



# Potomac Valley Chapter

*American Rhododendron Society*

www.arspvc.org

*Summer Newsletter Part 2: July 2024*

## **Chapter Officers**

**President:** Carol Segree  
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**Secretary:** Diane Reinke  
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**Treasurer:** Phyllis Rittman  
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## **Potomac Valley Chapter Calendar – 2024**

- **September 22, 2024: Chapter Picnic, Seneca Creek State Park**
- **December 4, 2024: Fall Banquet & Speaker: Richard Bradshaw's Place**

## **Summer Newsletter – Part 2**

Your editor sent Part 1 of our Summer Newsletter last week. This is Part 2 with other chapter news.

I hope you and your garden are surviving the record heat and drought. It really has been brutal!

## **Chapter Picnic – Sunday, September 22 Seneca Creek State Park**

**1:00 to 4:00 PM**

Last year we had our Fall Picnic at London Town Gardens in order to dedicate the memorial bench to Jean Beaudry. This year, we will return to the Fawn Pavilion at Seneca Creek State Park in Gaithersburg, MD, (shown below) which we have used for many years. We have some plants left from our District 9 meeting and will have a few for sale. Expect more details in early fall with the dues renewal notices.

The chapter will be providing fried chicken but ask that people bring a side dish. We also ask that you RSVP so we know how much chicken to order.



## **Fall Banquet – Wednesday, December 4**

Richard Bradshaw has offered to host our chapter for the fall banquet at his place on December 4, 2024. The time will be 11 AM to 4 PM. We realize this is a Wednesday, but most of our members are retired and for those who are not, maybe you can take an extended lunch. We hope to use the same caterers we had for our District 9 meeting. We also intend to have a speaker at the meeting.

## **Thanking Our District Directors**



Richard Mohr pictured above with his wife Ginny, our past president, just retired as District 9 Director. We appreciate him keeping the ARS informed about the activities of the three chapters in our District. Thank you, Richard! Thanks to Ginny, too.



We appreciate Lloyd Willis of the Middle Atlantic Chapter pictured above who is stepping up to become our next District 9 Director. He and his wife Margaret live and garden in Crozet, VA, west of Charlottesville. Thank you for agreeing to serve!



## A Quick Trip to See Native Azaleas

Your editor has been hobbling around on a cane since January after hurting his back, both hips, and one knee while shoveling snow. It really wasn't that much snow... maybe a total of 8 inches. I think back to Snowmageddon in February of 2010 when I had to dig out from 54 inches that fell in a series of storms. Glad I didn't have to face that this year!

George McLellan and I passed the torch last year to Charlie Andrews who is coordinating the native azalea treks now. He had an ambitious trip this year that began in Georgia and worked its way north that we were unable to join. We did, however, take a one-day trip to Marion, VA, so we could admire the *R. calendulaceum* growing along the Appalachian Trail at Whitetop Mountain.



The top of the mountain is less than 45 minutes from town and easily accessible by car. The road is a little rough in spots with some ruts and rocks to avoid but once on top, there is a gravel parking lot where the Appalachian Trail crosses. The flame azaleas are everywhere. The trail is nearly level and quite easy, no more difficult than a trip to Walmart. The mountain views are beautiful, although not as spectacular as Roan Mountain. However, when physical limitations make the other treks too hard, this was a good substitute. I consider it therapy.



There are wonderful color variations right along the trail, shades of yellow, gold, orange, and orange-red. This pilgrimage is my geriatric equivalent of a Taylor Swift concert. I drive for 5 hours, meet with friends at a motel, have dinner, sip wine, and talk about plants. After breakfast, we leave for the main event... the native azalea show. We spend for 3 to 4 hours in awe while taking pictures, and then head for home, fulfilled.



## Sad News

We lost two former Associate Members recently. **Tom Fessenden** of the Mason Dixon Chapter passed away on June 15 in Lancaster, PA. He was 79. Tom and his wife Anne were regular attendees at meetings and picnics. She was a marvelous cook and shared many treats with us. Our sympathy to Anne and family.

**Vijay Chandhock** of the Valley Forge Chapter passed away in Lebanon, PA, on June 26. He was 91. We send our condolences to his wife Shelly and their family. Vijay maintained a home in Northern India at the foothills of the Himalayas where *R. arboreum* grows. The huge trees are covered with brilliant red trusses in the spring. In a newsletter article from May 2003, there is more about Vijay including the seed and pollen he shared with us. He even brought juice made from the flowers we tasted at Margaret White's at the picnic.

[www.arspvc.org/articles/News0503.html](http://www.arspvc.org/articles/News0503.html)



## Update on the White Garden



Our long-time members will never forget Margaret White. Our chapter used to hold picnics and meetings at her home for many years. It had a large glass-enclosed room that wrapped around the house and offered wonderful views of the garden that she and her husband J.C. created. Below is the late Jean Beaudry wishing Margaret a Happy 103<sup>rd</sup> Birthday in 2009.



Margaret made arrangements to transfer her home and 13.5-acre garden to Fairfax County when she died so it could become a public park. She passed away in 2010, a few weeks before her 104<sup>th</sup> birthday, and that is when the Fairfax County Park Authority took full control. This link has more about the White Garden.

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



Voters approved a \$500,000 bond referendum in 2012 to begin the development of the park but we waited for at least a decade and nothing happened. Why the delay? Invasive plants and vines took over many areas. The field of buttercups became a head-high thicket of weeds and trash trees. Many of the rhododendrons and azaleas declined in vigor or died. Others did survive and are still alive and well.

In April of 2022, we learned that the county was planning to turn the property over to their Resident Curator Program which planned to sign a lease to allow a family to live in the house rent-free for 25 years. They would have exclusive use of the home and the land around it, the prime area of the garden. They would not be required to care for the plants. We also learned that the bond money was gone.



Thanks to strong opposition by many people including plant societies like ours, local community activists, and the members of Margaret's family, we did defeat that effort. Unfortunately, the already overworked and underfunded staff of Green Spring Gardens is tasked to oversee the property.

Meanwhile, during a severe storm this spring, the huge 300-year old oak in the backyard blew down on the house and did significant damage. It destroyed the glass room where Margaret spent most of her time, crushing the roof where she had her dining table. I took the photo below on May 8.





The county removed the tree right away but then took down the entire house by the end of the May. Perhaps one day, they'll build a community center or pavilion where groups can meet and enjoy the garden. For now, the site is just a lawn surrounded by tall trees, a few large rhododendrons, and some azaleas. The photos on this page show how the site has changed. Actually, I think it looks better.

They have planted several native azalea species along the drive and fenced them to protect from deer. Some look good but others are too shaded.



The front view of the house



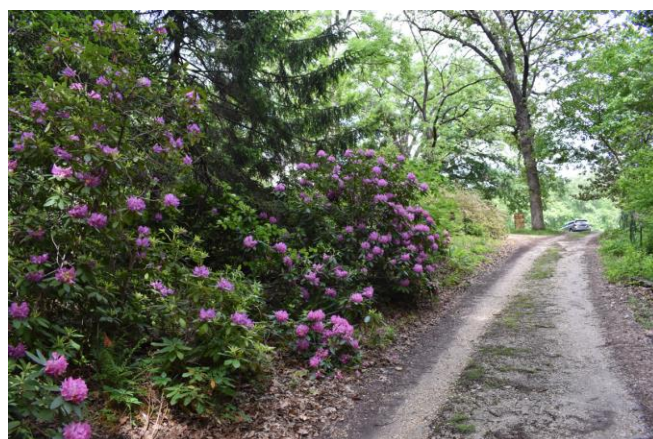
Back of the main house prior to the tree loss



Same view as above after the house was removed



Same view as above but after the house was removed



The drive still has rhododendrons, 'Roseum Elegans'



Grass was planted where the house used to be



Native Azaleas along the drive are new additions





'Anna Rose Whitney' has huge deep pink trusses



The meadow used to be a field of buttercups



A tree fell through the center of 'Anna Rose Whitney'



Due to neglect, the meadow was overrun with weeds



'Albert Close' continues to spread in the garden



The staff at Green Spring are renovating the meadow



The trusses of 'Albert Close' typically open in June



The 100-year old barn is boarded up but still OK



## Some Rhododendrons of Distinction in the White Garden

The White Garden had one of the most spectacular rhododendron displays in the Washington DC area. Not only were the plants large and relatively rare varieties, they were planted along the perimeter of open areas or “garden rooms” where their majesty could be appreciated from a distance.

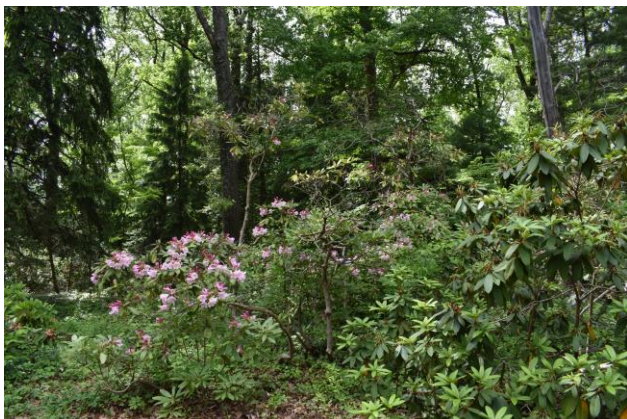
‘**Cadis**’, the hardy hybrid pictured below, was developed by Joe Gable in Pennsylvania. It was one of the largest rhododendrons on the property and was the focal point in the view from Margaret’s garden room.



‘Cadis’ was clearly the garden “Show Stoppers”



Its fragrant, pale pink flowers open in mid-May



‘Cadis’ is alive but has suffered from neglect and competition from other plants. It is now just a shadow of its former self but with care, it could recover.



‘**John C. White**’, the brilliant pink hybrid shown above, was a locally developed plant named in honor of JC White. The variety has become very popular and has won several honors including the 2015 Rhododendron of the Year in our region.



‘John C. White’ is very robust and still growing well



The pink flowers of ‘John C. White’ open in late April

**QR Codes:** One goal now is to label rhododendrons in the garden. It would be good to include a QR code similar to the one to the right so one could point a cell phone camera at the image and link to information on the variety.





## Other Plants of Interest this Spring



**(*R. fortunei* x 'Madonna')**

The late Jane Goodrich had many rare plants that came from Joe Gable. This large, fragrant white was the reverse cross of 'Madfort' (*Madonna-fortunei*).



**'Jane's Orange'**

Jane Goodrich made this cross using Gable hybrids. The cross was (CatFortCampy #2 x Mary Garrison) and has loose trusses of pink blended with orange.



**'Speckled Spider'**

This is a lavender and white striped sport of 'Koromo-shikibu' that is just becoming available.



**'Sweet Christy'**

This lovely, ruffled Knap Hill hybrid was raised from seed that came from England. It was introduced by Dr. Roy Magruder in 1976 but is still rather rare.



**'King's Red'**

Dr. Augie Kehr saved this Knap Hill seedling when our chapter auctioned off the hybrids of Dr. E. King in 1975 after his death. Augie introduced it in 1987. Wow! Vivian Abney still had a few in tissue culture.



**'Bob Furman's Big Yellow'**

For years, "BFBY" was one of the most sought-after yellows since it was hard to propagate. A small plant sold for \$210 at auction during our District meeting!



## More Photos



**'Keith Brown'** is a nice red that buds up early.

Photo: C. Segree



**'Sunny-Side-Up'** in Carol Segree's garden (above) is a stunning, heat-tolerant deciduous azalea.

The two images below are sister seedlings from the same cross, (**'Governor's Mansion'** x **'Wheatley'**). Carol Segree raised them and both are nice. They have lovely ruffled flowers and good foliage. One is pink and the other is light purple. Which is your favorite?



**'Hardy Loderi'** is a fragrant cream from Augie Kehr.



*R. makinoi* **'Margaret K. White'** is a selection of a Japanese species with striking foliage. The plant in the White Garden has died but Norm Beaudry's is healthy.



Potomac Valley Chapter ARS - Newsletter  
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## 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](http://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](http://www.rhododendron.org)

## Membership Application *American Rhododendron Society*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip/Country \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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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

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*\*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](mailto: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](http://www.rhododendron.org)

**More ARS National Contact Points:**

Phone (631) 533-0375

Email: [member@arsoffice.org](mailto:member@arsoffice.org)