

# MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

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

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September 2020

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

April 30 - May 2, 2021 (tentative) Roslyn Retreat, Henrico, VA

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### FALL MEETING CANCELLED

Due to the coronavirus our Fall Meeting was cancelled. Roslyn Retreat could not do meetings and we are hoping to have a Spring Meeting there in 2021.

### IN THE CROZET GARDEN by Lloyd Willis

It is August 12, 2020, as I sit down to write this article. When I last wrote on April 10, 2020, Mrs. Willis (Margaret) and I were under house arrest by our two daughters. We are now under a modified house arrest by the same two daughters. Both daughters have been excellent jailors and have provided our shopping needs and one of them continues to provide our supper. It has been such a treat to have supper provided. We have both been well with the exception of me having a three day chills-and-fever illness. I did test negative for Covid-19.

For the past six weeks, we have gone to our church's shortened 9 am outdoor service with social distancing and masks. We have also been allowed for the past six weeks to go into garden centers—also with social distancing and masks. It has felt like a treasure hunt trying to find plants that would work in the garden.

One of the first set of plants purchased recently were fifteen hostas in the 2.5 quart and one gallon size. Margaret approved each selection. She would have approved almost anything to get out of the heat and humidity. Those four varieties of hostas were planted within a week of purchase. They were



placed on the south side of our drive in an area about thirty feet long. We get to see them each day on our walk to and from the paper box.

Guess what has been growing extremely well in our garden—Japanese stilt grass. We have been pulling that up almost daily for several months. We have paid laborers (the grandsons) on the removal task as well as using the push and the riding lawnmowers (except for the three weeks when the riding lawnmower was being repaired). Any success with the removal and control project (keeping it under 8 inches tall) is only in comparison with the Japanese stilt grass that is across the road on the neighbors' property (16-18 inches tall). We like to reserve weed killer for poison ivy.

Currently, based on height, there are five groups of rhodos on the property. Group 1 are 4 to 8 inches tall. These are the rooted cuttings still in the pots. Group 2 are the 8 to 12 inch tall ones that are in the newest nursery bed. Group 3 are 12 to 24 inches in height and are in the newest landscaping bed. Group 4, the largest group, are in the 2 to 6 foot range. Group 5 are those over 6 feet with the tallest ones around 12 feet. We had only three or four rhodos that were lost during the last dry spell which ended about three weeks ago. I had about 150 feet of hose out and needed to water for about a week.

The rhodo cuttings in the pots were a bit yellow but a dose of blood meal greened them up. The blood meal placed around some of the rhodos in the latest landscaping bed caused a bit of a problem. All four of the grandpuppies, ranging in age from one to sixteen, wanted to dig around those plants. Looking forward to next spring, there is a nice bud set on most

of the rhodos and azaleas.

So where is the humor in this article? This past month we have had a deer visiting several mornings in a row. Visiting uninvited. Since I had been spraying the hostas with liquid fence which had been working, I wasn't too worried about them being eaten but I still wanted the deer to be gone. I had been clapping my hands and yelling, "Go away" or other not so appropriate phrases which had worked for several days in a row to frighten the deer away. Then, one morning while I was clapping and yelling at the deer, it just stood there looking at me with an expression that said, "Why are you bothering me?" So I take off toward the deer at a quick jog which thankfully caused it to bolt and not be seen for a week. As I was catching my breath, I saw in my mind a future newspaper article: Local resident Lloyd Willis dies at the age of 105. Cause of death—Deer Chasing.

#### WINDBEAM WAY WANDERINGS, September 2020 by Doug Jolley

The summer garden season has for all intents and purposes been a very good one indeed. In July, a potential heat and dry period was remedied by a welcome multi-day, three plus inch rain. One of the few disappointments was that this was a poor year for *R. maximum* both here and in the wild.



Our visitors. Photo by D. Jolley.

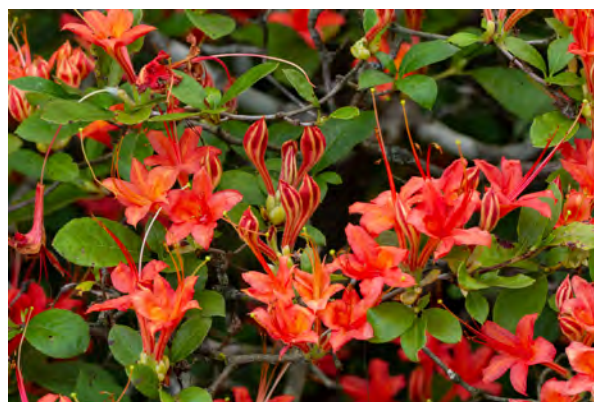
We had one family visit us one June evening. They did a walk through of the yard and garden from one end to the other. Mom and four young ones. For what ever reason after the visit they left heading over the hill and have never returned. A

family of skunks. Thank goodness the cats were in!



*R. calendulaceum* x *R. arborescens*. Photo by D. Jolley.

One dependable native azalea cross is *R. calendulaceum* by *R. arborescens*. Just after Memorial Day, we count on its colorful display. Many years ago, the late Joe Parks (Massachusetts Chapter) visited our garden and he pronounced this plant the best in garden at the time of his visit. Not surprisingly Harry Wise made this cross in the mid '80s and this is one of the original of his "orphans" we adopted and planted. This year was superb. A Rhododendron Species Foundation *R. prunifolium* hybrid is also a nice late June bloomer. Our handful of plumleaf azaleas (*R. prunifolium*) are situated each in a different exposure niche. With different sun versus shady locations, Davetta and I enjoy this azalea blooming from early July through mid-August. Anchoring some of the afternoon shade areas of the garden, these azaleas are now well over 7 feet in height. The hummingbirds and various butterflies



*R. prunifolium*. Photo by D. Jolley.

also approve of this prolonged season.

One Ericaceae family member that has been outstanding this summer both in our garden and



Humming bird on *R. prunifolium*. Photo D. Jolley.



Hummingbird on *Lobelia cardinalis*. Photo D. Jolley.



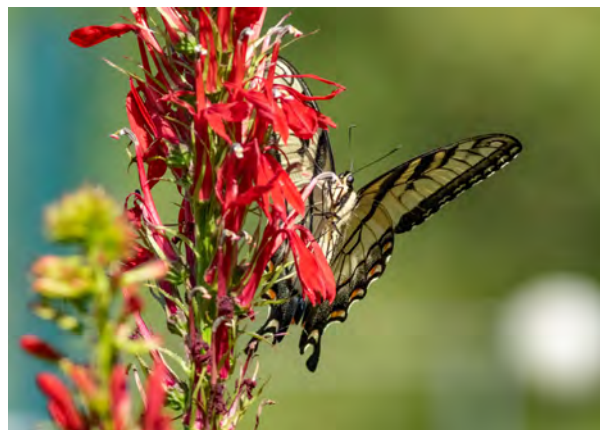
*Ruellia humilis*. Photo D. Jolley.



*R. prunifolium* hybrid. Photo D. Jolley.

Wild Petunia (*Ruellia humilis* and not in the Petunia family) appeared as a solitary plant three years ago in the bog garden. Its source is a mystery. Since that initial plant, dozens are now fixtures in the garden. Most seedlings are sprinkled in and about the adjacent limestone gravel pathways. They are welcome additions and at home among the azaleas too. Hot days pose no problems for them and they

along many of the roadsides I travel is Sourwood (*Oxydendron arboreum*). When the plumleaf azaleas reach prime anthesis, gaze upward and the Sourwood will be snow white with flowers. For beekeepers, this is a source of the finest honey Appalachia can provide. In the fall, the trees are cloaked in mahogany red foliage and can rival maple trees in color.



Swallowtail on *Lobelia cardinalis*. Photo D. Jolley.

flower for weeks on end.

Over the years, a small planting of Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) has self-sown and now hundreds grow where allowed! We have given away countless divisions to Master Gardeners and other gardening friends. When the Cardinal Flower wanes, that signals that Labor Day is soon approaching. The time for fall chores is not too far away!

## DEATHS

Longtime MAC member Alice Marie Newbill Doggett died on August 7. She was 93. Alice was the widow of Ray Doggett who served as MAC president 1995-1997 and helped him out in that



Alice Doggett and husband MAC past president Ray. Photo S. McDonald.

work. She was a lovely, friendly hostess. She liked plants and grew a lot of African violets. She also liked her rhododendrons, azaleas, day lilies and hostas. Ray passed away in 2017. Alice was also predeceased by a daughter Jerri, son Cliff, and one grandchild. She is survived by her daughter Sherri and six grandchildren.

## REMEMBERING ALICE AND RAY DOGGETT

by Bill Bedwell

Both Ray and Alice Doggett were some of my favorite people in MAC. Ray also was my insurance agent, or owned the company that my agent worked for. I visited with them at meetings of the Richmond Chapter of ASA and during planning sessions for meetings of MAC and Richmond ASA. After Ray's retirement, we met at their house at Gloucester Point for the initial planning of the highly successful ARS Eastern Regional Convention that MAC, alone, hosted

at Ft. Magruder in Williamsburg. It drew 257 people according to Sandra's record and was a major source of the money MAC built up in our treasury, second only to the 1988 ARS Convention.

Those were the days when MAC was at its peak. I remember that Ray and Alice Doggett also were prominently helping when MAC hosted a District 9 Meeting at Gloucester in April of 2001, which drew 131 attendees. Years before that, Ray had to take over as MAC president when Terry Sheuchenko died suddenly mid-way through her term as president. Then Ray served his full term, all with the help of Alice. I have missed them for the many years since they became unable to attend meetings, probably because of Ray's failing eyesight from macular degeneration. He told me about it when we were touring Lewis Ginter at the Spring 2007 District Meeting that MAC hosted in Richmond which drew only 97 attendees. After that MAC meeting attendance gradually went further into decline. Lets hope that after Covid-19 is no longer a threat, we can once again have meetings and visit with each other.

## NOTE FROM JEANNE HAMMER

A friend of Jeanne's pointed out a very nice article about rhododendrons and Jeanne asked for the link to be included in our newsletter. The link is: <https://www.ourstate.com/charlie-owen-dexter-rhododendron-asheville/>

The article is "A Private Asheville Garden Is Rhododendron Heaven" by Leigh Ann Henion. This garden is the home of Charlie Owens, one of Charles Dexter's relatives.

## SKINNER MATERIAL BACK ONLINE AT UVA LIBRARY

by Jeanne Hammer

In 2005, the University of Virginia Library undertook a project to create a digital, online archive of the records from Dr. Henry T. Skinner's 1951 travels throughout the Southeast. During his travels, Skinner surveyed and kept detailed location and descriptive records on native azaleas. Various MAC members, including Don Hyatt, Sandra McDonald, George McLellan, Kendon Stubbs, and the late Donald Voss, contributed to the effort. Unfortunately, in 2013 the archive, which included supplemental, supporting materials in addition to Skinner's journals, disappeared from the UVA Library's website due to major system-wide updates to software supporting the UVA Library website. The Skinner digital

archive and others similar to it were casualties. Although individual catalog records were still available, those who had relied on the ease of searching the consolidated archive began lobbying for its restoration. The UVA Library responded. The archive has been restored and can be found at <https://azaleas.lib.virginia.edu>.

## SUMMER COLOR IN A WOODLAND GARDEN

by George McLellan

If you crave some color other than green in your woodland garden after your rhododendrons and azaleas are finished blooming, look to the genus *Hydrangea*. These plants bloom in shade to part shade and some can even take full sun. By utilizing different cultivars of the five most available species, you can have interest in your garden from late May into September and even into December with the fall foliage.

I will give you a quick overview of some of my favorites in the order of interest in my Zone 7B Tidewater garden in Gloucester, Virginia.

### I. *Hydrangea arborescens*

The first to catch my attention is the native species *Hydrangea arborescens*, and its cultivar ‘Annabelle’, with flowers starting to appear in late May as small, bright kelly green balls that quickly mature into large, bright white blooms lasting for three to four weeks before fading to bright green. The attractive green stage can last until fall if there is enough water. The flowers of these low (3'-5') shrubs bloom on new wood so the plant appears best cut back close to the ground in late winter. Some of my favorite selections of *H. arborescens* are:

- ‘Annabelle’ large white flowers 3' - 5'
- ‘Incrediball’ very large flowers on strong stems 4' - 5'
- ‘Invincible Spirit’ pale pink smaller flowers 3' - 4'



*Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Annabelle’. Photo by George McLellan.

### II. *Hydrangea quercifolia*

Michael Dirr says this is “one of the most handsome plants that landscape designers have at their disposal.” This is another native species for our gardens that will bloom in shade or sun, starting in June with startling white cones of flowers that can age to wonderful shades of deep pink and red after three to four weeks. The large leaves (3" -8") turn a rich deep red to burgundy in late fall and may last to the new year. Some favorite selections of *H. quercifolia* are:

- ‘Alice’ white flowers that age to reddish pink, deep red fall foliage 8'+
- ‘Snow Queen’ white 8" long flowers age pink, burgundy fall foliage 6'+
- ‘Munchkin’ white flowers aging to pink on a dwarf plant 3'+
- ‘Ruby Slippers’ white flowers quickly age to Ruby on a compact plant 3 ½' x 5'
- ‘Snowflake’ white double hose-in-hose flowers, very unique 6-7'+



*Hydrangea quercifolia* ‘Alice’. Photo by G. McLellan.



*Hydrangea quercifolia* ‘Snowflake’. Photo G. McLellan.

### III. *Hydrangea serrata*

*Hydrangea serrata* is a refined version of its close relative *H. macrophylla*. *Hydrangea serrata* is from Japan and Korea and has smaller leaves and flowers than *H. macrophylla*. *Hydrangea serrata* generally has lacecap inflorescences, small finely serrated leaves, and a compact form although a few do grow taller. Garden writer and plantswoman Pamela Harper recommends that they should be grown near a path. *Hydrangea serrata* also usually starts to bloom earlier than *H. macrophylla*, but the bloom time overlaps with *H. macrophylla* in July an August. Some nice lacecap selections which will be pink or blue\* depending on the soil pH are:

‘Blue Billow’ 3' - 4'

‘Blue Bird’ 3' - 4'

‘Cerulean Lace’ 5' - 6'

‘Grayswood’ 5' - 6'

\*Blooms can be changed from pink to blue by adding aluminum sulfate.



*Hydrangea serrata* ‘Grayswood’. Photo G. McLellan.

### IV. *Hydrangea macrophylla*

This is the species most people think of when the name *Hydrangea* is mentioned. It is the queen of the

species. To again quote Michael Dirr, “Blue in a garden is a gift from the heavens, and no species of woody shrub provides the range of the softest blue, violet blue, to purple blue. Please note flowers will be pink in non-aluminum soils and media.” This species with the classic mophead flowers also comes with some beautiful lacecap forms. We are lucky to live in an age when this species has been bred to have plants that flower from new vegetative growth instead of flowering only on old wood as most old cultivars do.

If your hydrangea is pink and you want it in blue, you may have to add aluminum sulfate to your soil. *Hydrangea macrophylla* blooms very well in full shade for me and I have had some cultivars bloom as late as December. Any more plants that I add to my *Hydrangea* collection are going to be from the newer ones that flower on new growth.



*Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Dirr’s Gift’, lacecap type. Photo G. McLellan.



*Hydrangea macrophylla* ‘Dirr’s Gift’. Photo G. McLellan.

### V. *Hydrangea paniculata*

Most gardeners are familiar with the peegee hydrangea, *Hydrangea paniculata* ‘Grandiflora’, usually seen as a coarsely branched shrub or small tree. But there are now many new and finer choices of the species. *Hydrangea paniculata* is the most culturally

adaptable of the genus taking full sun to part shade and is the most drought tolerant. It flowers on new wood so can be pruned back in late winter to any desired size. In my garden it is the latest blooming hydrangea, usually blooming in August and can still bloom with some shade. Some of my favorites are:

‘Limelight’ pale green changing to white 10' - 20'  
‘Quick Fire’ first to bloom, white aging to rose pink 7-8'  
‘Pink Winky’ white aging to bright pink 8' - 12'  
‘Little Lime’ greenish white aging to white 3' - 4'  
‘Tardiva’ last to bloom starting mid August 15' - 25'

If hydrangeas interest you, be sure to read Michael Dirr’s book *Hydrangeas for American Gardens*



‘Original Endless Summer’ in a wooded garden with ‘Lady in Red’ in background.

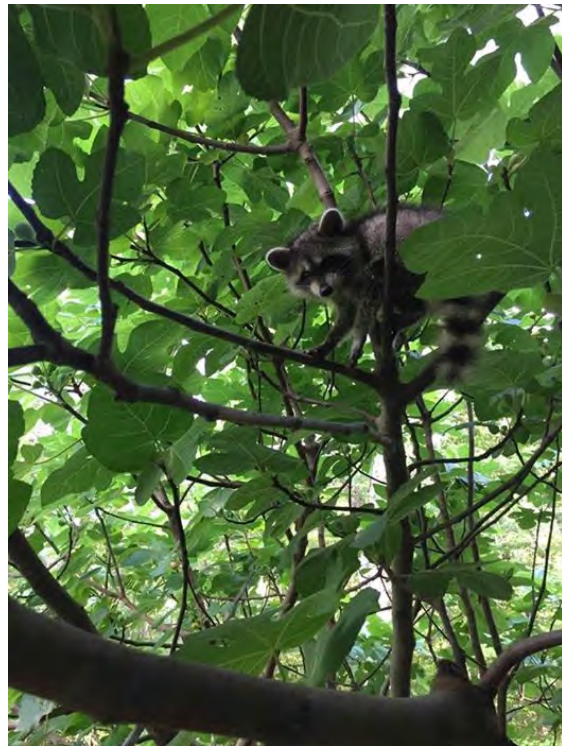
#### **ISAIAS** by Sandra McDonald

Tropical Storm Isaias came by to the west of Hampton in the early morning hours of Tuesday, August 4. The winds woke me around 4am. It was a rather fast moving storm because the winds were dying down here around 8 to 9am. The highest gusts here were only 69mph, but they were coming from a different direction than the hurricanes usually hit from so they did do some damage, especially to some of my neighbors houses along the waterfront. I only had a small roof over the back steps pull away from the house and had to have it removed since it was blocking the door and was bent up. There were a few medium sized branches and lots of little debris to clean up so I think I was fortunate. The city was busy for a few days clearing downed trees. Power was out for many, too.

#### **MY GARDEN VISITOR** by Jeanne Hammer

Summertime in the garden after the last of the late-blooming rhododendrons and azaleas provides its own

interest. My ‘Celeste’ fig tree is a big attraction to crows and squirrels when the fruit starts to ripen. Whenever the foliage rustles, I rush to scare the critters away. Much to my surprise, the day after Isaias passed through, instead of a squirrel, I found this cute, young raccoon peering back at me. He visited the fig tree regularly mid-day and evening, and probably early morning before I woke, for over a week, and was welcome to eat as many figs as he wanted.



Young raccoon in ‘Celeste’ fig tree. Photo by Jeanne Hammer.



**Remember all photos can be seen in color and ENLARGED at [MACARS.ORG](http://MACARS.ORG). Click on Newsletter on left panel.**

BIRDS, PLANTS, AND INSECTS IN DOUG JOLLEY'S GARDEN  
All photos by Doug Jolley



Dragon fly.



Goldfinch on cardinal flower.



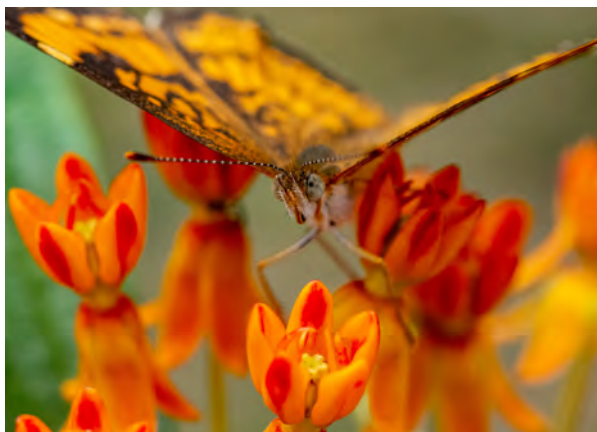
Monarch butterfly.



Swallowtail butterfly.



Downy woodpecker.



Pearl crescent.



Zebra swallowtail.





Hummingbird moth.



Sourwood.



Hummingbird.



Hummingbird.

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.

**Memberships and renewals should be sent to our Membership Chairman Jeanne Hammer at 231 N Robinson Dr, Macon, NC 27551.**

Annual membership dues are \$40 per year.

Miscellaneous inquiries may be sent to the editor (address below) for forwarding to proper individual.

Sandra McDonald, Ph.D., Editor  
Mid-Atlantic Rhododendron News and Notes  
4302 Chesapeake Ave  
Hampton, VA 23669