



Potomac Valley Chapter

American Rhododendron Society

www.arspvc.org

Winter Newsletter: January 2025

Potomac Valley Chapter Calendar – 2025

- **February 28 – March 1: North Carolina Nursery Trip**
- **March 23: Joint Meeting with Northern VA Chapter ASA**
- **April 11 – 12: MAC Spring Meeting, Norfolk, VA**
- **April – May (TBA): Proposed Chapter Garden Excursions**
- **May 7 – 9: ASA Convention, Jenkins Arboretum, Philadelphia. PA**
- **June 5 – 8: ARS Convention, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada**

Joint Meeting: ARS and ASA

Speaker: Don Hyatt

**“Garden Art and Accents,
plus a Touch of Whimsy”**

**Where: Kirkwood Presbyterian
Church, 36 Carrleigh Pkwy,
Springfield, VA 22152**

Date: Sunday, March 23, 2025

Time: 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Our first gathering of the year will be a joint meeting of our Potomac Valley Chapter ARS with the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA. The program will be held on Sunday, March 23, in Springfield, VA, at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church. We will also have a plant exchange.

Over the years, Don Hyatt has collected images of garden art, accents in the landscape, and whimsical features he has seen on various tours. He is finally putting together a new talk that will touch on a broad range of artistic ideas used in gardens. He hopes you will enjoy it.

Many images were photographed on ARS and ASA garden tours such as the two at the above right. The smiling Friar was in Barbara Hall’s garden we toured at our Williamsburg convention. The fanciful monkey was in the garden of Blossom McBrier near Erie, PA.

He will cover a few projects including the transformation of a large tree trunk in Norm Beaudry’s garden. The artist created a huge sculpture with three woodpecker carvings. The first image shows Norm standing in front of the sculpture to give an appreciation of the scale. Carolyn Beck took the prize photo (far right) with the brilliant red Japanese maple foliage.

Chapter Officers

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



Make Me Smile: Whimsical Garden Art

Cheerful Friar Statue

Barbara and Alton Hall Garden
2016 Williamsburg Convention

Fanciful Monkey Sculpture

Blossom McBrier Garden
2014 ARS Cleveland Convention



Bird Carvings: Transforming a Tree Trunk

Norm Beaudry

Comparison for Scale
(Don Hyatt photo)

Japanese Maple

Color Echo
(Carolyn Beck photo)



Brookgreen Sculpture Garden

"Diana of the Chase"

Famous Bronze Sculpture by
Anna Hyatt Huntington



Brookgreen Vista

Brilliant Caladiums provide
summer color in the garden

Don will show images of some temporary art exhibits as well as permanent displays he has seen at public gardens including the Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, the Garden in the Woods, Longwood, and other places in the US. He also will include garden art from Canada, Germany, and the UK. Pictured to the left are images from Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina which showcases the work of Anna Hyatt Huntington, one of the first female sculptors in the US to receive world-wide acclaim. The 9000-acre botanical garden is famous for its incredible display of tens of thousands of colorful caladiums which they use to help showcase her work.

Don's presentation will touch on some other artistic garden accents including water features, masonry additions, and innovative paving ideas.

Seed Exchanges

I did not get a local chapter seed exchange organized this year although Carol Segree and Karel Bernady did clean some seed from several of her deciduous azaleas and rhododendrons that people admired during our District 9 meeting last April. (see below) If you are interested in raising a few plants from open pollinated seed in Carol's garden, contact Don Hyatt and request a few random packets.



Deciduous Azaleas in Carol Segree's Garden

The ARS also has a National Seed Exchange. It is now open until March 8 for ARS members. They have over 200 seed lots, The cost is \$3.00 per pack.

www.rhododendron.org/seedexchange.htm

North Carolina Nursery Trip

February 28 – March 1

Plans for our annual trip to visit nurseries in North Carolina to purchase plants is a bit sketchy at this point but save the date. Several nurseries in the area have annual open houses in late winter including Camellia Forest Nursey, Big Bloomers Flower Farm, and Tony Avent's Plants Delight Nursery.



Lewis Ginter Winter Symposium

February 12 – 14, 2025

The Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens in cooperation with the Central Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service have a program to raise funds for student scholarships. There are five lectures each of the first two days. The cost is \$100 per day which includes lunch. The third day is for pesticide certification. On Day 2, Tony Avent's talk will be the main attraction: *A Celebration of Eccentricities - Famous Plant People and Their Plants*. Don Hyatt will follow his presentation that afternoon speaking on the native azaleas in the Southern Appalachians.

For more information, check out the website:

www.lewisginter.org/event/winter-symposium-cvnla/

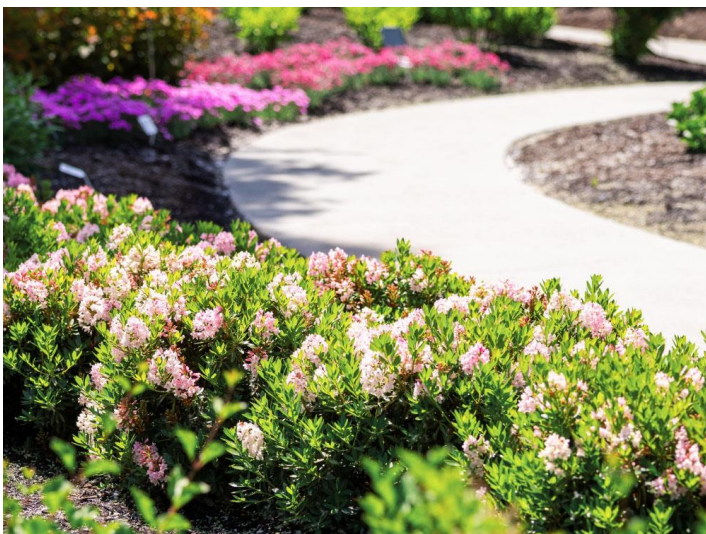
Bloombux® Rhododendrons



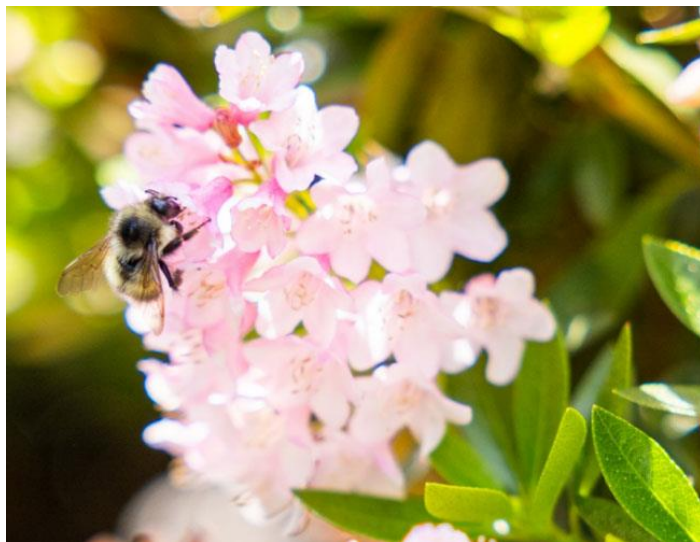
Bloombux® Blush - Plant (Bloomin' Easy)

At the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS) in Baltimore recently, a new dwarf rhododendron made its US debut. It has been available in Europe for a few years, sold as an alternative to Boxwood which is prone to blight. Its compact plant habit with small, deep green leaves makes it an ideal plant for hedges or containers. The plant apparently can take soils that are slightly alkaline and its hardiness range is Zone 5 to 9.

Bloomin' Easy is the firm marketing the plants, and it has trademarked the name Bloombux® to emphasize the shrub is a substitute for Boxwood (*Buxus*), and it also blooms. The many-flowered trusses have small blooms of pale to medium pink. **Bloombux® Blush** is featured on this page and the deeper pink **Bloombux® Magenta** is on the next page.



Bloombux® Blush - Landscape (Bloomin' Easy)



Bloombux® Blush – Truss (Bloomin' Easy)

This hybrid is a cross of *R. micranthum* from China crossed with *R. hirsutum* from the Alps. That means it is a Lepidote like *R. keiskei* or 'PJM'. Even though Bloomin' Easy says Bloombux® rhododendrons are heat tolerant, we should be careful in our climate.

They bloom in late May to June and although the hybrids are listed as heat tolerant, it would be wise to provide afternoon shade. Boxwoods are prone to disease and these hybrids are marketed as disease free. However they can get Phytophthora so like all Lepidotes, they will need good drainage.



Bloombux® Foliage (Photo: Ron Rabideau)

The foliage remains bright green year-round. The plants can be pruned to shape them into hedges or topiary but only prune heavily after flowering since the plants will be forming flower buds in late summer into fall. Off season pruning will reduce flowering.

The marketing campaign in the US looks quite wide and several major garden centers and even some box stores in our region are expected to carry them.

Bloombux® Rhododendrons (cont.)



Bloombux® Magenta - Flower (Bloomin' Easy)

According to reports, Bloombux® Magenta is more upright and open than Bloombux® Blush. Both of the cultivars have been used for topiary,



Bloombux® Magenta - Plant (Bloomin' Easy)

For more information on plants sold by Bloomin' Easy, check out their website. In addition to these two rhododendrons, they also sell hydrangeas, a few azaleas, and many other plants. They are wholesale and do not sell directly to customers but the site can direct you to retailers in the US who carry their plants.

<https://bloomineasyplants.com/>

The Bloombux® Cross

It is interesting to look at the cross that created the Bloombux® hybrids. One parent was a Chinese species *R. micranthum* which does grow in our area. I had it for a while but my plant was straggly which is apparently common with young plants. Those small white flowers reminded me of chickweed. Older plants do become better behaved.

R. hirsutum, also known as the Hairy Alpenrose, is native to the mountains in Europe and the Alps. It has a dwarf with loose trusses of small pink bell-shaped blossoms and hairs on the leaves. It grows on soils that are high in lime (calcium carbonate) which has resulted in progeny that are tolerant of neutral soils. It is similar to *R. ferrugineum* which has rusty leaves and grows above the tree line in the Alps but only in acid soils.



R. micranthum at the Henry Foundation for Botanical Research in Pennsylvania. Notice the bud count in a truss. (Photo by Ron Rabideau)



R. hirsutum - Native to the mountains of Europe and the Alps.
(Photo by Hans Eiberg - reproduced with permission from the Danish website)

<https://www.rhododendron.dk/arter/h/>

2025 Rhododendron of the Year Awards

Every year, our region selects four cultivars that will become our Rhododendrons of the Year. Here are the plants that grabbed our attention this past year.



'Bob Furman's Big Yellow'

Elepidote rhododendron: ('Golden Star' × (Jalisco × yakushimanum)) × (((Dido × ('Chlorops' × lacteum)) × 'Golden Star'))

'Bob Furman's Big Yellow' was developed on Cape Cod and has been highly prized for its huge, fragrant blooms of rich yellow. It is finally getting distributed in our region and a small plant sold at our District 9 meeting in Annapolis for over \$200 in a heated auction at the banquet.



'Blue Success'

Lepidote rhododendron: ('Epoch' x 'Barto Blue') X *augustinii*

This cultivar was developed by Dr. Augie Kehr who was one of our chapter founders. It is another one of the few blue lepidotes that will grow for us.



'Venus' Baby'

Evergreen azalea: 'Venus' X 'Girard's Hot Shot'

This is one of Dr. Sandra McDonald's hybrids that attracted so much attention in Carol Segree's garden during the tours at our District 9 meeting last April. The large, ruffled flowers of pale pink and white with a few green spots are absolute perfection,



'Sweet Christy'

Deciduous azalea: parentage unknown

One of our original members, Dr. Roy Magruder, selected and registered this pale yellow Knap Hill hybrid in 1976. The parentage is not known but its large, ruffled flowers always attract attention.

Congratulations Norm Beaudry, and Thanks!

We want to congratulate Norm Beaudry on his 90th Birthday celebrated earlier this month. We also want to thank him for offering to be our Membership Chair. Instead of sending renewals to Phyllis Rittman, please send them Norm including any email address changes:

Beaunorm@gmail.com

Climate Change: Hurricane Helene and the Southern Appalachians *by Don Hyatt*

As I survey the host of record weather disasters this year, it is hard to believe that “global warming” is the cause. Scientists have dropped that phrase and now refer to it as “climate change” instead but what we are experiencing is actually due an increase in the world’s temperature. It wouldn’t be so bad if we just had balmy weather in the winter and just needed to turn the air conditioner up a couple of degrees in the summer.

That is not what happens. Warmer air holds more moisture and that means we get more severe storms that change the weather patterns due to greater circulation. Warm air can head north into the Arctic which melts the ice caps. That often pushes Polar air to the south so we get record cold. Places like New Orleans and the Florida Panhandle were getting snow while Anchorage, Alaska, stayed above freezing with mild rain showers. In California, the rains missed them but the circulation of one of those southern storms synced with a dry, high pressure system to produce 100 mph Santa Ana winds that spread wildfires destroying many communities in Los Angeles for many days.

The image to the right is a NOAA satellite view of Hurricane Helene on September 26 as it was about to ram into the coast of Florida as a category 4 storm. It developed rapidly due to from there, it raced across Georgia on September 27 and slammed into the Southern Appalachians near Asheville causing some of the worst damage to that area in recorded history. It dropped 20 to over 30 inches of rain on ground that was already saturated from a stalled front that had already produced soaking rains during the prior week.

When it hit, wind gusts at the upper elevations exceeded 100 mph which flattened most forests on the eastern slopes and ridges. The National Park Service photo below is between Craggy Gardens and Asheville.



Appalachian Trail at Engine Gap: Now Closed

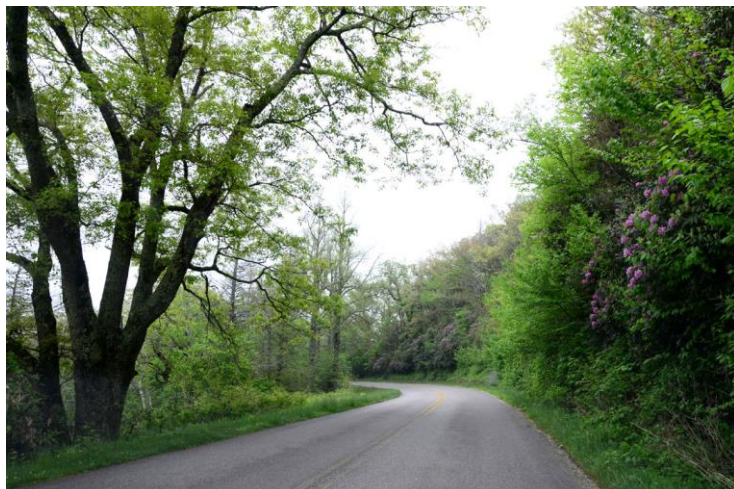
Every road in Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee was closed due to washed out bridges, mud slides, downed trees, and flooding. There has been some recovery but the Blue Ridge Parkway and some major routes may remain closed through at least the next year. The Appalachian Trail in North Carolina is also closed.



Hurricane Helene on September 26 (photo NOAA)



Blue Ridge Parkway at mp 375 (photo NPS)

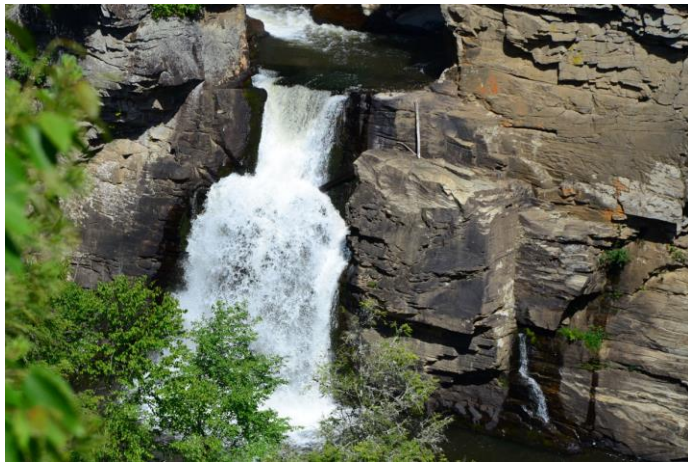


Parkway Near Asheville before Helene (Hyatt)

The Blue Ridge Parkway

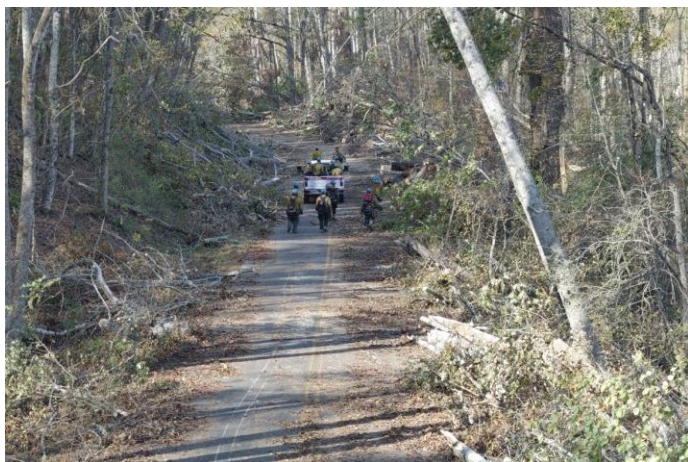


Linville Gorge Wilderness Area (Hyatt)



Linville Falls Before Helene (Hyatt)

The areas around Linville Falls and Linville Gorge experienced serious flooding. The visitor center sustained major damage and many roads were blocked by trees, washouts, and mudslides. Access was via the Parkway at mp 316 but the entire Parkway from near Boone all the way to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park will remain closed until further notice.



Clearing Trees off the Parkway, mp 318 (NPS)

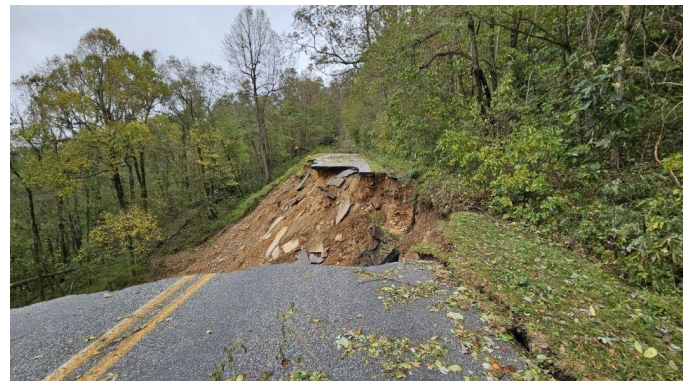
We understand that Hooper Bald was not harmed. Another positive note is that the Linn Cove Viaduct near Grandfather Mountain that took nearly 20 years to build did not incur any serious damage either.

Concern for the “Red Max”



The “Red Max” (Hyatt)

The rare “Red Max” (pictured above) is a red form of *R. maximum* found growing at the headwaters of Curtis Creek near Mount Mitchell. It was discovered in a very remote location when the Parkway was being built in the 1930s. That area received some of the heaviest rains (30+ inches) and winds which caused catastrophic damage to the Parkway. It will probably be years before we will be able to check on that plant.



Damage at Gooch Gap (mp 336) (photo NPS)

The turn to get to the Forest Service Road we took to begin the hike to the “Red Max” is between Gooch Gap (mp 336) and Mount Mitchell State Park entrance (mp 355). The Parkway in this area was washed away in many places. Rainfall here led to record flooding of the French Broad River and damage to Asheville.



Parkway Washout at mp 345 (photo NPS)

The Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian Trail is closed in much of North Carolina. The stretch from Carvers Gap to Round Bald and Engine Gap is not accessible due to fallen trees and mud slides. Much of the parking area at Carvers Gap is gone, too.



Carvers Gap from the Appalachian Trail



Trail through the Trees

The ascent to Round Bald was recently routed through the trees to make access easier and reduce erosion. This area received major damage from Helene.



***R. calendulaceum* 'Little Yellow' at Engine Gap**

The azaleas continue along both sides of the trail for many miles. The dwarf 'Little Yellow' is a favorite.



Vista of Mt. Mitchell from Engine Gap

This stretch of the AT in the Roan Highlands is considered the most beautiful of the entire 2000-mile trail. It has 360-degree views with incredible displays of rhododendrons and azaleas that peak in June.



Red Form of *R. calendulaceum* at Engine Gap



***R. catawbiense* at Grassy Ridge on Roan**

The AT continues along the crest of Roan to Jane Bald but then turns north to Maine. A side trail goes out to the last peaks on Roan. Grassy Ridge is breathtaking when the rhododendrons turn the mountaintops purple.

R. calendulaceum selections on Roan Mountain



Ralf Bauer photographing *R. calendulaceum* along the AT near Jane Bald on Roan Mountain



George McLellan and Karel Bernady admire 'Molten Lava', a stunning plant at the edge of Jane Bald



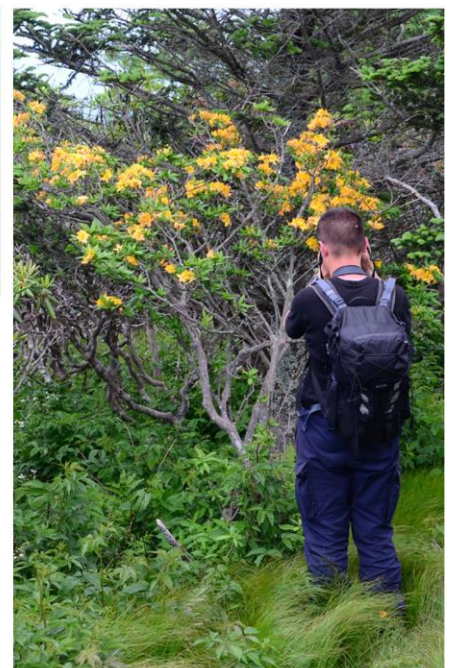
'Big Bird'



'Little Yellow'



Large ruffled flowers of 'Molten Lava'



The plant we call 'Ralf's Gold'

Ralf Bauer's Garden

Ralf Bauer lives in Offenberg, Germany, and has a modest sized urban garden. He joined us on our annual treks to see native azaleas in 2015 and has made many trips to the U.S. ever since. He has raised thousands of plants from seed collected in the wild but due to space problems has selected only a few for his garden. He has donated the rest to public gardens in Europe or members of the German Rhododendron Society.

Some native azaleas like 'Molten Lava' and 'Ralf's Gold' seem to produce superior forms from seed. He was surprised to get a true dwarf from 'Molten Lava' shown to the right. It is very compact with excellent flowers and he gave it the accession #1264. We have not seen any dwarfs from seeds of 'Little Yellow'.



Ralf's Dwarf *R. calendulaceum*: #1264

Seedling Variations – You Can't Keep Them All!



#1556: Tall, Deep Orange Seedling from 'Molten Lava'



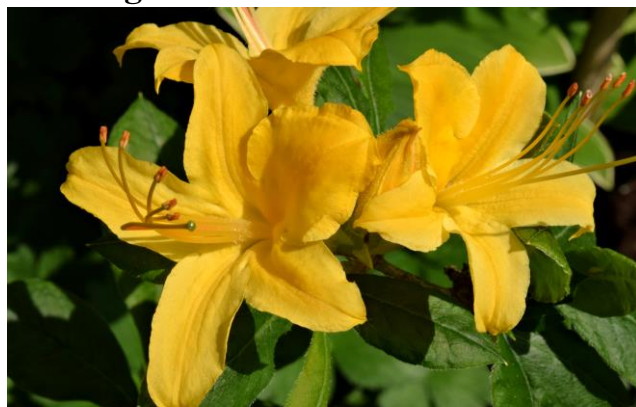
#1264: Dwarf *R. calendulaceum*

Ralf only had room to keep two selections from seedlings he raised from 'Molten Lava'. The tall 1556 is a very rich orange which sends up strong new growth that can be a foot long or more. The dwarf 1264 is a lighter orange and only grows a couple of inches a year. He did not have room for the other excellent seedlings so he gave them away.



Some Other Excellent Seedling Variations from 'Molten Lava'

Seedlings from 'Ralf's Gold'



#1557: Early Light Yellow from 'Ralf's Gold'

Ralf only had room to keep one seedling from 'Ralf's Gold' but the others were all very good. He liked the above selection 1557 the best since it blooms early and has light yellow flowers.

J. Jackson and Lindy Johnson gave him the seedling to the right which came from 'Big Bird'. He labeled #1105 and since it grows tall, and he planted it beside the arched gate to his garden,

It is amazing to see how many plants Ralf has in his garden. He grows all of our native azaleas and many other species, too.



Other Nice Seedlings from 'Ralf's Gold'



Seedling #1105 from 'Big Bird'



Ralf's Garden



Entry to Ralf's Garden. Dwarf azalea 1264 is in the foreground and tall 1105 azalea by the gate.



Pots of Seedlings Being Evaluated



Kalmia and Other Plants in Ralf's Garden



More Seedlings!

Did You Forget to Renew?

We had a number of friends who forgot to renew this year. We hope we can entice you back and continue to count on your support. Regular Membership is \$40 per year. You can renew online which accepts credit card payments but you will need your ARS Membership number.

www.rhododendron.org

You can also send your dues to our new Membership Chair:

Norman Beaudry

beaunorm@gmail.com

Associate Membership is only \$10 if you already belong to another ARS Chapter. Please send that to Norm and identify your base chapter. You can use the form on the last page of this newsletter. Please keep email addresses current!

Friends of the White Garden

Fairfax County has organized some volunteer sessions to help clean up the garden and maintain trails. They have set aside the third Wednesday of every month from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM for these work sessions. They would like people to sign up in advance and commit to help on a regular basis. Upcoming dates are February 18, March 18, April 16, May 21, June 18, and July 16.

Below is contact info for the coordinator.

Contact Name: Pamela Smith

Email: pamela.smith2@fairfaxcounty.gov

Primary Phone: 703-642-5173

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

ars2025.org



ARS 2025

Emerging Trends for
Rhododendrons

Wolfville, Nova Scotia • June 5-8, 2025

Registration Opens Jan 20

Garden Tours of the Kentville Research Station and private gardens*



Speakers:

Dr. Hartwig Schepker, Bremen Rhododendron Park

Connor Ryan, Holden Forest and Gardens

Joe Bruso, President, Massachusetts Chapter, ARS

Bonus: Pre and Post tours of five days each to gardens throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.



For more information and to register: ars2025.org

ASA Convention "History and Horticulture"

The Jenkins Arboretum, Malvern, PA

May 7 – 9, 2025

<https://azaleas.org/convention-2025/>



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
- Informative Chapter Newsletters
- Photography Contest

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 Membership Chair
beaunorm@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