



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Winter Newsletter: January 2023

Chapter Officers

President: Carol Segree
csegree17@outlook.com
Secretary: Diane Reinke
Isabelle49@aol.com
Treasurer: Phyllis Rittman
rittwoman@gmail.com

Potomac Valley Chapter Calendar – 2022

- January 29, 2023: 1 PM Zoom Meeting: Ralf Bauer & Tara Spears
- March 3 – 4, 2023: Possible North Carolina Nursery Trip
- March 26, 2023: Joint Meeting with Northern VA Chapter ASA
- April 13 or 14: Possible Pennsylvania Nursery Trip
- April 19 – 23, 2023: Joint ARS / ASA Convention, Atlanta, GA
- May 19 – 21, 2023: Joint Meeting with MAC, Orkney Springs, VA

Next Meeting: January 29, 2023

Double Zoom: Two Presentations!

1:00 PM “The *R. minus* Complex”

By Dr. Ralf Bauer

Ralf lives in Offenburg, Germany, but he has made many trips to the Eastern United States to study our native species. In this talk, he will discuss the small leaf rhododendrons, or lepidotes, in the *R. minus* Complex. This includes *R. carolinianum*, *R. minus*, *R. chapmanii*, and the new species he just described in 2019, *R. smokianum*. His photographs of these plants and the scenic places where they grow are awesome!

2:15 PM “Native Azalea Exploration”

By Ms. Tara Spears

Tara Spears is a young and enthusiastic graduate student from the University of Pennsylvania who is in a Masters program studying Environmental Science. She also serves as a Curatorial Assistant at the Jenkins Arboretum in PA. For several years, Steve Wright at Jenkins has been developing a major repository of our native azalea species and Tara is now assisting.

Last June, Tara and Steve traveled with us during our annual trip to the mountains to study some of the best populations in the wild we have observed. We recently learned that she was scheduled to give a talk to the Valley Forge Chapter ARS on Native Azalea Exploration in the Southern Appalachians, so we have been trying to make arrangements to share her talk with us by Zoom, too.



R. carolinianum on Hawksbill Mountain, NC

Photo: Ralf Bauer



Tara Spears studies *R. calendulaceum* at Hooper Bald.

Photos: D. Hyatt

We encourage you to gather with friends, bring some snacks, and support these two speakers.

Please join us by Zoom on **January 29 at 1:00 PM!**

Zoom Topic: Ralf Bauer talk on *R. minus* followed by Tara Spears on Native Azaleas

Time: January 29, 2023 01:00 PM Eastern Time

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5673619168?pwd=TzJlYkZkZjFCdHU2UXZsV1MvNlBqZz09>

Meeting ID: 567 361 9168

Passcode: 1234

Rhododendron minus Complex

Many of us who tour the Southern Appalachians have been baffled by the classification of our native lepidote species. Lepidote rhododendrons usually have relatively small leaves that are covered with waxy scales. I realize the term is confusing and hard to remember. Most of us prefer to call those plants by an unscientific term, “scalies.”

Below is a close up of a lepidote that shows those tiny waxy bumps or scales on the back of the leaf. Look closely at the insert for the scales.



The large leaf rhododendrons most people grow don't have scales on their leaves. They can have sparse hairs, dense hairs, or no hairs at all. The fact that they have no scales puts those rhododendrons officially in a category called “elepidotes.” When the hairs on the back of the leaf form a dense, felt-like covering, we call the surface indumentum. The image below is a selection of *R. yakushimanum* which is prized for its fuzzy indumentum.



Most of the people I know find those two terms tedious so we tend to avoid them in conversation. We refer to the large-leaf elepidotes merely as “rhododendrons” and the small-leaf lepidotes are called “scalies.” It is easier. Why complicate life?



'Olga Mezitt'

Photo: D. Hyatt



'Windbeam'

Photo: D. Hyatt

Many of the small leaf scalies make great landscape plants. They tend to be more compact than regular rhodies and many have aromatic foliage that the deer in my garden do not like. Some lovely blue scalies like *R. impeditum* and *R. augustinii* are of alpine origin and do not take our heat. Both 'Olga Mezitt' and 'Windbeam' are hybrids of species in the *R. minus* Complex and they do very well here.

I may seem a bit irreverent but I think our native American lepidotes probably confused taxonomists, too. Perhaps they only looked at dried herbarium specimens and never saw our species in the wild. Not long ago, they decided to lump all our lepidotes into the species *R. minus*. It sure makes it easy to identify plants in the wild. If it has scales on the leaves, the species is *R. minus*. Otherwise, if the flowers are purple, it is *R. catawbiense*. If the flowers are white to blush pink, then it is *R. maximum*. Done!

It is my hope that the DNA tests Ralf Bauer and other scientists are doing will help sort out these plants for us. Ralf has extensive field experience and grows them, too. That is invaluable! On the next page, I will share some thoughts about our scalies. It may not match current protocol but taxonomists' change things so often it hardly matters anyway.



R. chapmanii

This is clearly rarest of our scalies. It is native to a few locations in north central Florida with perhaps less than 100 plants total in the wild. Those areas keep getting hit by severe hurricanes, too. The plant is very heat tolerant but is not very winter hardy.



R. carolinianum

We have observed two major populations of *R. carolinianum* in the wild. The plants growing near Mt. Pisgah are usually in the white to blush pink with a yellow blotch. The population to the north near Linville Falls tends to be pink and the foliage is reflexed. Flowers are flat with a short tube. The form below looks like the ones used by hybridizers.



R. minus

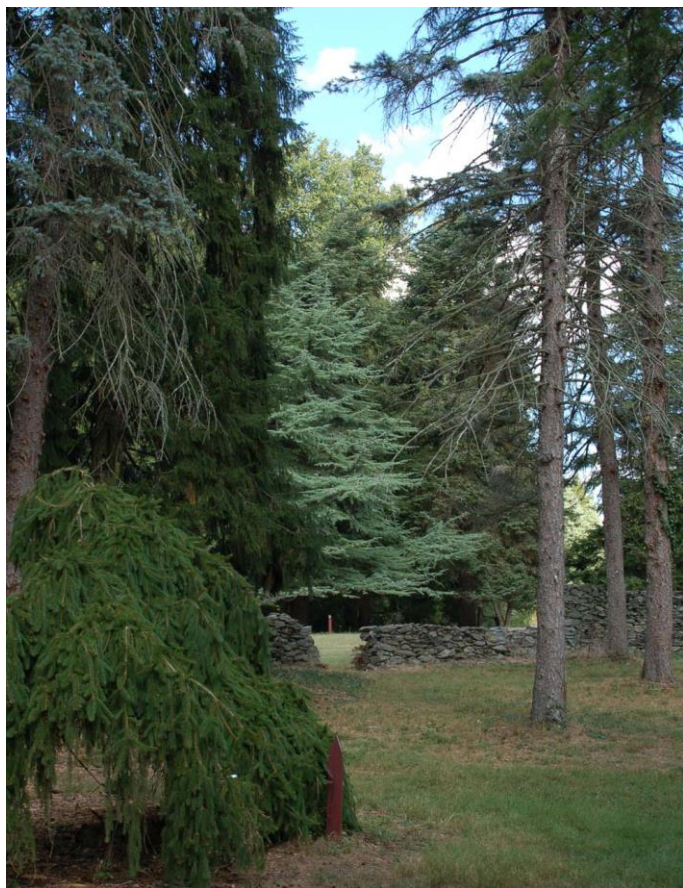
This species seems to be widespread in the south. It is a larger plant with larger leaves. The blossoms have long tubes and can vary in size. The color can range from white to pink with a gold blotch. They seem so different I wondered if it could be several species. It blooms in midseason after *carolinianum*.



R. smokianum

This was a plant we referred to as the “dwarf purple minus” for decades. It was the last to bloom, often with *R. maximum*. It grows at high elevations in the Smokies and often on steep rock walls. It didn’t look like the others and had small blossoms that were flat to bell shaped. Colors ranged from lavender, to rose pink, to deep purple. Ralf Bauer used DNA to show this was indeed a new species.





Blue Atlas Cedar and other Evergreens at Blandy
Photos: D. Hyatt

Need Help on Zoom?

Zoom is a software package that allows people to communicate over the Internet in real time. For full interaction, your computer needs a microphone and video camera. If your computer does not have those items, you can still watch Zoom but will not be able to respond.

Our next meeting will be a Zoom presentation by Ralf Bauer from Germany followed by a talk by Tara Spears from Pennsylvania. The link is already established and listed on the first page.

On the day of the meeting and a few minutes before the time, just click on that link and it will launch the software. When ready, Ralf will take control so we can hear him and see his screen. We viewers should put our sessions on **mute** so we don't interfere with Ralf. Then we will turn control to Tara so she can give her portion. The mute control is found at the bottom left of the screen. There are other Zoom controls so for more on the basics, there are many good tutorials like this one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1CwZFiAyxY>

Joint Meeting with the NoVA Chapter ASA!

March 26, 2023, 1:00 PM

Chris Schmidt, Chief Arborist at Blandy Experimental Farm, the Virginia State Arboretum

The speaker our March meeting will be Chris Schmidt, the Chief Arborist at the Virginia State Arboretum, Blandy Experimental Farm. This will be a joint meeting with the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA and it will be held at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Springfield. We will likely have a plant exchange, too. More details later.

Chris will tell us about the history of Blandy while she shares insight into some of their amazing collections including trees, shrubs, and flowers. The original owner, Graham F. Blandy, was a wealthy New Yorker who used it as a summer home. Upon his death in 1926, he bequeathed 712 acres and a structure known as the Quarters building to the University of Virginia for the arboretum.

The arboretum's first director was Orland E. White from the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. He oversaw the design and planting of the property from the date he was hired in 1927 until he retired in 1955. Many specimens are approaching 100 years old now so we can appreciate the beauty of mature specimens as well as other newer plantings.

Chris expects to retire this year and we are fortunate to have her join us. She can speak on a broad range of topics and we will let you know more details in our next newsletter.

I have been to Blandy many times and always find interesting plants and landscape ideas. Below is the hydrangea 'Lady in Red' against the white-washed brick of the Quarters building. I was so impressed with subtle but effective color echo!



'Lady in Red' Hydrangea at Blandy

Photo: D. Hyatt



R. austrinum 'Escatawpa' Photo: D. Hyatt

ARS/ASA 2023 Convention *"Georgia with Azaleas on My Mind"* Atlanta, GA April 19 – 23, 2023

The Northern Virginia Chapter ASA and the Azalea Chapter of the ARS are co-hosting this year's convention in the Atlanta area. There were some serious problems with messed up labels on the Winter Journal. Some people got multiple copies while others got nothing. I finally did get a copy but the material describing the convention seemed incomplete. Steve Henning put together some additional information which we will forward to you. The Azalea Society does host the convention website which includes program description and online registration:

<https://www.azaleas.org/convention-2023/>

Did You Remember to Renew?

If you forgot to pay your dues, be sure to renew as soon as possible. You can send a check to our Treasurer, Phyllis Rittman, using the membership form at the end of this newsletter. Regular membership is \$40 per year. Associate members who already belong to another ARS Chapter pay only \$10. You can also renew online at the ARS website: www.rhododendron.org

Mea Culpa

Your editor wishes to apologize for his obvious shortcomings this year. He had some personal and family problems and was unable to complete some things he intended to do. You may have noticed sparse newsletters and we did not have a seed exchange. Hopefully, 2023 will be less stressful and more productive. Thanks for understanding.

MAC and PVC: *Joint Meeting!* Orkney Springs, VA May 19 – 21, 2023

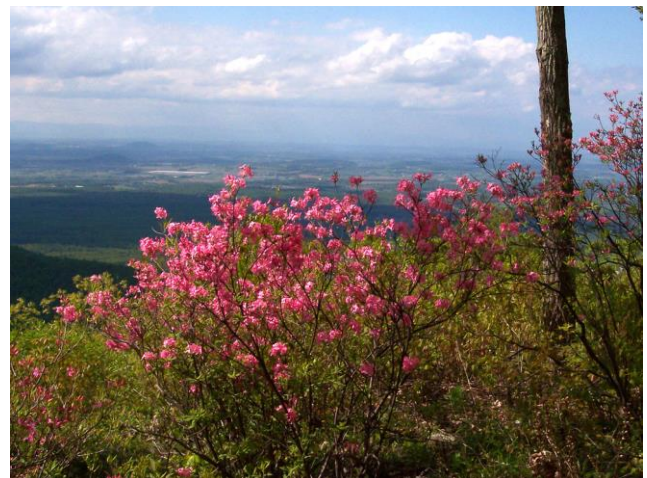
The Middle Atlantic Chapter and the Potomac Valley Chapter are planning a joint meeting from May 19 – 21 at Orkney Springs, VA. This area is in the Shenandoah Valley near the West Virginia border and about 2 hours west of Washington, D.C. We will be staying at a retreat called Shrine Mont near Bryce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

<https://shrinemont.com/>

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

This weekend will require some advance planning. Shrine Mont is busy and they require that we reserve the rooms two months in advance. That means we will be sending out the registration materials in the middle of February with a deadline to register set at March 19. The room rates are \$150 per night for singles and \$220 for doubles. Those costs do include all fees such as state and local taxes, service charges, and three full meals a day. One price covers everything.

Since Shrine Mont is not too far from Skyline Drive and other scenic places, this excursion lends itself to possible side trips, too. If you have some ideas of great places to see to or from the region, please share it with us.



R. prinophyllum along the Parkway frames a vista of the Shenandoah Valley Photo: D. Hyatt

A Memorial for Jean Beaudry

We are proceeding with plans to install a memorial bench and landscape planting in honor of Jean Beaudry at London Town Gardens at Edgewater, MD. The concept will be similar to what we did for Gray Carter a few years ago.

Norm Beaudry has selected a spot at the base of a large tree near the steps that descend from the gardens around the visitor center to the lower level plantings. See the red arrow in the image to the right. It is a beautiful location above the water with an inspiring view across the South River.



Location selected for the Jean Beaudry Memorial Bench

Photo: D. Hyatt



Example Bench Photo: D. Hyatt



Area for the Bench and Rhododendrons

Photo: D. Hyatt



Vista from the Bench Site

Photo: D. Hyatt

Meenal Harankhedkar, the Director of Horticulture at London Town, is working on a landscape plan. We expect to meet with her soon to discuss the rhododendron varieties that would be most appropriate for Jean's memorial. We hope to be able to install the bench and some of the plants before spring.

The Ben Morrison Chapter has offered to split half the cost of a bench with our chapter, but we could use additional funds for plants and other materials needed for landscaping. If you wish to donate to the memorial planting, you can send a check to Phyllis Rittman and identify that it is for the Jean Beaudry Memorial Garden. Thanks!

The Gotelli Conifer Collection

Harold Belcher shared some images he took last fall in the Gotelli Conifer Collection at the National Arboretum. It was once known as the “Dwarf Conifer Collection” but after many years, even dwarf plants can get big so they now just refer to it as the Gotelli Collection.

William Gotelli, a New Jersey businessman, had amassed one of the most extensive conifer collections in the United States. In 1962, he donated his collection of approximately 800 conifers to the National Arboretum. Over the years, some of the original plants have died but the Arboretum has added new cultivars, too. They now have companion plants among conifers to provide additional interest as well.

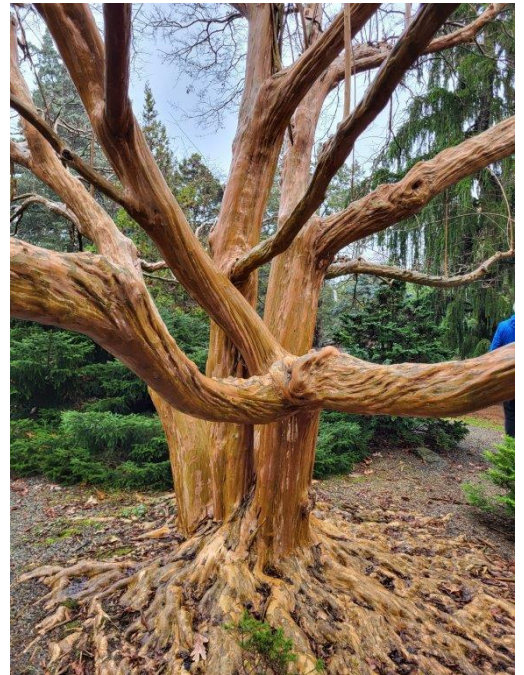
The plants truly are spectacular throughout the season but perhaps most admired during the winter months. Thanks for sharing, Harold!



Vista in the Gotelli Collection Photo: H. Belcher



Weeping Blue Atlas Cedar Photo: H. Belcher



Crape Myrtle Photo: H. Belcher



Dwarf Conifers Get Big! Photo: H. Belcher



Gotelli Conifers Photo: H. Belcher

2023 Rhododendrons of the Year

These are the Rhododendrons of the Year in 2023 for our Mid-Atlantic region. At long last, Joe Gable's very hardy 'Cadis' got the nod for best large leaf rhododendron. For more about the winners from other regions, check out: <https://www.rhododendron.org/royawardsintro23.htm>

Elipodote Rhododendron:

'Cadis'

Flower light pink, flushed yellow, 3½" to 5" across, wavy-edges, fragrant. Held in flat trusses with 9-11 flowers. Blooms late midseason. Leaves 2¾" long, light green. Dense, spreading habit. Typical height: 5 ft. in 10 yrs. Plant is hardy to -15°F (-26°C). Gable Hybrid.



'Cadis' Photo: D Hyatt

Lepodote Rhododendron:

'April Rhapsody'

Flower vivid purple, no markings, openly funnel-shaped, flat-edged lobes, 1⅓" across. Truss holds 3-9 flowers. Blooms early season. Leaves elliptic, 1⅛" long, semi-glossy, moderate to light yellow-green, scaly below. Typical height: 2½ feet in 10 years. Dense growth habit. Hardy to at least -8°F (-22°C). Anderson Hybrid.



'April Rhapsody' Photo: K. Bernady

Evergreen Azalea:

'August to Frost'

Flower white with a pale yellow-green blotch, broadly funnel-shaped, single, 2½" across, wavy edged lobes. occasionally flowers have strong reddish-purple stripes or a prominent red/violet blotch. Blooms continuously but sparingly on current growth from late summer to first hard frost. Leaves 2" long, flat, semi-glossy with hairs above and below. Grows to a height of 2 feet in 10 years. Plant hardy to at least -10°F (-23°C). Selected by Matlack but introduced by Norm and Jean Beaudry.



'August to Frost' Photos: D. Hyatt

Deciduous Azalea:

R. colemanii

Flower white or pink, some with yellow blotch on upper lobe, tubular funnel-shaped, 1"-2" across, held in truss of 8-10 flowers. Blooms midseason. Leaves dull or glossy green. Shrub grows to 6-7 ft. in 10 years. Hardy to at least -5°F (-21°C). Native species found in the eastern United States in southern Alabama and western Georgia.



R. colemanii Photo: D. Hyatt



May 2015: Hyatt Garden in Dappled Shade



June 2022: Oak Trees Suddenly Die

It is not easy getting heavy equipment into my back yard so I had the arborists drop the big trees in open areas. The images on this page show before and after pictures and the enormous amount of debris that I am dealing with now. Last summer, I couldn't even get a lawn mower back there. Reclaiming the garden is on my priority list but I must take things slowly. My place will not be on the garden tour circuit for quite a while.



June 2022: Trees being dropped on the garden



January 2023: Piles of wood still cover much of the yard

Starting Over *by Don Hyatt*

My garden of over 70 years has been going through a period of drastic transition. The first "big kill" was the 8 ft of rain in 2018 that wiped out most of my mature rhododendrons. Many plants were 40 to 50 years old but their root systems could not take wet feet for that long.

The next plague hit my oak trees. I had to have nine of my largest oaks taken down last June because they had died and posed a threat to my house and to my neighbors' homes. I did not verify the disease vector but the symptoms were consistent with Bacterial Leaf Scorch. It has been killing trees in our region and Chestnut Oaks like mine are very susceptible.

My big oaks were well over 100 years old and at least 100 ft tall. You may be able to make out the tiny arborists circled below for comparison. My garden went from dappled shade to full sun. It was a total disaster!

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



Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

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

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

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

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

www.arspvc.org

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

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

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

www.rhododendron.org

Membership Application *American Rhododendron Society*

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip/Country _____

Telephone _____

E-mail: _____

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

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

**Associate Members must identify home chapter*

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

To join our chapter, send this form with payment to:

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

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

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

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

www.rhododendron.org

More ARS National Contact Points:

Phone (631) 533-0375

Email: member@arsoffice.org