

Rhododendrons International

The Online Journal of the World's Rhododendron Organizations



Vireyas



Rhododendrons



Azaleas

Volume 1 2016. Part 1 - North American Rhododendron Organizations

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Please put "Rhododendrons International" in the subject line.

From the Editor

Dr. Glen Jamieson
Parksville, BC
Canada



Welcome to the first issue of *Rhododendrons International* (RI). I am the editor of the *Journal American Rhododendron Society* and while attending the 70th International Rhododendron Conference in Dunedin, NZ, in 2014, I was fortunate to be able to meet with representatives from the Dunedin, Japanese, German, Australian and the host NZ Rhododendron societies, as well as representatives from the USA Rhododendron Species and Botanical Garden (RSBG) and the NZ Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust (PRT). While I personally was aware of many of the initiatives of these groups through our journal exchange programs, I know that most members of each rhododendron society are not aware of the many rhododendron-related activities or initiatives around the world that are being supported or discussed by rhododendron societies and organisations.

In an effort to increase awareness of activities involving rhododendrons on a scale larger than is occurring in each of our own individual societies or groups, I came up with the idea of producing a digital, on-line publication that would hopefully have content from as many rhododendron-related groups as possible. My idea was that issues of this journal would be made available to be distributed free by each rhododendron group to all its members. Initially, only one issue is being planned, but if it is well received and there is subsequent interest, perhaps this could become an on-going publication.

I am pleased to report that all the rhododendron societies and organisations world-wide that I know of have welcomed this idea and are participating in this first issue of *Rhododendrons International*. However, with 16 submissions in the first issue and many photos from each group, the resulting pdf document may be too large for convenient timely downloading if it was done as one large file. To remedy this, this first issue of *Rhododendrons International* has been divided into three smaller pdfs on a geographical basis, which should all be downloaded separately and then be read sequentially, since they are linked together text-wise. The three pdfs are “North America Rhododendron Organizations” (Part 1, this pdf), “European Rhododendron Organizations” (Part 2), and “Southern

Hemisphere and Asian Rhododendron Organizations” (Part 3). Issue file size may not be such a concern for future issues, as future issues, if produced, will likely have no more than 8-10 articles in each issue.

We welcome article submissions for future issues, but as indicated, when they might be produced will depend on the responses received to this issue. There is no remuneration for submitted material, and at present, I am willing to volunteer my own time to edit and coordinate submissions. However, at present I have no commitment for someone to do the layout, but this may change once we have a better idea of how much future work will be involved. Comments on any aspect of this new journal and future articles for consideration should be submitted in digital form to:

Dr. Glen Jamieson

rhodojournal@gmail.com

Please put “Rhododendrons International” in the subject line.

Some guidelines for the future content. The content of RI should not interfere with possible article submissions to any existing journals of rhodo societies and organizations, but rather help disseminate more widely relevant rhododendron articles to a larger audience. Article submissions to RI should thus primarily be timely articles that have already been published in other rhodo journals when possible, but be modified so that they are not identical to what was previously published and hence incur possible copyright conflicts. Tweaks could include more images, additional text, and so on.

Other guidelines are the following:

- 1) **Language:** the language of RI will be entirely in English. I know this will cause problems for some groups that have many members that do not speak English, but unfortunately this is the most widely accepted language at present and most importantly, it is the only language with which I can competently edit articles.
- 2) **Content:** All articles will be reviewed and edited, and we reserve the right to refuse material deemed of questionable relevance or scientific credibility. Suggested content that could be considered of interest to the broader rhododendron community could include local or regional efforts in rhodo conservation, the habitats and characteristics of species occurring in your area in the wild, rhodo hybridization issues, challenges in local rhodo culture, preferred companion plants, challenges in keeping your society operational and so on. I am not suggesting that all these topics would be considered in a single article

or even RI issue, but am simply suggesting what type of content might initially be considered. I am sure that many readers will have other great ideas!

- 3) **Timeframe:** We are all busy people, so there is no rigid schedule for future issues. However, potentially one issue a year might initially be feasible, but again, this is not fixed, and since we are depending on volunteers for article submissions, it may be less frequent!
- 4) **Participation:** Article submissions are welcome from anyone.
- 5) **Format:** Being a digital publication, there is no cost for colour images and these can be located throughout an article, so high quality images (300+ dpi, i.e. large file sizes) are welcome. However, there is work involved in writing, editing and in layout, so writers should bear this in mind in determining individual article lengths and the number of photos submitted. However, rather than specifying limits at this time, lets see how it goes and if submissions should perhaps be made longer or shorter, as editor I will suggest that to specific writers for their consideration.

In summary, thanks to all the writers that have contributed to this first *Rhododendrons International* issue, and to you all for reading this material. I would particularly like to thank Sonja Nelson, Assistant Editor of the ARS journal for volunteering to do the layout and proofing of this first issue, as without her, this issue would not exist. I hope you enjoy it and find it useful.

Glen Jamieson

Editor, *Rhododendrons International*

Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Vireyas World-wide

Glen Jamieson

Parksville, BC

Canada

All photos by the author



PRIOR TO THE 1940s, AMERICANS SUCH AS GUY NEARING AND JOE GABLE belonged to the British Rhododendron Association. In the early 1940s, war events stopped many non-essential activities and prevented timely mail delivery between the USA and Great Britain. They could thus no longer participate in the seed exchange or get the yearbook. An American group from western Washington State and western Oregon thus held an organizational meeting in 1944, and the result was that the American Rhododendron Society (ARS; not to be confused with the Australian Rhododendron Society, whose members also call it the ARS) was formed that year in Portland, Oregon (Henning 2015). Initially, all members were members-at-large of the society, and meetings were held in Portland. In 1949, 75 members and prospective members from the east coast of North America attended a meeting in New York to form the “Eastern Division” of the ARS. This development led to a proposal to form local chapters for members too far from Portland and in 1951, by-laws were revised to include local chapters. As a result, in 1952 the society approved the Eugene, Middle Atlantic (Virginia), New York, Seattle, and Tacoma chapters. Chapters were then added as needed. Centers of interest in rhododendrons were initially from British Columbia to Southern California, and along the East Coast from Massachusetts to Georgia, with a good representation from states in between. Some 23 American states were soon represented in the membership, with members from Canada, England, the Netherlands, and New Zealand.

By 1964, the ARS had nearly 1,000 members. A plant-name registry was established in coordination with the RHS, standards for plant ratings and awards were adopted, rules for flower shows were promulgated, and two

plant explorers (J.F. Rock and F. Kingdon-Ward) were funded and their seed collections distributed. By its 20th anniversary in 1964, there were 2500 members, 15 more chapters had been added, and salaried positions for an Executive Secretary and Editor were established.

Starting in 1969, the President's term of office was two years. The board changed the bylaws to provide for two vice presidents, one from the East and one from the West, and these VPs alternated in becoming the society's next president.

In 1952, Gold Medals began to be awarded for distinguished service to the society and in 1969, a Silver Medal Award was added. Gold and Silver medals are awarded to Society members for significant contribution over a period of time to either the Society or to the genus *Rhododendron*, or both. Gold awards are for contributions that have national or international impact, while Silver awards recognize significant regional contributions. Bronze medals are awarded by individual chapters to their members that have made significant local contributions.

The great expansion of chapters and membership had not been foreseen and by 1974, there were 38 chapters. With each chapter president designated a board member, board size was then becoming unwieldy. In 1979, the position of executive secretary was made full-time because of the greater workload. In 1981, board size was reduced to 19 and chapters were grouped together geographically into districts (Table 1) and became represented on the board by a District Director. In 1991, an agreement was reached with the Rhododendron Society of Canada (RSC) and its three chapters, Atlantic, Niagara, and Toronto, became a new district (District 12) of the ARS, and the three RSC chapters became ARS chapters. By 1994, the 50th anniversary of the ARS, there were 72 Chapters, some of them overseas (represented by a Director at Large), and 5600 members.

This was the maximum size of the ARS, and now in 2015, there are only 59 chapters and a non-chapter membership (Table 1). As with many gardening societies, membership has declined significantly in recent years, to just over 3100 in 2014. Thus, at present there are ten chapters in Canada (three in the east and seven in the west); overseas chapters in Great Britain/Ireland (termed Scottish), the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and in Sikkim, India; and a "non-chapter" category for presently 86 members not wishing to have a chapter affiliation. The Scottish Chapter includes many English-speaking members from European countries that do not have a chapter, and there are many ARS members in different chapters from other countries such as New Zealand (17), Australia (14), Germany (14) and Japan (22) where rhododendrons are

Table 1. The twelve ARS districts and their chapters, and the Chapters at Large, i.e., outside North America.

<p>District 1: British Columbia, Canada Cowichan Valley Fraser South Mount Arrowsmith Nanaimo North Island Vancouver Victoria</p>	<p>District 7: New York and New Jersey, USA New York Princeton Tappan Zee</p>
<p>District 2: Northcentral Washington, USA Cascade Pilchuck Seattle Whidbey Island</p>	<p>District 8: Pennsylvania, USA Greater Philadelphia Lehigh Valley Susquehanna Valley Valley Forge</p>
<p>District 3: Western Washington, USA Juan de Fuca Kitsap Olympia Olympic Peninsula Peninsula Shelton Tacoma</p>	<p>District 9: Maryland and Virginia, USA Mason Dixon Middle Atlantic Potomac Valley</p>
<p>District 4: Oregon, USA Eugene Portland Siuslaw Southwestern Oregon Tualatin valley Willamette</p>	<p>District 10: Southeastern States, USA Azalea Southeastern Tennessee valley William Bartram</p>
<p>District 5: California and Hawaii, USA California De Anza Eureka Hawaii Monterey Bay Noyo Southern California</p>	<p>District 11: Midwest States, USA Ann Arbor Great lakes Midwest Ozark</p>
<p>District 6: New England, USA Connecticut Massachusetts</p>	<p>District 12: Eastern Canada RSC Atlantic Region RSC Niagara Region RSC Toronto region</p>
	<p>Chapters at Large: Northern Europe and Sikkim, India Danish Dutch Finnish J.D. Hooker Scottish Swedish Non-chapter members</p>



Fig. 1. A Virginia garden on a 2016 spring convention tour.



Fig. 2. A BC, Canada, garden on a 2015 spring convention tour.



Fig. 3. A BC, Canada, garden on a 2015 spring convention tour.

grown and where other rhododendron societies exist.

Reasons for the recent decline in ARS membership are complex, and are in part due to deaths of older members, and fewer newer, younger members joining the society due to reduced average property sizes and hence gardening space, greater city and condo living, both partners in relationships now having jobs, more competition for “time” by other urban activities and interests, and greater use of the web to acquire gardening info instead of by attending meetings with people of similar interests. While many chapters have regular meetings where guest speakers participate, not all do, and while chapter activities are focused around rhododendrons, they also include consideration of companion plants that grow well with them. Finally, many members join chapters as much for their social activi-

ties (garden tours, near and far; plant sales, Xmas and spring/summer picnics, etc.) and camaraderie, as they bring together like-minded gardeners with similar interests! Regular membership in the ARS with all its benefits (printed journal, seed exchange, chapter affiliation, conventions, etc.) typically costs \$US40, but many chapters subsidize membership by funds earned from their garden tours and plant sales, with some memberships as low as \$CDN30.

Two annual conventions with a board meeting are typically held each year, with a large spring convention, typically attended by 300-500 people in recent years, with a truss show, many speakers, great garden tours (Figs. 1-5), banquets (Fig. 6) and a plant sale (Fig. 7); and a smaller fall convention typically with only speakers, a banquet and a plant sale. The spring convention typically alternates between the east



Fig. 4. A BC, Canada, garden on a 2015 spring convention tour.



Fig. 5. A BC, Canada, garden on a 2015 spring convention tour.



Fig. 6. One of the banquets at the 2016 ARS Convention in Williamsburg, VA.

and west coasts of North America, with a fall convention on the opposite coast. See:

<http://www.arsoffice.org/history/conventions.htm>

However, the west coast usually has a fall meeting each year, even when the main ARS fall meeting is on the east coast, as there is typically sufficient interest on the west coast to support this social get-together on an annual basis.



Fig. 7. The 2016 ARS convention plant sale in Williamsburg, VA.

There have on occasion been spring conventions outside North America. In 1996, the spring convention was in Oban, Scotland, and in 2004 and 2008, fall meetings were held in Hilo, Hawaii. A spring convention in Bremerhaven, Germany, in collaboration with the German Rhododendron Society is being considered for 2018, but no final decision has yet been made.

The question sometimes arises as to why there are two English-speaking rhododendron societies in North America—the ARS and a largely eastern North America “Azalea Society of America”



Fig. 8. An image of the Spring 2016 JARS issue's front cover.

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Fig. 9. The Table of Contents of the Winter 2016 *Journal American Rhododendron Society*.

(ASA). The answer is that in 1979, there was a schism within the ARS in that many eastern North American members felt the ARS was then too focused on evergreen rhododendrons, many of which did not grow well in the hotter, southeastern North American areas where native azaleas were plentiful. They subsequently formed their own society that focuses on azaleas only, although many eastern ARS and ASA members actually belong to both societies. There have been four joint meetings of the two societies (2002, 2006, 2012 and 2016) the latest being this past April in Williamsburg, Virginia.

The ARS published a series of informative yearbooks on Hybrids (1945), Species (1946), Stud Book (1947), Azaleas (1948), and Hybrids again in 1949. It started a quarterly bulletin in 1947 and in 1949 the membership chose to focus the ARS's publication efforts on the *Quarterly Bulletin of the American Rhododendron Society*. This was changed in 1982 to the quarterly *Journal American Rhododendron Society* (JARS). Each JARS volume had four issues of about 60 pages each, initially more than half in colour and now potentially colour on all pages, with articles over a year representing evergreen rhododendrons, azaleas, vireyas, hybridizers, different geographical regions, a photo contest, relevant research, exploration results, new hybrids, and so on (Figs. 8 & 9). The content of past issues of both publications can be accessed at:

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JARS/>

although not all issues of the journal are presently digitised. The objective is to have all issues older than five years soon available on the web, but issues from 2002-2011 are still in the process of being digitised; this conversion backlog should be finished within the next few years. The Tables of Contents of issues that are not publicly available, including those less than five years old, are posted online at:

<http://arsstore.org/Downloads/TOC/index.html>

and are accessible to online searches.

Beginning in the fall of 2012 (Vol 66 (4)), an electronic format of each journal issue has been produced, but because these are currently still less than five years old, these presently are only accessible by password to current ARS members. Like the earlier digitised archived issues, the advantage of an online journal is that they can be accessed by computer, tablet or iphone/android; they are easily searched for specific names; and for ARS members that only opt to receive a digital journal format, there are no associated journal printing or mailing expenses, thereby reducing journal production and distribution costs. A push is now underway within the society to make receiving only a digital journal product more attractive, a challenge as many of the ARS's older members are not particularly computer-savvy. However, over time, it is

hoped this will change, as newer, younger members are proving to be more accepting of a digital product. Recent changes will allow more colour photos in the online *JARS* in comparison to the printed *JARS*, as this has no greater cost, and inclusion of descriptions of rhododendron species, as opposed to hybrids which are already well described, that are particularly garden worthy. To date, receiving only the digital *JARS* does not confer a cost saving, but this is a possibility for the future.

In 1970, an ARS Research Committee was established but it had no funding and basically reported on research performed by others. Prior to 1975, Seed Exchange revenues supported some research, but without a formal funding mechanism, the Research Committee's efforts to sponsor research were thus limited. Establishment of a Research Foundation of the American Rhododendron Society was sanctioned in 1975 at the annual ARS meeting in Seattle, thus formalizing support by the ARS for research on rhododendron and azalea problems and issues. In 1976, the Research Foundation, a separate organisation from the ARS, was established with the signing of a Trust Agreement between the American Rhododendron Society and the Foundation's original trustees. The purposes of the Foundation were to devote and apply the property of the trust for promoting and financing research projects relating to the introduction, production, cultivation, maintenance, improvement, propagation, and dissemination of azaleas and rhododendrons.

Funding of the Trust was initiated that year (1976) at the ARS Annual Meeting. Incorporation as a not-for-profit foundation meant that donations were potentially tax exempt and the Research Foundation Endowment Fund would serve as a way to fund ARS research activities. All donations are placed in the endowment trust and the proceeds are kept at a level to conserve and perhaps grow the principal. See:

<http://www.arsoffice.org/history/research.htm>

for further details). Most government, university and corporate funding for plant research concentrates on food crops, and relatively little is allocated to ornamentals such as rhododendrons and azaleas. The intent of the Research Foundation has been not to fund complete solutions to problems, since it will never have the funding to do that, but to point the way with seed money and demonstrate an interest by the ARS. This can attract additional funding from other sources, and provide investigations with direction to areas that are of unique interest to rhododendron enthusiasts.

The ARS Research Committee was given responsibility to approve grants for research that conformed with the goals of the Trust Agreement. The committee accepts proposals on a regular basis and meets to select those for funding by

the Research Foundation, generally at the time of the Annual Meeting of the ARS. Dr. Harold Sweetman became chair in 2001 and is supported by nine ARS members that have scientific backgrounds and experience in scientific research. The Committee reports to the Board of Directors of the ARS on its research funding activities.

Since then, the combined efforts of the Research Committee and Research Foundation have helped fund publications, international scientific rhododendron symposiums, seed collections, identification of diseases and work on tissue culture techniques as it relates to rhododendrons. The results of funded projects are subsequently published in the ARS Journal. The Research Foundation continues to provide extraordinary benefits to the ARS at bargain rates and has propelled the ARS into the role of a significant contributor to rhododendron knowledge beyond just the casual observational lore that we all possess about our favourite genus. Since its formation in 1976, the Foundation has funded over 144 projects, both in North America and overseas, that reflect the diverse interests and curiosity of ARS members.

In summary, the ARS is an active, vibrant rhododendron society and its board is optimistic that it can at least stabilize its membership number, and hopefully even increase it. Further info can be obtained from its recently updated website at <http://www.rhododendron.org>. Among rhododendron societies worldwide, it is the only multi-national society, with chapters in the USA, Scotland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Canada and India. In addition, many members from other countries without an ARS chapter (e.g., New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Spain, France, Germany and so on) have friends in existing chapters, and have thus become ARS members through those chapters. Thus, although the ARS is named the “American” Rhododendron Society, in reality it is the most significant “international” rhododendron society and as such, has a major role to play in increasing rhododendron awareness and education world-wide. We welcome new members from anywhere in the world, and believe that the ARS’s journal and activities nicely complement those of other rhododendron societies!

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North American Azaleas

Barbara Stump
Nacogdoches, Texas
USA



THE AZALEA SOCIETY OF AMERICA (ASA) WAS FOUNDED IN 1977 AS AN EDUCATIONAL and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation, and appreciation of azaleas, which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentathera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the heath family (*Ericaceae*). The primary purpose of the ASA has always been education, at all events and at all levels of horticultural skill. As the Society is now 39 years old, there has been an increasing focus on encouraging young members to join and learn to grow azaleas properly as well as other educational aspects, such as:

- To increase knowledge about, and interest in, the hundreds of hybrid groups and cultivated varieties of azaleas, both evergreen and deciduous;
- To provide a forum for the sharing of experiences and the dissemination of techniques of hybridizing and selection for new varieties, propagation practices, and proper care of azaleas—in home gardens as well as public gardens;
- To promote the proper description and registration of new azalea hybrids and selections (photos on www.azaleas.org);
- To encourage research studies, with results communicated to members through publications and meetings; and
- To serve as a focus to bring together all those whose interest in and appreciation of azaleas form a bond of friendship.



'Maya-Fujin' (Kurume Hybrid). Photo by Joe Coleman.



Natural hybrid selection on seed *R. cumberlandense* × *R. arborescens*. Photo by J Jackson.

History

A group of azalea enthusiasts who participated in the early organizational meetings in 1977 were: Emile Deckert, Frank White, Mike White, George Harding, Buck Clagett, Alice Holland, and Bob Caviness. The Azalea Society of America officially became a non-profit organization in December 1979.



Kurume 'Gunki' (Kurume Hybrid), Photo by Joe Coleman.

Many of the founding ASA members were already members of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS), but, being located in the Mid-Atlantic states of Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, they wanted to focus on the 15,000+ cultivars or hybrids of azaleas that could be more easily grown than the elpidote rhododendrons in that climate. There also

was a push for more study of naturally occurring “natives” and selections or hybrids of deciduous azaleas, which grow well in the mountains of the Carolinas and Gulf Coast states such as Alabama, Georgia, northern Florida, Mississippi, and eastern Texas (Holland 1997).

Most of the meetings and current work of the Society is done in the twelve ASA chapters, although the original Board of Governors has been replaced by an elected Board of Directors. Chapter presidents are ex-officio members of the board and there are six Directors who are elected for a staggered period of two years (three directors being newly elected each year). Currently there are 514 domestic members, 72 life members, and 15 foreign members, including the RHS International Rhododendron Registrar, Dr. Alan Leslie. Most chapters have annual “cutting parties” in the summers to show new members how to vegetatively propagate azaleas and to share members’ cuttings.

Annual conventions are sponsored by individual chapters and thus are held in different areas of the country. These conventions include speakers, plant sales of unusual and new cultivars, and tours of both private and public gardens. Periodically, the ASA and ARS hold joint conventions, with many special events such as flower shows, flower photography competitions, and speakers on both azaleas and rhododendrons. The 2016 joint convention was held in Williamsburg, Virginia, in April. This four-day convention included not only private but also huge public gardens (Norfolk Botanical Garden, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden) and tours of Revolutionary War era historic sites.

Some chapters have their own websites, and others are building them. All



‘Gloria Still’ (Harris hybrid). Photo by Bill Meyers.



‘Pink Jewell’ (Kurume Hybrid). Photo by Joe Coleman.



'Luna' (Glenn Dale hybrid). Photo by Bill Meyers



'Margaret Douglas' (Back Acres hybrid). Photo by Bill Meyers.

these contact points are listed in the “About Us” section of the ASA website:

<http://azaleas.org/aboutus.html>,

but some are:

Central Carolinas:

<http://www.centralcarolinasazaleasociety.org/>

Northern Virginia:

<http://www.nv-asa.org/>

Texas Blog:

asatexaschapter.org

Vaseyi:

<http://www.azaleas.org/vs.html>

And some, such as the Rev. John Drayton Chapter in South Carolina have Facebook interfaces.

Where possible, the ASA collaborates with member nurseries and universities that have horticulture programs to obtain special plants for auction and introduction to the membership. These collaborations inform college students of the benefits of a horticulture education and the wide variety of applications of azaleas in home and commercial landscapes. Nursery collaborations make members and students aware of the huge scale (acres and acres)

of growing fields required to succeed in the commercial nursery business, and these nurseries in turn often provide the ASA with some of their newest cultivars and series.

The current trend in commercial azalea culture in the US is breeding for repeat-blooming plants, that bloom in both the spring and fall or sporadically throughout the warm season. Most of these azaleas came from areas that have little or no freezing weather, but some also grow well in the more northern states such as Ohio and Michigan. This trend has led to the need to clarify nomenclature yet again, since the big nurseries legally register a series with a good

“marketing name” (as in Encore® or ReBloom®), then individually “name” a plant with a trademarked name that a homeowner might recognize or remember easily, as in Autumn Fire™, while the actual registered IRRC cultivar name for that plant is *Rhododendron* ‘Roblez’. In order to protect their hybridized product, companies usually include PPAF (Plant Patent Applied For) somewhere on the plant tag. This indicates that the commercial nursery has applied for an official US plant patent, in an



‘Oriflamme’ (Glenn Dale hybrid). Photo by Bill Meyers.



Photo collage of deciduous *R. austrinum* variations in northern Florida (by Sally Perkins as shared by Ron Miller).



Top row, L to R - 'High Tide'* (Aromi hybrid), *R. vaseyi* (species), 'Narcissiflorum' (double form of *R. mucronatum*), 'Goldstrike' (Aromi hybrid); bottom row, L to R - 'Gloria Still' (Harris hybrid), 'Bill Miller'* (Stewart hybrid), 'Brookside Delight'* (USDA hybrid), 'Bobbi Gail' (USDA hybrid).

effort to limit reproduction of that exact cultivar by anyone other than the plant patent holder or a nursery licensed for plant reproduction by the commercial patent-holder. This collaboration with nurseries helps our chapters get more azaleas into landscapes, but frustrates those who know proper nomenclature practice and try to get members to follow it.

Outreach and Role of the ASA Website

Outreach for the Society begins with chapter and convention activities, but is reinforced by the quarterly publication of the journal *The Azalean*. It has now grown from a single chapter newsletter to a 24-page journal with 16 pages of colorful photographs of azaleas, nurseries, events, and propagation techniques. The editor and the journal designer are the only paid staff, and advertising is always needed to help with production costs. *The Azalean* is a soft-copy magazine with a full-color cover and is also published in digital format on the society website.

The Society's website: www.azaleas.org/ is a gold mine of information,

which includes:

- Society organization, officers, and contact information;
- Membership application forms;
- Advertising Agreements, which can also initiate web links through our Azalea Sources web page;
- Member Sources page—members who own nurseries—with descriptions of main azalea groups offered;
- Convention descriptions and registration forms for current conventions; listings of past locations;
- List of Azalea Cities of America;
- List of Awards by the Society and recipients;
- Basic descriptions of the difference between azaleas and rhododendrons;
- Lists of azalea hybrid groups and descriptions of cultivars as these become available (e.g., Huang Hybrids and Aromi Hybrids); and
- Copies of *The Azalean* articles (viewable to the public except for the most recent twelve issues).
- Extensive pictured database at www.pbbase.com/azaleasociety/azaleas.

Hard copies of the Society Archives are stored in the Special Collections Division of the D. H. Hill Library of North Carolina State University (NCSU) in Raleigh, North Carolina. These archives cover the years 1928-2015, although most material is from 1979 to 2015. Earlier material contains research papers and publications of early azalea researchers such as Dr. August Kehr. The website gives directions on how to submit documents or request copies. This was a project by both Dr. Donald E. Moreland, Professor Emeritus of NCSU, and John Brown of the ASA. Dr. Moreland was a long-term ASA member and his legacy has helped fund the project. See the Archives “tab” on ASA website for more information on accessing or adding to these records.

Recent website enhancements are helping both chapter members and the 150 at-large members not currently affiliated with a chapter stay connected to the Society.

It is now possible to search the entire 39 years of articles in *The Azalean*, although access to view the most recent twelve issues (three years) is limited



Natural hybrid selection grown from open pollinated seed taken from the Zo Warner selections: *R. arborescens* X *R. cumberlandense*. Photo by J Jackson.



'J Jackson' - a natural hybrid of *R. arborescens* X *R. cumberlandense*.

to current paid members. Content searches can be made by year, author, or keyword. An additional current member benefit is that each issue's table of contents and articles are viewable on the website as soon as the journal issue goes to press.

Special Programs

In 2004, the Society initiated the Azalea City of America program to recognize cities which promote

azaleas and hold special activities to celebrate them in their towns. Many hold special "Azalea Trails" that lead visitors through residential areas and public gardens. The intent was to encourage towns to plant azaleas, learn about them, and participate in the ASA. To qualify for the award, a city must have up to five public or private gardens or arboreta and have no less than three current active ASA members within the city limits. It was first awarded to Nacogdoches, Texas, in 2004. Other cities are listed on the website.

Azalea Seed Exchange

This program makes azalea seed available to ASA members and operates through the Web, from January 1 through March 31 each year. After April 1, non-members can order seed. Instructions for both hybrid and open-pollinated seed collection and storage are shown on the website. The price for the seed is nominal to cover mailing. This is run by Vaseyi Chapter member Lindy Johnson.

Azalea Research Committee

First proposed by the late Dr. August Kehr in 2001, this committee, a part of the ASA, was established in 2009, and is funded by donations from other organizations and ASA members. The goal is to fund azalea research projects and report them in both *The Azalean* and other scientific journals. The focus is both plant research and pest and disease control.

This is a new effort, and research grants of \$500 to \$5000 are made, based on merit to the Society. More information on the ASA Research Committee is available at: <http://www.azaleas.org/arf.html>

Looking to the Future

As with the ARS, the ASA needs new and younger members. In 2015, the ASA designated Chris Wetmore of Central Carolinas Chapter as our Membership Chairman and liaison with our many at-large members. He is helping us work on ways to attract new members, to recruit at-large members into existing chapters, and to retain existing members. While we have focused on education about azalea care and culture, we have not considered how to foster those interests in younger people, especially children. There is still work to be done, but we thoroughly love azaleas and want to share the fact that they can be grown nearly everywhere in the US—from Michigan to California to Florida and New Hampshire, and that they make great companion plants to rhododendrons. Visit us at www.azaleas.org.

If you have an article you would like to submit for publication in *The Azalean*, please contact our editor at theazalean@gmail.com. We are always looking for new material for our members, especially in the following categories:

- Asexual propagation for evergreen and deciduous azaleas;
- Tissue culture of azaleas that are difficult to propagate from cuttings;
- Hybridization of new cultivars and commercial breeding for heat-tolerance and re-blooming characteristics;
- Botanic gardens famous for azalea collections and unique design features—domestic or overseas;
- Down-to-earth azalea growing methods for the home gardener;
- Organic—non chemical—fertilizers and treatments for specific pests such as azalea lace bug;
- Taxonomic and nomenclature articles to aid in proper azalea identification and to guide growing in the proper locations;
- Service projects of chapter members;
- Biographical articles about famous azalea hybridizers, projects, and illustrative photos of representative azaleas;
- List of nursery sources with Web links where available;
- History of hybrid groups, with some example photographs; and
- Bibliography of sources and reviews of new books on azaleas.

* = Name is not registered

All following photos are by Carolyn Beck. All are Stewart Hybrid evergreen azaleas except for ‘Kathleen Vines’ which is a Holly Springs Hybrid and ‘Terrie Frankel’ which is a Joe Klimavicz Hybrid.



'Buck Clagett'*.



'Barbara Ella'*.



'Paul Beck'*.



'Dr. Douglas J. Fraser, Jr.*'



'Hyatt's Happiness'*.



'Joe Klimavicz'.



'Kathleen Vines'.



'Lady Catherine'*.



'Mary Rutley'*.



'Monique Marie'*.



'Dan Krabill'*.



'Terrie Frankel'*.



'Special Friendship'*.

Reference

Holland, A. 1997. "How it all Began." *The Azalean*, 19(4): 64-65.

Barbara Stump is a member of the Texas Chapter of the ASA, vice-president of the ASA since 2015, and is the current editor of The Azalean.

Growing Rhododendrons in La Belle Province

Claire Bélisle
Rigaud, Quebec, Canada



THE SOCIÉTÉ DES RHODODENDRONS DU QUÉBEC (SRQ) in eastern Canada is still in its infancy stage. It was officially formed on September 28, 2003, but the idea had been germinating since 1991 as the brainchild of Richard Dionne. He has been responsible for the Montreal Botanical Garden Ericacetum (Jardin Leslie Hancock) for quite some time now. Without his knowledge and wisdom,

Month	Average Days below			Average Days Above		
	-2 °C	-10 °C	-20 °C	10 °C	20 °C	30 °C
	28 °F	14 °F	-4 °F	50 °F	68 °F	86 °F
January	29	21	8	0	0	0
February	25	17	4	0	0	0
March	22	9	1	3	0	0
April	6	0	0	17	3	0
May	0	0	0	30	12	0
June	0	0	0	30	24	2
July	0	0	0	31	30	4
August	0	0	0	31	29	2
September	0	0	0	30	17	1
October	2	0	0	22	3	0
November	13	1	0	6	0	0
December	26	13	2	1	0	0
Year	124	63	14	201	117	9

Average number of days of old and hot weather in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, gathered from 1981 to 2010.

<https://www.currentresults.com/Weather/Canada/Quebec/Places/montreal-temperatures-by-month-average.php>



R. 'White Lights'. Photo by Nicole Lafleur.



Leslie-Hancock Garden. *R.* 'Lemon Lights' and *R.* 'Golden Lights'. Photo by Michel Tardif.



Leslie-Hancock Garden. Photo by Nicole Lafleur.

the Society would suffer greatly! Many plants in our garden came from small seedlings Richard provided to the Society for its plant sales.

As you might know, Quebec's climate is not ideal for a large number of rhododendrons. We are limited to growing the Ironclad varieties and even those can suffer badly after a very cold winter, like those we had in 2013-14 and 2014-15. Where a thick cover of snow is still a sure thing—those areas also have cooler temperatures in the summer—one can have good results with alpine species. I should say that azaleas from the Lights Series perform well under our growing conditions and are quite popular amongst gardeners, but in general, rhododendron cultivation doesn't yet have strong roots in Quebec, like it does in northwestern North America or Great Britain. The southern part of Finland, for example, provides better growing conditions for rhodos than does our climate.

Nevertheless, we can count on dedicated members who collect and grow surprising numbers of rhododendrons and other acid-loving plants. Aside from those select few though, many of our members show little involvement in the Society, grow only a few rhododendrons, but love them unconditionally. We usually meet them once a year at the Montreal Botanical Garden spring "Rendez-vous horticole," where many plant aficionados gather to get their hands on hard to find taxa.



R. 'Snowdrift' and *R.* 'Stewartsonian'. Photo by Michel Tardif.

Four years ago, the Society was down to a record low 20 members. After a change of leadership, the SRQ raised its membership to over 130 in the span of a year. The creation of a full-day event called “Destination Rhododendron” in June 2012 that was held at the Botanical Garden reversed the downward trend. Richard Dionne and Albert Mondor, an author of many books on horticulture including one on rhododendrons, were both guest speakers and guides for the subsequent tours of the Jardin Leslie Hancock and the Shade Garden. To facilitate entry into the Montreal Botanical Garden, all participants had to become members of the SRQ, but we were pleased to retain nearly half the following year.

Another positive action from the new leadership was the provision of better access to more species and varieties for SRQ members. My contacts in the horticultural industry allowed me to order plants from growers on the West Coast. One year, another member and I went to pick up young plants at Weston Nurseries in Massachusetts where there used to be a lot of hybridization and development of new plants. Having access to a wide variety of acid-loving plants seems to be what members were looking for.

The change of leadership also marked a big improvement in communication with society members. The Society started to publish both a monthly newsletter and a quarterly e-magazine, *Rhododendrons et compagnie*. This has proved to be an excellent way of retaining members by providing them timely information



Rhododendrons et compagnie

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The SRQ newsletter header.

on plants and activities. Unfortunately, we recently had to cut back on their numbers to reduce the workload of our editor (its now six newsletters and three e-magazines a year, which is still better than many Societies).

Still in the communication field, our small society is working on the ambitious project of building a comprehensive online rhododendron database in French, with specific growing information for the Quebec climate. We still have a lot of work ahead of us, but every year, new taxons are added. Our website has been in operation for the past six or seven years now, and we have also created a Facebook page that has 154 followers.



R. 'Spek's Brillant' and *R. 'Koeingin'*. Photo by Michel Tardif.



R. 'Rosy Lights' and *R. 'Golden Lights'* and *R. Northern Hi-Lights'*. Photo by Sylvie Tremblay.

We've accepted that attendance for conferences other than big events such as "Destination Rhododendron" in 2012 will never attract more than a dozen or so of our 60 members. Most of our activities are held in Montreal since we have free access there to a conference room at the Botanical Garden, but with our members scattered around the province, and the constant repair work on roads and bridges for most of the year in Montreal over the past decade, one-way travel time can easily exceed two hours. It's one of the drawbacks of living in a relatively low-populated area, but this also holds so many advantages we can't really complain!

In the past two years, we've made concerted efforts to get members interested in growing plants from seeds and providing them with rare finds from the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society in Nova Scotia, but the response so far has been timid. None of our members have dabbled in hybridization yet, nor with seed collection in the wild.

Since few rhododendron societies around the world share a climate similar to ours, it might be interesting for others to discover our reality. In our case, we have had to wander elsewhere otherwise we would have a limited amount of plant to cultivate. Rhododendron species indigenous to Quebec are very few: only *R. canadense* and *R. groenlandicum*! Many native ericaceous plants grow in the estimated 8 to 12 million hectares (31,000–46,000 square miles) of peat

bogs found in Quebec, but most are difficult or impossible to grow in the urban environment of the most southern parts of Quebec, especially in the Montreal area where the temperature can be hot and humid in the summer.

We invite members of other rhododendron societies around the globe to contact us when they travel to Quebec. If possible, we will invite them to one of our activities or show them our gardens. We can also create an activity to meet with them if they are willing to give a talk to our members! That is how we got to meet with Kristian Theqvist from Finland in 2010, a meeting that was greatly appreciated by all present.

So, that's who we are! We are looking forward to meeting any of you here in Quebec, abroad or through writing and emails.

Rhododendronly yours,

Claire Bélisle
President of the Société des rhododendrons du Québec
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The Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden

Steve Hootman
Federal Way, Washington
USA



RHODODENDRONS are, after roses, the most widely-grown and popular shrubby plants in the world. The *Rhododendron* genus (a group of closely related species) is one of the largest in the plant kingdom in terms of the number of different



The Garden in late April.



R. kesangiae.



R. himantodes.

species. There are over 1000 documented species in the genus *Rhododendron* and thus they are of great interest to scientists and conservationists as well as gardeners due to their extreme variability and adaptability. “Species” are those plants that are found growing naturally in the wild places of our planet, unchanged by humans and reproducing and maintaining their own wild populations. Conversely, the majority of rhododendrons seen in gardens and landscapes are hybrids that have been developed by humans who have artificially crossed various species with other species (and eventually other hybrids) to create plants with “flashier” multi-colored or larger flowers, superior cold-hardiness, and so on..

The wild species rhododendrons occur naturally in a wide range of habitats throughout the world, primarily in the mountains and forests of Asia, Europe and North America, with a few hundred tropical species in the mountains of SE Asia including Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea. Additionally, two species have been found in the tropical mountains of northern Australia. Throughout the world there are many public gardens featuring the often more

flamboyant and easier to grow hybrid rhododendrons that have been developed by humans. The Rhododendron Species Foundation and its Botanical Garden is the only botanic garden on the planet devoted specifically to wild



A section of the evergreen azalea collection with *Viburnum plicatum* var. *tomentosum* in the background. May 2011.



A view through the Alpine Garden in early April.



One of the propagation grow-out greenhouses. Fall 2010.



Seedling rhododendrons in the propagation unit.

species rhododendrons. The Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden (RSBG) is, in a sense, a “zoo” for these wild plants, displaying some of the most interesting, beautiful and rare plants on the planet.

The Rhododendron Species Foundation (RSF, which manages the RSBG) is a non-profit organization founded in 1964 to secure the finest authentic forms of *Rhododendron* species and to develop a comprehensive collection of this remarkable group of plants. This was an important goal and mission because in North America at that

time, properly named and authentic species rhododendrons were very rarely available to gardeners, collectors or public display gardens. On the other hand,



R. rex subsp. *rex*.



April flowers near the plant sales area.



R. anthopogon.



R. edgeworthii on an old stump.

extensive collections of species were still in cultivation in the United Kingdom. These large and often famous, well-established old estate gardens had been among the original sponsors of the early plant hunters and were still growing the results of those initial exploratory collecting trips to the remote mountains of Asia.

Thus, the origin of the RSF may be said to lie with a visit to England by Dr. Milton Walker of Oregon in March, 1964. The purpose of his visit was to explore the possibility of importing cuttings, many from the original wild plants, of the best forms of *Rhododendron* species growing in both public and private British gardens. The RSF's *Rhododendron* collection was first housed on Milton Walker's property at Pleasant Hill, near Eugene, Oregon, but was soon moved to the property of RSF board member P.H. (Jock) Brydon, near Salem, Oregon. By the fall of 1973, it had become apparent that the collection was becoming too large for the Brydon property, and an RSF committee met with George Weyerhaeuser (a relative of RSF board member Corydon Wagner), who was immediately and enthusiastically receptive to

the idea of providing adequate space for the growing collection on the new Weyerhaeuser corporate campus in Federal Way, Washington. In 1974 the Weyerhaeuser Company generously leased, at no cost, a permanent site of 9.7 ha (24 acres) for the collection. The following year the collection was relocated from Salem to its permanent home in Federal Way where it has expanded and

grown beautifully since that time. Since that time, the RSF has been functioning as a completely independent, non-profit, conservation-based organization for several decades and has tremendously expanded its scope, its programs and its international outreach. Examples include sponsoring plant collection “expeditions”, participating in international meetings and conferences, enriching its website and enhancing its publications programme. Recent RSBG Newsletters are available on the website (<http://rhodygarden.org/cms/>) and the substantial yearbook, titled *Rhododendron Species*, is international in its scope. The RSF is fully funded through gift shop sales and plant purchases, admissions, memberships, grants, donations, and a proportion of income from our endowment investments. Each year, the one hectare (2.5 acre) nursery, with its four heated glasshouses, two lath houses and nine poly houses, produces some 15,000 rhododendrons along with several thousand companion plants. Those not needed for the collection or other botanical gardens are sold. There are two plant catalogues each year, primarily selling two to three-year-old plants, as well as a pollen list and a seed list, the seed resulting from hand-pollination of plants in the garden.

The RSBG is dedicated to the conservation, public display, and distribution



Cardiocrinum giganteum.



Rhododendron benhallii (syn: *Menziesia ciliicalyx*).



Primula prolifera and *Iris sibirica* in June.

of *Rhododendron* species. Home to the largest collection of species rhododendrons in the world, the Garden presently displays almost 700 of the 1000 species found in the rapidly disappearing wild forests of the world. We serve as an exceptional resource for conservation, scientific, horticultural and educational communities worldwide. Utilizing our unique collection of plants, the RSBG provides education and exposure to the intricacies of the natural world through interpretive signage, guided tours, our website and numerous publications.

There are four full-time “collections” staff, working in the nursery and garden, and the office and gift shop have two full-time and three part-time staff, but we also rely heavily on volunteers, especially in the office and in propagation work. Regular tours are provided for school students, but there is plenty of potential for extending this aspect of our educational activities.

We also serve as the primary germplasm repository for the genus *Rhododendron*, one of the largest genera of plants known to science. The vast majority of our accessioned collections represent documented material obtained from wild populations occurring in some of the most densely populated regions on the planet, including the rapidly disappearing wildlands and forests of southeastern Asia, where the majority of *Rhododendron* species occur. These wild populations are at extreme and immediate risk from extirpation and even extinction due to human activities such as land clearing, burning and fuel-wood consumption. We provide documented material to



Rutherford Conservatory.

universities and scientists around the world. This material is used in both phylogenetic and phylogeographic studies; current examples include projects on leaf morphology as related to habitat, the taxonomy of subsection *Fortunea*, and vireya phylogeny (the study of the evolutionary history of species). In a partnership with the University of Washington, we are also sequencing the entire genome of the genus *Rhododendron*.

In 2010, the RSBG opened the 465 m² (5000 ft²) Rutherford Conservatory, a heated greenhouse open to the public that displays a collection of endangered tropical rhododendrons known as vireyas. These rhododendrons are native to many of the rapidly disappearing forests in mountain areas of tropical southeastern Asia, specifically in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Malaysia. Other rare plants such as wild orchid species and tree ferns are also displayed, all growing together as one would see them in their native habitats. This new exhibit serves to further our mission of education about the biology of plants as well as raising the awareness of the general public concerning the environmental degradation that is taking place in these far distant lands.

Today the garden and its ever-expanding collections have matured beautifully and you will note the many exciting and beautiful garden projects which have



Rutherford Conservatory with terrace.



A pond inside the Rutherford Conservatory.

been added or improved upon over the past several years. In addition to the recent opening of the Rutherford Conservatory, the Hardy Fern Foundation's Victorian Stumpery (the largest public one in the world) has developed into the mossy, shaded and lush display of ferns and bold foliage plants that we had envisioned; the Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis*) Meadow has increased in beauty each year and brings in more visitors than any other single feature; the Magnolia Grove had its first major flowering in 2013 and should improve tremendously each year as the trees gain in strength and age; the iconic western red cedar Garden Gazebo, overlooking the Alpine Garden,



Agapetes serpens on a rock in the Rutherford Conservatory.



The *Meconopsis* planting. May end 2011.



Part of the Stumpery.

has been completely rebuilt and is now accessible to the elderly and disabled; and the *Rhododendron* collection has been increased tremendously thanks to the numerous new introductions that have recently been made from such far-flung locales as Guangxi, China; Myanmar (Burma) and Papua New Guinea.

As we head into the second half of our first century, we are in a better position scientifically, economically and professionally than at any time in our first fifty years of history. With the added stability of our increased endowment and an ever more beautiful garden, we look forward to a long and productive future.

Steve Hootman is the Executive Director and Curator of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden and Rhododendron Species Foundation.