

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

A Publication of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American
Rhododendron Society

Vol. XXXIII No.1

February 2007

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MAC MEETINGS

April 12-15, 2007 ARS Annual Convention, San Francisco

April 27-29, 2007 District Meeting in Richmond, VA

Rhododendron Web Site Addresses:

American Rhododendron Society	http://www.rhododendron.org/
MAC Website (*UPDATED*)	http://www.macars.org/
U VA Science & Engineering Libraries	http://www.lib.virginia.edu/science/guides/s-rhodo.htm
UVA Special Collections	http://www.lib.virginia.edu/small/
Henry Skinner Website	http://http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/collections/projects/rhodo/skinner/

HARRY WISE – MAC ARS MEMBER EXTRAORDINAIRE by Sandra McDonald

MAC lost a very valuable member on January 18, 2007. Harry Wise had been recovering from lung surgery he had in the late summer and suffered a fall when he went out to get the newspaper in January and two days later died at a hospital in Huntington, WV. A memorial service was held at Coonskin Park, where Harry had been active in planting and working in the park. Two county commissioners and a former governor were among the group who braved the bad winter weather to attend the service.



Harry Wise

Harry had been very active in MAC and traveled long distances sometimes over icy roads from Charleston, WV, to most of the MAC meetings and board meetings wherever they were held. He joined ARS in 1965, was president of the chapter from 1981 to 1983, served as a MAC director, ultimately becoming Director Emeritus, a position he held at his death. He received the chapter's Bronze Medal in 1984. One very valuable job Harry did was act as

Chairman of the Nominations Committee where he could be counted on to come up with good candidates to fill officer and board positions over many, many years. He also started the chapter's Seedling Sale with proceeds totaling over \$2500 going to the ARS Research Foundation over a period of years. Harry was active in helping establish the Rhododendron and Azalea Endowment Fund at University of Virginia Library and the Rhododendron and Azalea Manuscripts Collection.

Harry served as an ARS District Director from 1988 to 1991. He received the American Horticultural Award of Merit in 1997 from the Garden Club of America, presented by the Kanawha Garden Club in recognition of his work for the ARS, the Master Gardeners, and Friends of Kanawha County Parks (Coonskin Park). Harry did much volunteer work at Coonskin Park planting, caring for, and maintaining rhododendrons, lilies, and irises.

Harry said, "Plant propagating is one thing I truly enjoy. It's the science behind it.

"I grew up on a farm in Southern Alabama. I learned I did not want to be a farmer. That is work. This is fun."

Harry was a busy pollinator and hybridizer. He ran out of planting space for his seedlings and gave large numbers of them away. Many people will remember him fondly

**MAC IS HOSTING
DISTRICT 9 MEETING IN
RICHMOND APRIL 27-29.**

See page 3.

when they look at a mature seedling he gave them as a small plant.

Harry did not blow his own horn. He did so many things behind the scenes, helping people, cheering them up and helping them through difficult times. He will be remembered by many of us for his wise counsel. He was unfailingly generous, touched people of all ages, and expanded public awareness of *Rhododendron*. He was an enthusiastic worker, a good communicator, and expressed his opinions fearlessly. He had a good sense of humor and shared it with the chapter in some presentations he made. He was a faithful supporter of the chapter newsletter and supplied many leads and articles for it.

In 2004 Harry was honored with the ARS Silver Medal. Frank Pelurie had picked up the medal at the meeting in King of Prussia that Harry was not able to attend and later presented it to him.

Bob Schwarz of the *West Virginia Gazette* in an article about Harry after his death included this comment from a Master Gardener about Harry, "He was a cranky old guy, and I loved him dearly. You always knew where he stood on an issue, but it was never personal. He would blow off his steam, and then turn around and be as sweet and helpful as could be." She must be young!

Harry was no friend of deer since they destroyed so many rhododendrons. It is perhaps fitting that Doug Jolley, who arranged the memorial service for Harry, had to move a dead deer from his driveway the morning of the service before he could get out of his driveway.

THE END OF AN ERA –GLADYS JENKINS WHEELDON

Gladys Wheeldon, MAC member and widow of MAC Founder and orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Thomas F. Wheeldon, died on January 16, 2007. She was 94 years old. She had been a strong supporter of the chapter throughout the years even after Dr. Wheeldon's death in 1976. At the first chapter meeting held March 23–25, 1952, Gladys Wheeldon signed as a guest, apparently not having a separate membership, although playing a strong supporting role to her husband who served as president of the Middle Atlantic Chapter (MAC) for over twelve years. Mrs. Wheeldon had a membership in her own name after her husband's death for a total involvement with MAC and rhododendrons of almost 55 years. In the early years of the chapter Mrs.

Wheeldon hosted many speakers for MAC at the Wheeldon's home in Richmond and was friends with



Gladys Wheeldon

early names in the rhododendron world such as Dr. Henry Skinner, Director of the U.S. National Arboretum; Frederic P. Lee, author of *The Azalea Book*; hybridizer Henry Yates; and Dr. Fred Coe. Some others she knew whose names appeared on the list of the first meeting and who are still remembered

in the field were Joseph Gable, Anne Glass, Henry Hohman, Kenneth McDonald (Sr.), A.J. Shoosmith, L.G. Tingle, D.D. Withers, Peter Barber (of Exbury Estates -- whom she entertained), David Leach, and John C. Wister.

Mrs. Wheeldon received the Bronze Medal from the Middle Atlantic Chapter on May 10, 1980, for her generosity with time and money and sharing her garden, one of the outstanding ericaceous gardens in the South; and for sharing plants and cuttings, from Gladsgay as the garden and nursery were called.

She received the Award of Merit from MAC on April 26, 2003, for contributing to the founding, growth, and excellence of the chapter. She contributed many records of her own, as well as of Dr. Wheeldon and Gladsgay Gardens to the Rhododendron Manuscripts collection of the University of Virginia Library.

Mrs. Wheeldon was a financial benefactor for several rhododendron related causes including the rhododendron garden at the James Madison University Arboretum, the Middle Atlantic Chapter ARS, and the Rhododendron and Azalea Endowment Fund at the University of Virginia Library to which she made the key donation to get the fund started.

She was born and raised in Frostburg, Maryland. She graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1933 and earned certification as a registered physical therapist in 1937. She was active in the Women's Board of Managers of Sheltering Arms Hospital and of the Richmond Academy of Medicine Auxiliary, the Council of the Virginia Museum, and several other organizations.

Mrs. Wheeldon was active in helping a group get Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in the Richmond area

off the ground and established for the City of Richmond.

Mrs. Wheeldon welcomed visitors to her garden even after she was widowed until she moved to Westham Green in Richmond. She will be remembered by those who knew her for her graciousness, hospitality, generosity, and wit.

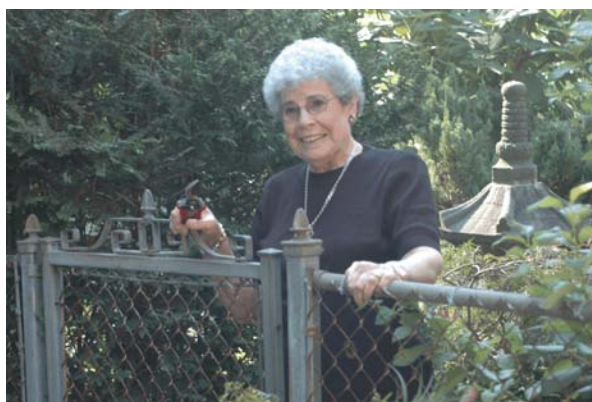
SPRING 2007 ARS DISTRICT 9 MEETING IN RICHMOND APRIL 27–29 by Barbara Hall, Meeting Registrar

Gorgeous gardens, fabulous speakers and free plants, all in a relaxing atmosphere with others who share your love of gardening. Doesn't this sound like fun? Be sure to mark the dates of **April 27 – 29, 2007**, on your calendar now so you won't miss the ARS District 9 meeting in Richmond, VA, hosted by the Middle Atlantic Chapter. We're planning a relaxing weekend where all the details have been taken care of for you! After you arrive at the Holiday Inn Crossroads on Friday afternoon, just relax and let us do the rest. The very reasonable room rate of \$99 per night (plus tax) includes a hot buffet-style breakfast — yes a real, honest-to-goodness, hot breakfast with scrambled eggs, bacon and other goodies.

On Friday night, we've arranged for a special herb-roasted chicken dinner to be served buffet-style in our meeting room so you'll have more time to relax and visit with old friends and new acquaintances before the evening's activities begin. This dinner is optional so, if you prefer, you may elect to eat on your own. Directions to nearby restaurants will be available at the registration desk.

Our Friday evening speaker will be Rosalie Nachman talking about shade gardening. Rosalie is well-known to longtime MAC members for her fabulous garden and her entertaining slide programs. She will share with us the invaluable knowledge that she has gained from many years of gardening on a shady site, including how to select and place plants. We haven't had the opportunity to hear her for quite some time, so this will be a real treat. Rosalie's program will be followed by a short video called "Garden Retreats: Stopping to Smell the Roses" that was originally produced to be shown on HCTV, the local cable channel for Henrico County public affairs. It contains interviews with the owners of the private gardens that we will tour, giving insight into

the philosophies and gardening styles of these avid gardeners.



Rosalie Nachman in her garden. Photo by Jim Brant.

We will finish off the evening with the first ever Pot Luck Plant Swap, based on the time honored tradition of gardeners passing on plants to other gardeners free of charge. Everyone is encouraged to bring plants that they would like to share with others. This includes all types of desirable plants (not just rhodies and azaleas), ranging from seedlings to rooted cuttings to divisions or even extra plants that you just don't have a place for in your garden. If you're a new gardener and don't have anything to share, don't worry. You're still welcome to take plants home. Since we have quite a few experienced gardeners in the group, you could end up with some real treasures. Just remember to send your meeting registration in quickly since entry to the Swap will be based on the order in which registrations are received.

Important: Registration information, including a schedule of events, meeting registration form, and hotel registration details, will be mailed to you shortly. **Please keep in mind that March 27th is the hotel's cut-off date for making room reservations at our special reduced rate.**

Saturday morning we will gather in our meeting room once again, this time for a nice, hot breakfast, before heading out on the garden tours. We'll have a rare opportunity to visit the mature garden of Friday night speaker Rosalie Nachman. Rosalie admits that she had no plan for the garden and that it has evolved through trial and error over the years. She enjoys "recharging her batteries" by spending some time in the garden every day. Nearby Hugh and Pat Greene took a site with a very steep slope and no access and transformed it into an amazing terraced

garden with “tapestry steps” made by using a variety of materials that they had on hand. They also had no master plan and owe their success to their combined talents which include Pat’s knowledge of plants and Hugh’s design and building skills. At the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden we will be served a tasty box lunch in a special tent reserved just for our group. There will be plenty of time to explore the forty-some acres of spectacular gardens and check out the “Walk on the Wild Side” where



The new conservatory at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Photo by W. Przypek.

rhododendrons and azaleas donated by members of the Middle Atlantic Chapter are planted. You may also tour the new buildings, including the classically styled Conservatory. The extensive gift shop may even tempt you to make a few purchases. If you haven’t visited Ginter recently, you’ll be amazed at all of the changes. Our last stop before returning to the hotel is the impressive Japanese garden of Junco Liesfeld. Junco has artistically combined the five main elements of traditional Japanese gardens (stones, water, plants, ornaments and structures) into a beautifully serene place. As you stroll through this peaceful oasis, a feeling of calm will envelope you and you will see why Junco says that spring is a time for the “renewal of life” in this garden.

Back at the hotel, you’ll have a chance to refresh before the evening’s festivities begin. There will be time to view the flower show and to purchase garden books. During happy hour there will be an auction of a few very special plants. After a sumptuous buffet-style banquet of roast beef, Seafood Newburg and all the fixins’, our keynote speaker will be Robert E. “Buddy” Lee, currently the president of the Azalea Society of America. Buddy is probably best known as the developer of the highly popular Encore Azalea® collection of evergreen azaleas. His program, “Breeding for Heat Tolerance in Rhododendrons and Azaleas,” will bring us up to date on his current work.

On Sunday morning, we will enjoy breakfast together one last time before adjourning. At this

time, MAC will have a brief business meeting to elect officers. Directions will be available so you can visit private gardens of MAC members and public gardens on your own before heading home. Don’t forget to bring plants for the Swap and lots of entries for the Flower Show! Please plan to join us in Richmond for what promises to be a fun and relaxing weekend.

FROM THE MIDDLE OF MAC by Jane McKay

Last week (early January) we had spring; this week it has turned to winter. We finally have accomplished a few chores that should have been done months ago. I’m cleaning leaves out of the azaleas and Wally mowed the paths. We don’t throw away our leaves: those on the lawn and driveway are picked up with the lawn mower and composted; the leaves on the paths are chopped up with the lawn mower and left where they fall; the leaves in the plants stay on the ground making the best and cheapest mulch you can find.

Now for a followup on the cuttings I made last fall. I stuck 27 cuttings and 20 have good roots, and the foliage looks good. Two have roots but their foliage looks terrible so I’ll wait to see if they sprout new growth. Five have no roots but the foliage looks good on 4 cuttings so I will leave them in their plastic bags and give them a bit more time. The last one I threw out. Three of the cuttings that rooted well are



R. metternichii × *R. hyperythrum*. Photo by Jane McKay.

from one of a kind plants. One is *R. pseudochrysanthum* × *R. ‘Small Wonder’* with light pink flowers, good foliage, and bloom time is very early. The second is *R. metternichii* × *R. hyperythrum* with white flowers that start out palest pink, great foliage, and blooms very early spring. The third plant is (*R. ‘Sham’s Tut’* × *R. yakusimanum*) × *R.*



Rosalie Nachman's garden. Photo by Jim Brant.



Rosalie Nachman's garden. Photo by Jim Brant.



A quiet spot in the Greene garden. Photo by Jim Brant.



The Greene garden. Photo by Jim Brant.



Junco Liesfeld's garden. Photo by David Sauer.



Junco Liesfeld's garden. Photo by David Sauer.

yakusimanum. This plant is the best 'yak' I grow. I call this plant 'Little Alex' named for the late N.Y. chapter member Alex Bennisato who gave me the seedling many years ago. The first time this plant bloomed (very young and still in a pot) the flower truss was perfect but small hence the 'Little'. Now the truss is perfect and no longer small. One of the main attributes these plants have is that they bud and bloom every year unlike many of my other rhododendrons. A few of the cuttings that did not root have *R. fortunei* in their background and in the past I've found these rooted better when taken earlier even as early as July when I usually take azalea cuttings.

Here is a tip that has nothing to do with rhododendrons. A few years ago during the month of May the chapter visited the Nachman's garden. Rosalie Nachman showed us some unusual aucubas, one had ivory colored berries and the other was a willow leaved Aucuba. She gave some of us branches to see if we could root them. I was skeptical but took some anyway. When I got home I put them in a vase filled with water and was surprised when within two weeks they rooted. I planted them outdoors that fall and now I have nice plants. Never hurts to try something new.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all in the new year.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Peter & Betsy Agelasto, Virginia
Beach, VA 23451

Jonathan Jochem, Pearisburg,
VA 24134

Robert Matsuga,, Moneta,
VA 24121

Bob & Jerri Molloy, Virginia Beach,
VA 23451

Ian Robertson, Charlottesville,
VA 22903

Margaret Russ, Fayetteville,
NC 28305

MAC SPECIES STUDY GROUP

George McLellan and Jim Brant are planning a trip to Pilot Mountain to see the *R. vaseyi* in bloom right after the MAC District Meeting, probably leaving April 29th. The Species Study Group's annual trip to the mountains will probably be around June 18 to June 22, following the International

Magnolia Society's meeting in Raleigh, NC. Contact George McLellan for details for both trips.

TRIP TO EDINBURGH

George McLellan and Dr. Jay Gillenwater are considering arranging a tour to the 2008 International Rhododendron Conference jointly hosted by the Scottish Rhododendron Society and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, May 7–11, 2008. There appears to be a pre-conference tour, also. If you have an interest, let George McLellan know.

MAC BOOTHS AT VIRGINIA BEACH AND IN RICHMOND

Some MAC members with have a booth in cooperation with the Colonial Virginia Chapter of the Holly Society of America on February 15th –18th at the Mid-Atlantic Home & Flower Show held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center in Virginia Beach.

Then Sharon Horn and her committee will set up a display at the Greater Richmond Convention Center Exhibit Hall for the 18th Annual Maymont Flower and Garden Show February 22-25, 2007.

MAC will also try to have a representative at the York County Master Gardeners' Horticultural Extravaganza on March 10 at Tabb High School.

MAC MEMBERS WHO GIVE TALKS ABOUT RHODODENDRONS OR AZALEAS by Sandra McDonald

At the January MAC Board Meeting we had a suggestion that members who give talks should get a little publicity in the newsletter. This would serve as a handy record of the events. If you give such talks, please drop your editor a note or email with the information every time you give a talk so it can be included in the newsletter. See the back cover of the newsletter for my contact information.

2007 ANNUAL CONVENTION IN SAN FRANCISCO

For our adventurous annual convention attendees, this spring's convention is being held early in South San Francisco, California, at the Embassy Suites. Meeting information is in the Winter *ARS Journal*. Deadlines are quite early, the cutoff for hotel reservations being March 21, 2007. A schedule is currently online at www.ars2007conf.org.

GARDENS OPEN TO NEW MEMBERS - New members are encouraged to visit members' gardens in their area. The officers and board members have agreed to show new members through their gardens if the member will call ahead and arrange a convenient time.

Sandra McDonald, Ph.D., Editor
Mid-Atlantic Rhododendron News and Notes
P.O. Box 268
Hampton, VA 23669