

Potomac Valley & MAC ARS - North Carolina Nursery Trip

March 2 – March 4, 2017

It is nice to get away in March for a gardening outing. For over a decade, members of the Potomac Valley Chapter and Middle Atlantic Chapter ARS have been heading down to North Carolina to visit some mail order nurseries that have open houses at that time of year. We buy some plants, socialize, go out to dinner, and have a lot of fun.

George McLellan and some other members of MAC will be leaving on Thursday to stay that night at the Best Western Hotel in Danville, VA. The next morning, they will pick up a wholesale order from Cam Too Camellia Nursery in Greensboro, one of the largest wholesale camellia growers in the US. With 30 acres of hoop houses, it is not a place to tour or make on-site selections. Orders must be placed in advance which we could do sometime.

Before getting to Cam Too, George expects to visit nearby Buds and Blooms Nursery, another wholesale nursery that grows woody plants including hydrangeas, crape myrtles, azaleas, kalmia, and a limited number of rhododendrons. After that, they will head to Camellia Forest Nursery and then continue south to Sanford. They will have to miss Pine Knot Farms on Friday, but it may be possible for them to stop by there on Saturday afternoon if they have time.

We all intend to convene on Friday night in Sanford, NC, but we are not exactly sure which motel we will use. Last year we stayed at the Baymont Inn but some rooms had problems. This year we will likely choose the Hampton Inn or maybe the Holiday Inn Express. George intends to drive straight home on Saturday night, but others may want more time to tour Plant Delights Nursery. One option is to spend the night at the nearby Comfort Inn in Garner, NC, and drive back Sunday. Details about the hotels are provided later, but for updates, please contact Don or George.

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George McLellan - gmclellan38@gmail.com

Proposed Itinerary

Friday morning: March 3, 2017

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

Target time at Pine Knot: 10:00 am to 12:00 noon
Approximate travel time from DC: 4 hours

On Friday morning, we try to visit Pine Knot Farms for their Hellebore Festival. Judith Tyler passed away last year, but Dick Tyler and his family still sell hellebores and other plants like John Lonsdale's hardy cyclamens. Some GPS systems may suggest heading west via VA-58 around the Kerr Reservoir, but we have found it better to continue on I-85 into North Carolina, take exit 214, and head back on NC-39 to Pine Knot Farms.



Double Hellebore at Pine Knot Farms

Friday afternoon: March 3, 2017

Camellia Forrest Nursery (9 am - 5 pm)
9701 Carrie Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516
www.camforest.com

Target time at Nursery: 1:30 to 3:30 pm
Travel time from Pine Knot: 1.5 hours

David Parks has joined the mail order nurseries in the area that are holding open houses at this time of year. From Pine Knot, we will return to I-85 and head south via Rt. 25 to Chapel Hill, and then head west on NC-54 to the nursery. Camellia Forest is well known for their extensive camellia collection, but they also have other rare plants, flowering plum trees (*Prunus mume*), woody shrubs including evergreens, some native azaleas, etc. Afterwards, we will drive south to Sanford via NC-15 and avoid Raleigh's Friday rush hour traffic nightmare.



'Pink Icicle' – Hardy Camellia

Saturday morning: March 4, 2017

Big Bloomers Flower Farm (8:30 am – 5 pm)
275 Pressly Foushee Road, Sanford, NC 27330
www.bigbloomersflowerfarm.com

Target time at Big Bloomers: 8:30 – 10:30 am

On Saturday morning, we usually go to Big Bloomers in the morning and Plant Delights Nursery in the afternoon. By spending the night in Sanford, we can save the hour we normally spent traveling south from Garner. Last year, we arrived in Sanford in late afternoon and decided to take a quick look at Big Bloomers. Since they close at 5 PM, they let us start selecting plants but left our carts in the greenhouse and came back the next morning to finish buying and check out. That worked very well!

Big Bloomers has thousands of varieties of plants at relatively inexpensive prices. At last count they had 17 greenhouses covering nearly 30,000 sq. ft, and were continuing to expand. Every section is packed! They have market packs of annuals and perennials as well as larger plants in 4-inch to gallon pots including iris, grasses, hostas, hellebores, daylilies, ferns, wildflowers, plants for sun, plants for shade, house plants, and were adding woody plants like hydrangeas, camellias, quince, dogwoods, conifers, maples, and more.



Inside a Greenhouse at Big Bloomers

Saturday afternoon: March 4, 2017

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

Target time at Plant Delights: 12:00 – 2:00 pm
Travel time from Sanford: 1 hour

Tony Avent's Plant Delights Nursery carries premium plants but some may be pricey. Plant aficionados usually don't mind paying for quality and appreciate Tony's efforts to find rare plants that he can offer to the general public. Many plants are things that you never even knew existed. He carries superior selections of many familiar perennials, too. For shade, try hellebores, cypripedium orchids, arisaemas, epimediums, trilliums, ferns, and hostas. His recommendations for sun include agaves, baptisias, yuccas, grasses, iris, and more. He will often have a few woody plants but be sure to allow plenty of time to enjoy his ever-expanding display gardens. Tony can often be found in the garden near his house, so be sure to say "Hi" if you see him there.



Plant Delights Display Garden

Alternative Friday visits to Wholesale Nurseries: March 3, 2017

Buds and Blooms Nursery
7501 US-29, Browns Summit, NC 27214
www.budsandbloomsnursery.com

Wholesale only: woody plants, azaleas, and rhododendrons
Travel time from Danville: 40 minutes
Target time at Buds and Blooms: 8:00 – 10:00 am

Cam Too Camellia Nursery*
805 Oakbury Ct, Greensboro, NC 27455
www.camtoocamellia.com

Wholesale only: Primarily Camellias
Travel time from Browns Summit: 10 minutes
Target time at Cam Too: 10:00 – 12:00 am
Travel time to Camellia Forest Nursery: 1 hour 15 minutes

**If you want to see a list of camellia varieties Cam Too is offering this year, send an email request to Don Hyatt.*



Cam Too Camellia Nursery: 30 acres of Hoop Houses

Hotel Options for North Carolina Nursery Trip

Danville, VA: *Optional Thursday night, March 2, 2017*

Best Western Windsor Inn & Suites
1292 South Boston Rd, Danville, VA 24540
(434) 483-5000

Sanford, NC: *Friday night, March 3, 2017*

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

Holiday Inn Express & Suites Sanford
2110 Dalrymple St, Sanford, NC 27330
(919) 776-6600

Baymont Inn & Suites Sanford *(Some rooms had problems last year)*
2614 S Horner Blvd, Sanford, NC 27330
(919) 708-7400

Garner, NC: *Optional Saturday night, March 4, 2017*

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