

# GREATER PHILADELPHIA RHODO GRAVURE

Newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, American Rhododendron Society ::::::::::: Fall 2012

## *Meet the new chapter president*

Our chapter's new president, Maris Ogg, has long had a goal for her expansive garden in Flourtown: To have something blooming at all times of the year. And just recently, she says, "I've really finally gotten it to that point." Mission accomplished! Now there's time to be chapter president.

Anemones, asters, hellebores and grasses for winter interest are essential for



**President Maris Ogg**

different times of year, but the hardest time for Maris was mid-June, before the annuals and summer perennials come into their own. Phlox, echinacea and a particularly late-blooming iris have filled that gap. As was noted by chapter members who attended this year's picnic hosted by Maris and her husband, Bob Smith.

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## *The much-awaited return of Plants for Members*

In which Karel Bernady proves he is into graft

Following long precedent, the September chapter meeting is focused on ARS members and their insatiable desire to grow more rhododendrons. Members will be regarded with mild suspicion if they do not attend on Sunday, Sept. 9, for the annual Plants for Members sale.



**R. 'Mrs. Peach'**

This is the chance to acquire plants that can be had nowhere else. Karel Bernady, champion propagator,

scours the Eastern Seaboard for varieties to cut, stick, grow and make available to the discerning, collecting rhododendron devotee. This year, the chapter and Karel are upping the ante significantly. Two years ago, Karel embarked on a grafting program, to make it possible to propagate clones that are too finicky for traditional rooting techniques. He applied a method used in Germany and carried the first large-scale grafting exercise in 2010. (By large-scale, we do not compare ourselves to commercial outfits!)

Most people's image of grafting probably includes a tree, say an ornamental cherry, that is grafted onto the trunk of a robust but otherwise ordinary member of the genus. Once the

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Plants and Propagation: Karel Bemady & Linda Hartnett

Truss Show: Michael Martin Mills; Philadelphia. Flower Show: Linda Hartnett

The American Rhododendron Society is a horticultural organization devoted to the genus *Rhododendron* – which includes azaleas. At the national level, the society holds annual conferences, publishes an excellent quarterly journal, and fosters plant research and conservation. Its website, [www.rhododendron.org](http://www.rhododendron.org), is a trove.

The Greater Philadelphia Chapter gathers eight times a year. Sunday afternoon meetings are held September, October, November and January at Morris Arboretum. February through August we are more mobile, with a banquet, plant sale and picnic at various sites. The latest meeting information may be found at [www.GPChapterARS.org](http://www.GPChapterARS.org).

Not already a member? Dues are \$40 per year, which includes chapter and national membership and a subscription to the Journal. Contact the president or treasurer (see above) for a member form or go to [www.GPChapterARS.org](http://www.GPChapterARS.org); click on “Join us.”

## Welcome to *the RhodoGravure*

This is the debut issue of the new quarterly newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

Why a quarterly? For one thing, it's easier on the crew of dedicated chapter leaders than a newsletter pegged to each meeting or event, and it allows a product with more frills. In this era of technology, the principal means of circulation will be electronic, but the chapter is happy to mail a hard copy to members who are not wired for email.

With a quarterly, members will need to adapt a tad. Every issue will include a calendar with events several months in advance. When you get the *RhodoGravure*, transfer those dates to your personal calendar. About a week before each meeting, there will be an email meeting reminder, but nothing in the U.S. mail.

Michael Martin Mills is editor of the *RhodoGravure*, and he welcomes ideas and contributions, including photographs. Email him at [mmm19119@gmail.com](mailto:mmm19119@gmail.com). (FYI, the return address on posted copies is that of our treasurer, Myo Myint.)

The name *RhodoGravure* is a play on words, something that younger members may not get right away. In decades past, the color magazines in Sunday newspapers were frequently called the “rotogravure,” after the technique used to print them. The *New York Times* still has its rotogravure magazine, of course, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* did until 2003. The word even made the lyrics of a popular Irving Berlin song from 1933, “Easter Parade”: “On the avenue, Fifth Avenue, the photographers will snap us, and you’ll find that you’re in the rotogravure.” Precisionists will note that the *RhodoGravure* has no connection to the namesake printing process, or Sunday magazines for that matter. But isn’t it fun anyway?

## New president

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"I've always gardened," Maris says. "It's one of the few fun things you can do around the house. For me it's relaxing. When you have a job where you use your brain, sometimes at the end of the day look at your desk and ask what did I do today?" Not so with gardening: you see what you've done. "It's nice to have a tangible hobby."

Joe Flanagan, a former chapter board member and one of Maris' neighbors, suggested more than 10 years ago that she check out the Rhododendron Society. The Plants for Members sale got her hooked, and she began working at the big spring sale, surrounded by ARS members offering pointers and advice to customers.

Maris grew up in Ohio and got both her degrees from Ohio State University. She worked there for a while, but after a bank merger affected her position, she came to Philadelphia for a new job. After a couple of other positions, she started her own company, Tower Bridge Advisors, in 2001. This investment-management concern has about \$1 billion under management for wealthy individuals.

As a businesswoman, she has a couple of goals for the chapter. One is to increase membership, particularly among younger people, and to expand the circle of members who hold office and carry out the chapter's functions. The other is to create a how-to manual on the chapter presidency, so that her successors can more easily assume the responsibilities.

But she still has time for – ta-da! – woodworking. In fact, her daughter, who is building a house behind the Ogg-Smith residence, has various tables and shelves "on order" with her mother. It all started when an old triple-trunk cherry had to be removed. Why waste the wood when you can find someone with a portable sawmill? She ended up with 1,500 board feet, and once the planks had cured a side career was born. So if anyone has some particularly vast rhododendrons that need to be removed, there might be a chance for blending hobbies.

## Calendar

**Sept. 9, Sunday, 1:30 p.m.** Chapter meeting, Morris Arboretum, staff building, Bloomfield Farm section. See Page 1.

**Sept. 20, Thursday, 6:30 p.m.** Valley Forge Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum. Sale featuring John Doppel hybrids.

**Sept 21-23** – ARS Western Regional Conference, Nanaimo, British Columbia. "Rhodos in Paradise." For more information: <http://arsnanaimo2012.ca>.

**Sept. 22, Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.** Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Fall Garden Festival, with a booth operated by our chapter. Philadelphia Navy Yard. For more information: [http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/membership/members\\_day.html](http://www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/membership/members_day.html).

**Oct. 18, Thursday, 7 p.m.** Valley Forge Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum. Speaker: Joe Minahan.

**Oct. 21, Sunday, 1:30 p.m.** Chapter meeting, Morris Arboretum, Widener building. Speaker: Heidi Hesselein, "Forty Trees and Shrubs You Should Know by Heart." These are the most versatile and rewarding for our region. Heidi and her husband, Richard Hesselein, operate Pleasant Run Nursery.

**Nov. 11, Sunday, 1 p.m.** Valley Forge Chapter banquet, St. David's Country Club.

**Nov. 18, Sunday, 1:30 p.m.** Chapter meeting, Morris Arboretum, Widener building. Speaker: Ken LeRoy, "Trees for the Rhododendron Garden" and "State of Trees Report 2012."

**Jan. 13, 2013, Sunday, 1:30 p.m.** Chapter meeting, Morris Arboretum, Widener building. Speaker: Karel Bernady, "Grafting Elepidotes: A Beginning." Learn how Karel does it.

**Feb. 17, Sunday** Joint meeting with Valley Forge Chapter. Uwchlan Friends Meeting House, Lionville, Pa. Speaker: Norman Beaudry.

**March 2-10** Philadelphia International Flower Show

**April 13, Saturday** Annual banquet, Whitmarsh Valley Country Club.

**April 18-21** Azalea Society convention, Athens, Ga.

**May 1-5** ARS Annual convention, Seattle area.

**May 9-11** Chapter plant sale, Morris Arboretum.

## *The derecho that attacked Vineland*

Many of us welcomed the rain system that come through late June 29 – a torrid, parched summer, after all. And then there are Bud and Marilyn Gressman. Minus 15 towering oaks.

They, and the rest of Vineland, N.J., were right in the path of the fierce storm, called a derecho.

Bud and Marilyn were caught by surprise – hadn't watched the late TV news. First they heard wind, then a crash. They headed for the basement and stayed there for 45 minutes. "It was really loud, the wind was really kicking," Bud said recently. A neighbor recorded winds of 105 miles per hour.

Many trees were snapped, others uprooted, and 15 had to be removed. The largest stump is 6 feet across. 'Taurus,' at 7 feet tall and 12 feet wide, is now 4 by 4 feet. Five of the 25-year-old 'Scintillations' are gone, and Bud estimates they lost 35 percent of their overall collection, with many other rhododendrons now half their former size.

Fifteen old oaks translates into a great deal of dappled

shade; many surviving rhodies are now burning in the sun.

Cleanup took only a couple of days – because the outfit the Gressmans engaged had a crane that could lift 16,000-pound piece of tree and a chipper that took limbs more than 18 inches in diameter. Astonishingly, neither the house nor other buildings on the Gressmans' property was damaged.

Now they are contemplating tree replacements – Bud sees it as a chance to get some fall color.



## *Plants for members, including grafts*

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graft takes, the tree is dug up and sold. This is not Karel's style. The German technique involves simultaneous rooting and grafting. The scion (the desirable plant being propagated) is grafted onto an understock cutting, and the understock is then treated like a traditional cutting for rooting. Deft winding of string and some critical don't-trim/do-trim rules are involved for the leaves. Those that made it through the first year were potted up and grown a second year and are good size.

A full list of plants to be sold will be posted on the chapter website ([www.GPARSChapter.org](http://www.GPARSChapter.org)) in late August. Printed copies will be on hand at the sale. If a member without access to the website cannot wait until the meeting to see the list, either ask that clever nephew to download and print a copy for you (or contact Karel and ask him to mail you a copy).

The sale will also include older one-gallon plants and a number of seedl-grown native Americans.

Here are some highlights. Among the year-old rooted cuttings, look for 'Green Glow,' an evergreen azalea; 'Rhein's Luna,' a fine light purple lepidote; and 'Mrs. Peach,' a Hank Schannen hybrid. Grafted clones include 'Ernie's Freckle Face'; 'Kay Kay' (Sw 58-279 KK); and 'Irresistible'. The seeds for the natives were collected in the wild and include a late yellow *R. austrinum* and the "new" species *R. colemanii*.

Prices remain a bargain: \$5 per rooted cutting; \$12 per grafted plant; \$10 per one-gallon plants.

The sale/meeting takes place at the Bloomfield Farm section of Morris Arboretum (directly across from the public garden entrance on Northwestern Avenue, Chestnut Hill). We gather at 1:30 p.m.

## *In memoriam*

### **Mary Elizabeth “Betts” Layman, 1924-2012**

The Greater Philadelphia Chapter lost one of its best-beloved members on Aug. 15 with the death of Betts Layman at age 88.

There is no summing up of Betts Layman – she did so much with such vivacity. The Greater Philadelphia Chapter knew her as chapter president, host for uncountable board meetings, propagator extraordinaire (and not merely of rhododendrons and azaleas), consummate gardener, fabulous baker, and kindest soul within a few thousand miles.

There was much more. The Philadelphia Inquirer quoted her daughter, Kate Layman Gee, as saying, “If she couldn’t be useful, she wasn’t happy.” And useful she was, to Bartram’s Garden, Braille publishers, All Saints Church in Wynnewood, and of course the rhododendron community. For



years, a high-grossing “pre-sale” was conducted from the Layman driveway in the days leading up to the sale at Morris Arboretum. At that sale, she was the expert for azalea

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### **Fred S. Winter, 1919-2012**

This stalwart member of the Rhododendron Society died on June 21, 2012.

Born in Schenectady, N.Y., Fred Winter came to Philadelphia for postgraduate radiology studies at the University of Pennsylvania. In a long medical career, he was affiliated with Philadelphia General Hospital, Delaware Hospital of Wilmington, Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital,

and, for 25 years, Pottstown Memorial Medical Center, along with posts elsewhere in the United States and Europe. Fred was a veteran of World War II and the Korean War.

As a gardener, Fred was a keen devotee of rhododendrons, and his Company Farm near Pottstown was the frequent site of tours and ARS events. He served as president of the Valley Forge Chapter and as a national board member. He was a frequent competitor in the Valley Forge and Greater Philadelphia flower competitions, taking multiple Best in Show trophies, among many others.

Several rhododendron cultivars are associated with Fred. ‘Fred’s Barbara’ is a well-regarded white flower on a handsome shrub he grew from seed exchange material. He also named and registered ‘Break Fast’ and ‘Blessing.’ ‘Fred Winter’ is an unregistered Joe Becales hybrid (‘Merley Cream’ X ‘Polynesian Sunset’).

The Greater Philadelphia Chapter extends its condolences to Barbara Winter and their children and grandchildren.



**R. ‘Fred’s Barbara’**

## Betts Layman

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information. This year's chapter exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show was the first in years without Betts' help – and it was only because ill health kept her away. It was during Flower Show setup in 2008 that the chapter feted Betts with champagne on her 21st birthday – Feb. 29, that is.

The garden that she and Dan Layman created in Wynnewood is a wonder to behold, and the number of plants that left in the hands of admiring visitors is staggering. Those gifts always came with cogent advice, or tales of Betts' days taking horticultural classes taught by Laura Barnes herself at the Barnes Foundation.

One plant that many chapter members cherish is the azalea 'Betty Layman,' with large salmon flowers in the late-midseason. One of the Robin Hill azaleas, it was named for her by hybridizer Robert Gartrell around 1970 and registered in 1985. The chapter has recommended this "good-doer" for the ARS Rhododendron of the Year Mid-Atlantic azalea selection, and is now in the process of propagating it in large quantity in honor of Betts and with the intention of getting it into many gardens in the Philadelphia area.

Our chapter extends deepest condolences to her children, Kate Gee and Stephen Layman, and her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

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## Are you brilliant?

The clever folks who design and create our annual exhibit at the Philadelphia International Flower Show are always looking for more ideas and more participants. The work on the exhibit typically begins in the fall, with idea and design meetings. Committee chair Linda Hartnett will soon be scheduling those meetings and if you'd like to join in please contact her at 610-940-9478 or [lindahartnett@gmail.com](mailto:lindahartnett@gmail.com).

The title for the overall March show is "Brilliant!" – that is, British. Linda has already rejected the suggestion of an exhibit of charred *R. ponticum* (a scourge on the sceptered isle), but it shouldn't be difficult to work our favorite genus into an English tableau. What's your brilliant idea?



**Our  
"award"  
in 2012.**

## We're moving in October

Our September sale/meeting will take place on the Bloomfield Farm side of Morris Arboretum. But with our October meeting, we return to the Widener building in the arboretum proper. Say "rhododendron meeting" at the booth and drive in.