of the best plant material to be found anywhere and will make many lifelong friends. You will also have access to our website that contains valuable resources about azaleas. Even if you live in the city on a small lot, there are azaleas that will be appropriate for your geographic area and climate.

What is your involvement with the ASA Seed Exchange?

The history of the seed exchange can be traced back to a hike to Copper Bald during the 2001 National Azalea Convention. It was on that trip that I met Tom Milner and Jean Minch. Later, I would exchange seeds with Tom and Jean's husband, Fred Minch. By this time the Rhododendron Society had a thriving seed exchange and I thought it would be a good perk for our members to have access to a seed exchange as well. At the 2006 Convention in Rockville, MD, the board approved the seed exchange and, with a lot of help from contributors and Bob Stelloh, it was launched in 2007. From the onset until now, we have always depended on our generous seed contributors. None have been more faithful and generous over the years than Sally and John Perkins. From 2007 until 2012, I served as the Seed Exchange Coordinator. In 2013, Lindy Johnson took over and served admirably for the next 11 years. In 2024, I once again volunteered to take on the job of coordinator.

What seeds are most and least in demand?

The demand varies from year to year. There is always a demand for native deciduous species from unusual locations. There is generally good demand for native deciduous crosses between species that bloom at different times. We seldom have many good crosses of evergreen azalea seed submitted. It would be great if some of the evergreen hybridizers would send in some of their surplus seed.

What years did you serve as ASA President and what do you consider your most significant contribution?

I served as President from 2009 to 2011. During that time, there was a proposal from the National Arboretum to destroy the Glenn Dale Azaleas on Mt. Hamilton. Along with many members of the Society, we were successful in protecting that valuable resource for future generations.

Anything else you want to add or think would be of interest to ASA members?

I became a member of the Azalea Society in 2000 after some prodding by Bob Stelloh and Ed Collins. I was recruited to lead two all-day field trips to Copper Bald for the 2001 National Azalea Convention held in Asheville, NC. On those trips I became good friends with Tom Milner, Saleta Compton, J. Jackson, Lindy Johnson, Barbara Bullock, Will Ferrell, and many others. Those friendships have been ongoing for the last 25 years.

As I look back over the last 25 years, I have great memories of many other field trips and conventions. I cannot express adequately what the Azalea Society has meant to me personally and professionally. It has been my pleasure to serve both at the chapter and national level.

Aaron Cook watering the garden with his grandson.



Dedication of the Earl Sommerville Legacy Garden at the Wright Environmental Education Center

By Ken Gohring—Marietta, Georgia

On June 13, 2024, the Sommerville Legacy Garden was dedicated at the Wright Environmental Education Center in East Cobb County, GA. Earl Sommerville (Fig. 1) is recognized as an ASA legacy hybridizer and this garden was dedicated to his work. Cobb Master Gardener, Judy Beard, Project Leader at the Wright Center presided. In the dedication ceremonies, she discussed her relationship with Earl, some of his cultivars and the development of the garden. Over the years, she developed a good working relationship with Earl, who provided counsel and native azalea plants for the Wright Center.

Judy's presentation was followed with an address by Charlie Andrews, ASA President, who discussed Earl's work in detail. At the conclusion of Charlie's dedication presentation, attendees were treated to a meal served by the Cobb Master Gardeners. After the meal, Charlie and Ken Gohring conducted a session where various aspects of azalea and rhododendron culture, azalea genetics, and aspects of Earl's work with native azalea plant selection and propagation were discussed.

Earl Sommerville, a resident of Marietta, GA, developed an association and appreciation of wild azaleas. He acquired his love for native azaleas upon encountering them in the wild while pursuing his hobby of deer hunting. His hunting activities involved pursuing game in various locations throughout Georgia. In the spring, while scouting good hunting locations, he would encounter attractive azaleas in bloom. He would mark them with a tag and return during the hunting season to move them while they were in a more dormant state. As his interests grew, his collection efforts extended beyond hunting trips to exploration of natural areas throughout Georgia and other states. His appreciation of native azaleas led to an active pursuit to collect superior forms. His interests grew and as he became more successful in the industrial world, he amassed a large collection of native azaleas as well as evergreen azaleas and broadleaf rhododendrons at his home.

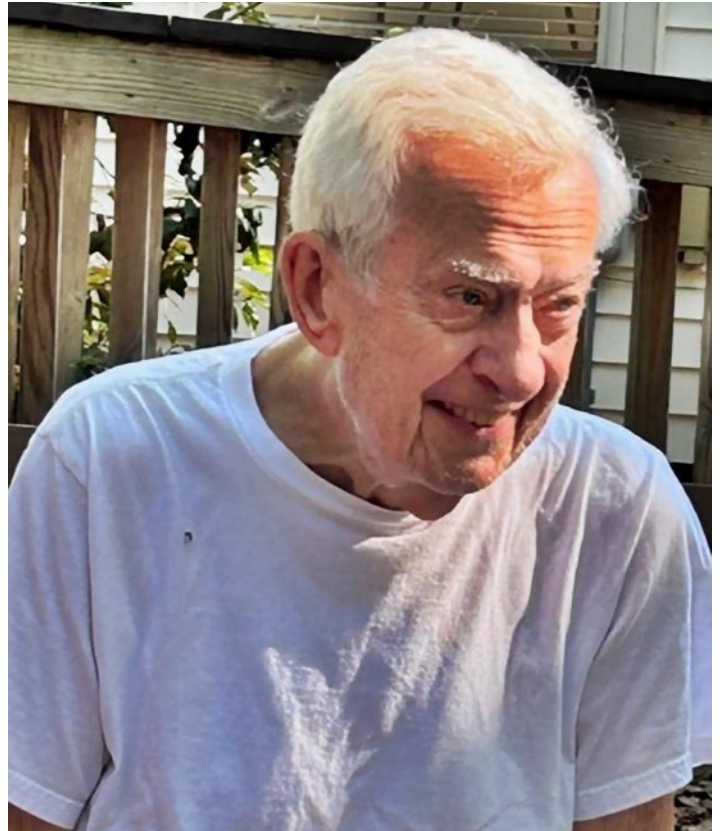


Fig. 1 Earl Sommerville. Photo by Janis Hylton.

He developed relationships with others who shared his admiration for native azaleas. His personal collection activities were supplemented with gifts of plants from these associates. As his collection of plants developed, he initiated efforts to propagate them. These initial propagation efforts included both sexual methods with seeds and asexual methods with stem cuttings. He encountered difficulties with these efforts. Some of the natural hybrids, such as crosses of species with different ploidy, would have sterile offspring that do not set seed. Many species of native azaleas resist propagation with cuttings. Some species are almost impossible to propagate using this method. Earl worked for 30 years, trying to propagate many of these type plants. He developed a method, that involved controlled misting and fertilization that was much more successful than previous asexual methods. Later, at a senior age, he became proficient in tissue culture methods to achieve successful propagation.



Fig. 2 R. 'Earl's Gold'. In Earl's notes, he wrote, "*R. austrinum* plant. Will root. Needs 5 to 6 hours of sun to bloom good. Plant is 12 feet x 8 feet in 25 years." Photo by Earl Sommerville.



Fig. 3 R. 'Razzberry'. In Earl's notes, he wrote, "This plant was collected in 1962 from Lake Allatoona. The plant is 6 feet tall now. The flowers are raspberry in color, with a bright yellow blotch. The plant is a natural hybrid." Photo by Earl Sommerville.

While he is a recognized azalea hybridizer by ASA, his extensive collection of different azaleas resulted from many natural cross-fertilizations, with resulting attractive cultivars. He did not use traditional hybridization techniques of specific plant selections and controlled exchange of pollen. His hybridization was completely natural with insects such as bees doing the pollination exchange. Having a large selection of native forms, natural hybridization took place in his garden. He propagated the resulting hybrids with the seeds produced. He and his wife, Verdie, registered, with the American Rhododendron Society, 27 of the cultivars he collected, produced, or received as gifts from fellow azalea collectors. The registered azaleas were named, based on the features of their blooms and for friends and relatives. Those received from others were named for the donor. The set of registered plants is extensive in color and plant form.

The initial set of plants in his collection came from the area in north central Georgia just north

of Atlanta where Lake Allatoona was constructed. He indicated that this site had up to five species of native azaleas. This assertion has not been verified but at least five species of native azaleas have been found in nearby sites and surrounding counties. The select cultivars, 'Orange Carpet', 'Razzberry', and 'Earl's Angel' were derived from this area. Other registered plants, many with *Rhododendron flammeum* in their heritage, came from central Georgia. Other species with *Rhododendron austrinum* in their lineage came from southwest Georgia and the Florida panhandle. Other cultivars have other species in their background. The Sommerville Azaleas have in their heritage many of the 12 native azaleas that are found in Georgia. The initial planting of azaleas in the Sommerville garden at Wright Center are registered Sommerville Azaleas.

Indeed, the Sommerville Azaleas are attractive plants. One of the distinguishing features of these azaleas is the number of ball-trusses that appear in the bloom sets. While many of the cultivars will



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Fig. 4 and 5 Sommerville Azaleas at Taylor University. Photos by Andy Whipple & associates.

grow to large sizes up to 12 feet or more, some of them are dwarf plants ranging in height from 18 inches up to 3 or 4 feet. The flower colors vary with many different hues and bi-colors. The colors range from yellow, orange, pink, to red with one attractive solid white. Early on, many southern nurseries offered the Sommerville Azaleas because of these attractive features. The difficulty of propagating the various cultivars with cuttings resulted with many commercial plant nurseries not including these plants in their offerings. This resulted in limited use of the Sommerville Azaleas by gardeners. (See figures 2 and 3 for examples of some of the more popular of the Sommerville Azaleas.)

Earl's work with tissue culture methods began after many years of propagating with stem cuttings. Upon learning about the use of tissue culture methods in propagating plants, Earl investigated the method and established contact with academics, who provided him with the necessary information and educational materials necessary to learn and use the procedures. Although lacking formal education in botany, Earl learned the sophisticated methods and set up a laboratory in the basement of his home. His efforts were quite successful. Results varied with some years being better than others. This occurred after he became 70 years old, a point in life when many retire from industrious activities. Earl was able to propagate those species that were difficult to propagate with cuttings. His work resulted in the production of thousand of plantlets that were distributed gratuitously to others, resulting in a large number of the cultivars being available to the public. He shared his enthusiasm of the process and led others to adapt the method to propagate select natives, in particular, those difficult to propagate using other

methods. Graciously, he did this work accepting from others, species that they could not propagate with traditional methods.

He was an early user of the internet to share his work with others. He set up websites that featured photos of the blooms of his registered cultivars. The material included detail information about each of the selections. The Sommerville websites became an effective tool for establishing relationships with others interested in native azaleas and facilitated the exchange of ideas. Several persons active in the trade credit Earl for providing encouragement and plants to further their skills and interests. One of the individuals influenced by Earl is Professor Andy Whipple, who established a fabulous native azalea garden at Taylor University in Ohio.

Figures 4 and 5 are a couple of photos of Sommerville Azaleas at Taylor University. The left photo is a planting near the University's chapel. The right photo features a more mature set of plants at another campus location. Andy, in developing the Taylor Garden, proved, that with diligent preparation, native azaleas can flourish outside their native environments. Many of the azaleas at Taylor are Sommerville Azaleas. At the time of Earl's death, Dr. Whipple shared: "You-Ying and I visited Earl and Verdie many times, both when we lived in Indiana and then from our retirement home in North Carolina. When Paul Lightfoot and I attended the ASA/ARS joint convention in Atlanta in 2002, it was the visit to Earl's home and grounds that got me hooked on deciduous azaleas. What an amazing collection! That led, with much mentoring by Earl, to my learning in vitro propagation of these wonderful plants. Over those years, we four shared plants, cultures, stories, and meals

(And Verdie's delightful coffee cake recipe that You-Ying now regularly makes for friends, church groups, and others). In the many talks I have given on deciduous azalea and their micro propagation, I am always pleased to tell the audiences—with pictures—of Earl and Verdie and the role they played in my life as an itinerant gardener. As a result of this, there are many of Earl's plants in the azalea garden at Taylor University, at our former home outside Upland, Indiana, as well as several friends' homes around Upland, our daughter's home in Indianapolis, at our home and around our community outside Black Mountain, NC, and more homes and public gardens, of which I know but a few. In my micro propagation lab in the basement of our NC home, I have hanging a poster of Earl's registered plants, plus one label the cultures I have from Earl's plants with a prefix of "ES"—reminding me of Earl every time I'm in the lab.

Another prominent native azalea person is Vivian Abney, owner of East Fork Nursery in Sevierville, TN. Earl worked closely with Vivian and encouraged her to adopt tissue culture as a propagation tool. At one point, Earl named one of his hybrids for Vivian. At the time of his demise, she shared: "I am so sorry to hear about Earl's passing. He has done more than anyone else I know to promote and help get into commercial production, azaleas that do well in the Southeast. He did this at his own expense, time, and effort and never asked for a penny in return. Without his devotion to this project, the only azaleas we would have would be the ones that do well in the Northeast and the West Coast. Many of those plants do not prosper in the Southeast. He will be greatly missed."

As he grew older, Earl no longer explored the wilds for native azaleas. However, he did not lose his interest in native azaleas. (The side article on pages 67-68, "W. P. Lemmon Azalea," relates some of his work in studying and documenting a native cultivar in his home Cobb County.)

The chronicle of Earl Sommerville is worthy of honor. Earl Sommerville, a man of limited formal education, worked diligently in promoting the appreciation and use of native azaleas by American gardeners. His continuing efforts to improve propagation methods resulted in the availability of his azaleas for residential garden use. In addition to his propagation work, he shared his knowledge with others and provided plants for public gardens. His generosity in sharing plants endeared

him to many others. His tissue culture work resulted in the production of a large number of plantlets. He shared these with a commercial firm who grew the plantlets to a marketable size. In turn, these plants were acquired by numerous commercial retail firms who sold them to the public. The late prominent nurseryman, Ernest Koone said of Earl: "Earl Sommerville of Marietta, Georgia, has done more than any other person to popularize and promote our Southeastern native azaleas. He has collected, protected, preserved, and propagated many selections that would have existed only as an original plant and perhaps a few rooted cuttings in the gardens of collectors had he not established a private tissue culture laboratory and propagated these azaleas, making them available on a commercial basis. It is worth mentioning that Earl has spent countless hours and many years working with native azaleas entirely as a labor of love, with a significant expenditure of his funds and absolutely no remuneration."

The Jean & Elwood Wright Environmental Education Center consists of 19 acres that was passed on to Cobb County after the Wright's death. One of the Wright's stipulations was that none of the trees be removed. Non-native vegetation is being removed. Thus, the site is mostly wooded but an area at the rear of the Wright home with good light qualities was selected for planting the Sommerville Azaleas. Cobb Master Gardener president, Grady McWhorter did significant work in developing the garden. Grady worked in procuring the plants planted in the garden. An effort was made to acquire the 27 Sommerville Azaleas that have been registered for the initial planting. Vivian Abney made a significant contribution of plants. Grady also helped plant the initial plants. He and his fellow master gardeners did an outstanding job in developing the garden.

*So you want to learn more about the lovely
Glenn Dale Hybrid Azaleas?*

The Azalea Works in Bethesda, Maryland,
has two books by Bill Miller and the late Dick West
which detail the fascinating story about B.Y. Morrison,
the 454 Glenn Dale cultivars, and the unpublished PI
and Bell Numbers by which they were managed. For
details, see the website at:

www.theazaleaworks.com

*While you're at it, visit the extensive collection of
azalea, companion plant, and animal .jpg images.*



Fig. 6 Charlie Andrews delivering his dedication address, standing in the Sommerville azalea garden area. Photo by Janis Hylton.

Here is an excerpt of the text of Charlie Andrews' dedication address at Earl Sommerville Memorial Garden Dedication Ceremony, Wright Environmental Education Center, Marietta, GA, on June 13, 2024:

Earl was stricken with the native azalea bug. Badly. Very badly. Much to our good fortune.

Earl was just out of the Air Force in 1960 when he discovered that there were native azaleas near his home north of Marietta and nearby around Lake Allatoona. Thus began his interest, which developed into a deep love. He soon took up deer hunting. This took him all over the state where he found more native azaleas.

I empathize with Earl. He did not have a botanical or horticultural background; neither do I. He was in the Air Force; so was I. He fell in love with native azaleas; I did too. He taught himself how to propagate azaleas. He learned on his own how to hybridize and cross different plants. You remember that wonderful scene in **O Brother, Where Art Thou**, where Ulysses Everett McGill escapes from the chain gang and going to his hometown finds his daughters singing on a stage as the Warvey Gals and he says, "You ain't Warveys, you're McGills." And the oldest replies, "But you ain't bona fide."

Well, some academics would say that Earl wasn't bona fide, but with his 60 years of real-world experience, he knew more than almost all of them. At his and Verdie's home at the foot of Little Kennesaw Mountain, he established an amazing two-acre garden. What stood out to me was (1) the garden was spotless. You had to search long and hard to find a weed. And (2), the plants were

vigorous. They were healthy, and often the trusses had large pom poms packed with many colorful corollas. In those two acres, he had over 1,000 native azaleas combined with perhaps 3,000 evergreen azaleas, as well as many camellias and other rhododendrons.

We propagate azaleas various ways, including by seeds, stem cuttings, layers, air layers, horizontal stem propagation, and tissue culture. Some native azaleas are extremely difficult to propagate, and often tissue culture, sometimes called micro propagation, is the only successful method. The problem is it is highly technical, exacting, and requires both specialized equipment and an ultra-clean environment to prevent contamination of the new plant cells as they multiply and grow into plantlets in an artificial sterile medium. At age 70, Earl, who had mastered all the other propagation techniques, began to teach himself how to successfully tissue culture plants. He did this with some of my Hurricane Creek plants.

Earl shared his knowledge and plants with everyone. His advice from experience included native azaleas need plenty of sun, use fertilizer, prune upright stems to keep from getting too tall, and that cuttings from recent-growth stems are easier to root.

He never sold azaleas. He was not in it for the money. He sent his plants to nurseries for them to propagate and sell. He helped Dr. Andy Whipple and Vivian Abney get into tissue culture. His encouragement, plants, and seeds led Mitch Mortvedt in Arkansas to open a new azalea nursery. There are many others like Andy, Vivian, and Mitch. In 2006, Earl registered 27 of his named azaleas. Many more beautiful Sommerville cultivars are named but not registered.

These friends, these plants, this is Earl Sommerville's Legacy. That is why we are here today.

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The Story of the W. P. Lemmon Azalea

By Ken Gohring—Marietta, Georgia

In his younger years, Earl Sommerville conducted business in Atlanta, GA. He traveled from his Marietta home to work locations throughout the metro Atlanta area. He recalls seeing populations of attractive native azaleas along the roads in his daily commutes to work. These first observations were made on roads that were later replaced by interstate routes, which were built resulting in the removal of vegetation from adjacent natural areas where these azaleas were found. The interstate road construction, while providing efficient travel lanes, resulted in the destruction of many natural plants. The older, narrow roads permitted closer observation of the azaleas. Earl recalled seeing them on numerous occasions. Many of the areas where he observed the azaleas were near streams that are tributaries of the Chattahoochee River. He developed an appreciation of these plants that he retained for many years. He recalls that the azaleas were particularly attractive if they were located in areas devoid of screening overgrowth. Their attractiveness was likely a factor in the demise of many of them as many were probably taken and relocated to individual gardens and yards.

In his latter years, he renewed his interest in the azaleas with a goal of locating some of them. His research led him to the publications of a plant explorer who studied native azaleas in piedmont Georgia and areas to the north. That person, W. P. Lemmon, conducted his work on native azaleas in the 1930s. He was a resident of Marietta, Georgia, which is located just northwest of Atlanta. A summary of his work was recorded in *Bartonia*, a technical journal of the Philadelphia Botanical Club. In that article, Lemmon discusses an azalea that he called *R. fastigifolia* or *fastigifolium*. His work describes the physical characteristics of the azalea and suggests that it was a distinct species. His selection of a name for the azaleas is based on the physical characteristics of the plant's shape and foliage. He describes the bloom of the plant as being a rich scarlet with no blotch on the upper lobe. It should be noted that after Lemmon's work with the azalea, some authorities conjectured it was a *R. canescens* × *R. flammeum* hybrid.

Earl believed that the azalea Lemmon documented was the one that he observed years ago in his trips to Atlanta. Presently, Cobb County, Georgia, where Marietta is located, has grown to a large county with



Fig. 1 R. 'W. P. Lemmon' early bloom time. Photo by Earl Sommerville.



Fig. 2 R. 'W. P. Lemmon' late bloom time. Photo by Earl Sommerville.

a population over 700,000. Such growth has eliminated many of the natural areas where native azaleas once flourished. Despite these changes, Earl persisted in trying to find existing populations of the attractive azaleas that he had observed earlier.

His research involved investigating the areas of Cobb County that Lemmon designated as locations of the azaleas. Most of these areas are now housing areas. The possibility that the Lemmon Marietta home site might yield growing specimens was checked with no positive results. A lead did turn up when a friend of his son, Grady McWhorter, told him of some natives growing on his property and the property nearby. This location was in east Cobb County, not one of the Cobb locations mentioned by Lemmon but not very far from

the cited locations. The subject properties are rather large acreages where most of the natural areas were retained when the houses were constructed. Earl was able to obtain one of the azaleas, which he nurtured in his greenhouse. The selected plant was budded and produced blossoms. One noticeable feature of the blossoms was the changing of the color of the blooms as they matured.

In the *Bartonia* article, Lemmon described the *fastigifolia* azalea, giving significant detail of the physical characteristics. The name “fastigiafolia,” used to describe the appearance of the plant, alludes to a distinct columnar shape, which is not evident in the plant that Earl obtained. In addition, the description of the leaves was not evident in that plant. Many of the terms used by Lemmon in describing the azalea are not lay terms and use of a botany glossary is necessary to make comparisons. Apparently, some of the terms in vogue in Lemmon’s day are no longer in use. Significant detail describing the blossom is included in the Lemmon article. A detailed comparison of the blossom features as described by Lemmon and the photographs resulted in practically all features matching to some degree. However, there were some items that did not match. In particular, color is one significant factor.

The set of pictures that Earl took of the plant that he had obtained show significant differences in color. He noticed that as time elapsed from the first opening of the blossom until it expired that the color changed. (See Figures 1 and 2.) On the initial opening of the bloom, the color is best described as golden-yellow. As time elapsed, the bloom became reddish-orange, retaining a small portion of the golden-yellow in the central portion of the corolla. Such color changes were not noted in the Lemmon article. Likely, his observations and measurements were made in a single phase of the bloom process. He described, “The color of the corolla is a rich scarlet, tinged with orange, but with no blotch on the upper lobe.” While calling the color

in the pictures in the latter bloom state rich-scarlet is something of a stretch, variance in color between different specimens is certainly possible. Such color variance is quite common in many native azaleas. Much of Lemmon’s article emphasizes other physical characters of the corolla as well as significant material about other physical features of the azalea branch structure and foliage.

While many *R. canescens* × *R. flammeum* hybrids are found in the Atlanta area, the azalea that Earl nurtured appeared to be a *R. calendulaceum* × *R. flammeum* cross. The bloom time for the azalea is the first week in May, a time that coincides with the bloom time of lowland *R. calendulaceum* in Atlanta. Bloom time for *R. canescens* and *R. flammeum* is normally two weeks earlier.

Earl thought that the azalea that he possessed was the azalea that Lemmon described as *fastigifolia*. He felt the physical characteristics of the blossom are close enough to that described by Lemmon to warrant this conclusion. Regardless of whether this conclusion is accurate, he decided that the azalea was worthy of being propagated and he started using tissue culture methods to reproduce the azalea. He felt strongly that Lemmon should be honored by naming the azalea after him. As he had done in the past with the plants that he had recognized and named, he did likewise with the W. P. Lemmon azalea.

Earl Sommerville made beautiful azaleas available to the trade without compensation. He shared his enthusiasm and methods with others. His compensation was the satisfaction that he had promoted appreciation of nature’s lovely native azaleas. Subsequent to Earl’s work in propagating the azalea, its ploidy was tested and it was determined to be a tetraploid. This strongly suggests that the plant is a *R. calendulaceum*. A *R. calendulaceum* × *R. flammeum* cross would likely be a triploid.

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Dick Johnston Cole, the Marlbank Farms Hybrids and the Colonial Series... in his own words

By William C. Miller III—Bethesda, Maryland

In the early 1980s, I invited Dick Cole to write an article about his azalea hybrids for *The Azalean*. It's possible that I met the Coles at the May 1984 ASA National Meeting that was held in Fredericksburg, VA, but I just don't remember. They were ASA members back then and they lived in Yorktown, VA. In November of 1984, Dick, a little embarrassed by the delay, sent me the story of the Marlbank Farms Hybrids and the Colonial Series which, after a brief introduction, is presented below in his own words (Dick J. Cole, letter, November 9, 1984).

Both Dick and his wife Eleanor were originally from Findlay, OH. He was born on October 11, 1908, and she was born on March 22, 1917. They were married on May 18, 1942 at Sikeston, MO, but moved to Portsmouth, VA, where Dick served in the Coast Guard during WW II. After the war, they moved to Hampton Roads, VA, where both were employed by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics which later became the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). They moved to the Marlbank Farm area, York County, in 1962 where they pursued their interest in azaleas with the help of "Gusty," a much beloved miniature schnauzer for whom an azalea is named. The Coles both retired from federal service in 1971. Dick passed away on December 26, 1993, and Eleanor passed away on May 19, 2012.

According to Galle, their azaleas are mostly seedlings of 'Sweetheart Supreme', are hardy to zones 6b-9, and have plant habits similar to Kurume Hybrids.¹

In Dick's own words...

"Marlbank Farm is a residential area located on Wormley Creek three miles south of Yorktown, Virginia. It borders on the National Colonial Restoration area. Our property consists of three and a half acres of woodlands with over 100 pine trees, many huge oaks, several other species of hardwood trees, and is dotted with dozens of dogwoods.

"The Marlbank Farm Hybrids were just a happening with little effort on our part. We furnished



Fig. 1. This image is from a newspaper article entitled, "Couple deals with age in odd way," written by Beth Meisner for the *York Town Crier* in February 1989. The photo credit for the image goes to Nan Brown. The story is about the golf cart in the picture. As Dick and Eleanor began to experience health issues, they became a two golf cart family. The electric carts enabled them to move plants and material and to traverse their hilly 3½ -acres as mobility became more challenging.

some 1700 varieties of azaleas, the bees did the work, and a number of plants produced seedlings. The climate and soil are ideal for azaleas and we have over 80 different species. We have had success with every species we have tried.

"When this program began, it was strictly a fun adventure involving many of our friends and neighbors. As the program progressed, some varieties developed that we thought might be of interest to azalea lovers outside our area. However, this continues to be only a hobby and we do not sell, although a couple of nurseries have obtained cuttings for propagation.

"The variety 'Eleanor Cole' is perhaps the best of the Marlbanks although several others, while not spectacular, have proven to have attractive characteristics, not the least of which was their withstanding cold such as that during last Christmas time. The Colonial Series were so named because of the close proximity of the headquarters and campsites of many of the Revolutionary War allied commanders.

"In all, we have 84 named varieties and over 80 numbered varieties that are still being evaluated.

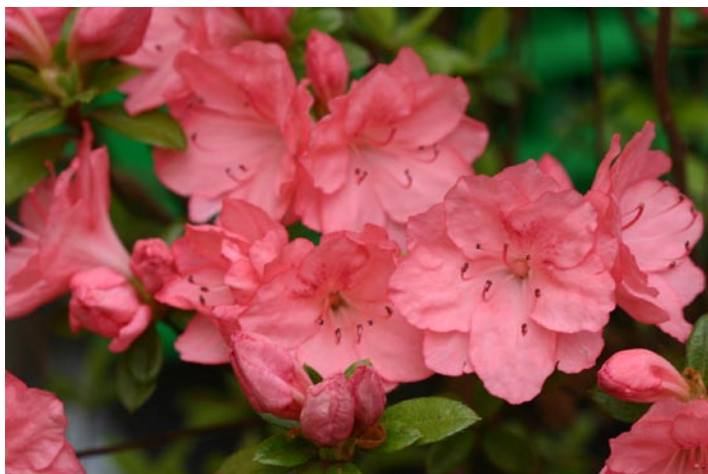


Fig. 2. 'Eleanor Cole', the single, hose-in-hose, strong pink azalea, named after Mrs. Cole and acknowledged by Dick Cole as "perhaps the best of the Marlbanks..." The Marlbank Farms Hybrids are named after family and friends. Photo by Carolyn Beck.

Some of the most interesting of these are listed below: (Colors, where numbered, are from the ISCC-NBS Color Name Charts.)"

The Marlbank Farms Hybrids

- 'Ann Mattson' - Vivid purplish red (254), single, 1-1/2". Low spreading plant with small dark green obovate leaves.
- 'Betty Bailey' - Strong red (12), single, 1-1/2"; small obovate leaves.
- 'Bob Gregorie' - Deep yellowish pink (27) with darker blotch, single, slightly ruffled, 2"; medium sized dark green elliptical leaves.
- 'Bob Arnold' - Vivid red (11), single, 1-3/4"; small obovate leaves.
- 'Charlotte Johnson' - Light orchid with darker blotch, single, slightly ruffled, 3"; dark green, slightly hairy elliptical leaves.
- 'Chris Arnold' - Deep pink (3), single, slightly ruffled, 1-1/2"; medium size obovate leaves.
- 'Dick Cole Too' - Strong reddish purple (237) with darker blotch, single, 2-1/4"; medium size, deep green elliptical leaves.
- 'Dr. Rives Bailey' - Deep pink (3) with magenta blotch, single, h/h, 1-3/4"; dark green oval leaves.
- 'Eleanor Cole' - Strong pink (2) with darker blotch, single, h/h, slightly ruffled. Semi-shiny dark green obovate leaves. Compact bush. Blooms a longer period than any other.
- 'Gretchen Kellas' - Rose lavender with red blotch, 2-1/2"; medium large dull green, slightly hairy leaves.
- 'Gusty Cole' - Deep purplish pink (248), single, h/h. At times, upper branches bloom in trusses. Dull dark green, obovate leaves.
- 'Heidi Hartwiger' - White, tinted very pale cream green; medium size elliptical leaves.
- 'John Speirs' - Moderate purplish pink (250) with

whitish throat and darker blotch, single; large dark green elliptical leaves.

- 'Katie Speirs' - Vivid purplish red (254), single; small obovate leaves. Earliest blooming of the Marlbanks.
- 'Laura Speirs' - Deep yellowish pink (27) with lavender blotch, red pistils, 2", very narrow petals; medium size, slightly hairy elliptical leaves.
- 'Luci Sproull' - Strong reddish purple (237) with deep reddish purple blotch, single, 2-1/4"; medium large dull green elliptical leaves.
- 'Mary C. Arnold' - Light reddish purple (240) with edges shading to lighter purple; dull dark green elliptical leaves.
- 'Milt Silvert' - White with prominent fuchsia blotch, 2-1/2"; large dull green elliptical leaves.
- 'Royce Sproull No. 2' - Deep reddish orange (36), single, 1-1/2"; semi-shiny dark green elliptical leaves.
- 'Yvonne Gingery' - Strong purplish pink (247), blotch on some petals, 1-1/2"; small dark green elliptical leaves.

The Colonial Series

- 'Baron de Omenil' - Deep purplish pink (248), single; very small obovate leaves.
- 'Baron von Stuben' - Vivid purplish red (254), single, h/h, slightly ruffled, 1-1/2"; medium large obovate leaves.
- 'Betsy Ross' - Vivid red (11), single, h/h ruffled, 1-1/2"; very small obovate leaves; dwarf plant.
- 'Colonel Timothy Pickering' - Light red, single, 1-1/4"; medium size obovate leaves; small compact plant.
- 'Comte de Barras' - Purplish pink, h/h, 1-1/2", small obovate leaves.
- 'Comte de Grasse' - Medium pink (5), 1-1/4". Large elliptical leaves.
- 'Comte de Rochambeau' - Strong purplish pink (247), single, slightly ruffled, 1-1/2"; small obovate leaves.
- 'Comte de Deaux-Ponts' - Deep pink (3), single, h/h, 1-1/4"; small obovate leaves.
- 'General Choizy' - Deep purplish pink (248), single, slightly ruffled, 1-1/4"; medium obovate leaves.
- 'General George Washington' - Deep purplish pink (248), single, h/h, 1-1/2"; small obovate leaves.
- 'General James Clinton' - Strong purplish red (255), single, 2", medium elliptical leaves.
- 'General "Mad" Anthony Wayne' - Strong pink (2) with light pink (4) on petals, single, h/h, ruffled, 1-1/2"; medium obovate leaves.
- 'Marquis de Lafayette' - Strong reddish purple (237), single, 2"; small obovate leaves.
- 'Marquis de Saint Simon' - White edged purplish white (231), slightly ruffled; large elliptical leaves.

Welcome New Members!

New At Large members include:

- Craig Cook, Medina, OH
- Paul Fisher, Englishtown, NS
- Makiko Goto-Wideman, Philadelphia, PA
- Ya-Ting Hsu, New Taipei City, Taiwan
- Harrison Howel & Victoria McQuinn, Aiken, SC

The Alabamense Chapter welcomes:

- Sarah Brecher, Mobile, AL
- Brandy Woods, Wilmer, AL

The Central Carolinas Chapter welcomes:

- Edward Davis, Charlotte, NC

The Louisiana Chapter welcomes:

- Lacey Cambre, Clinton, LA

The Northern Virginia Chapter welcomes:

- Greg & Saerina Stropko, Springfield, VA

The Vaseyi Chapter welcomes:

- Gary M. Pace, Hendersonville, NC

Membership in ASA makes a great gift!

Society Officers Sought for 2025-2027

For our next election, we will be electing society officers to serve during the term 2025-2027. The positions up for election are Society President and Vice President. Additionally, we will be electing three Directors to serve during the same period. Those interested in volunteering for one of these positions, or who would like more information, should contact the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Rick Bauer, at rickfbauer@gmail.com. Volunteers should submit a copy of their resume no later than September 30, 2024. These will be published in the Winter 2024 issue of *The Azalean*.



Fig. 3. 'Comte de Grasse' is one of the cultivars from the Colonial Series, a group of azaleas that was named after Revolutionary War military figures. While Dick Cole describes it as a medium pink flower, the existing photo record suggests that it could be quite variable including white flowers with pink sandings, stripes, and sectors. Photo by Carolyn Beck.

Dick and Eleanor Cole's Azaleas Today

Neither of these hybrid groups enjoyed a wide distribution. However, Frank White's Spring/Fall 1984 catalog announced the availability, in the Fall of 1985, of a limited number of cultivars from both hybrid groups, so there may be plants in private gardens in the Washington Metropolitan area. The Galle book² lists 23 Marlbanks Farms Hybrids and 18 from the Colonial Series. Those 41 azaleas appear in the IRRC.³ Comparing the cultivar lists in Galle with the cultivar lists in Dick Cole's letter reveals that there are a number of azaleas in the letter that are neither in Galle nor the IRRC. It is evident the several lists are snapshots in time. We may never get a complete picture of these two hybrid groups.

Notes and References

1. Galle, F.C. 1987. *Azaleas*. Revised and Enlarged Edition. Portland OR: Timber Press.
2. Ibid., 275.
3. Leslie, A.C. (comp.). 2004 *International Rhododendron Register and Checklist* (2nd ed.). London: Royal Horticultural Society.

About the Author:

William C. Miller III is a recipient of the Brookside Gardens Chapter's Frederic P. Lee Commendation (1988) and is twice the recipient of the ASA's Distinguished Service Award (1995 and 2002). He was chairman of the ASA's Glenn Dale Preservation Project, and co-chairman of Dick West's Ten Oaks Glenn Dale Project. He is past president of the Brookside Gardens Chapter, a former vice president of the ASA, a past member of the ASA Board of Directors, past co-chairman of the ASA's Membership Committee, past chairman of the ASA's Public Information Committee, the longest serving member of the ASA's Editorial Advisory Board, and a frequent contributor to *The Azalean*.



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