

GREATER PHILADELPHIA RHODO GRAVURE

Newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, American Rhododendron Society :::::::::: Summer 2014

Kim Kopple, new chapter president

Princeton-educated architect has been key to Flower Show exhibits

The chapter's new president, Kim Kopple, is a virtually native Philadelphian and the third consecutive woman to hold the chapter's top office.

Since her father was in the Air Force, Kim was born at Scott Air Force Base in Belleville, Ill., but she was roughly two weeks old when she had enough of the Midwest and opted for a life in Philadelphia. That led to graduation from Germantown Academy in 1978, followed by an architectural bachelor's degree from Princeton University.

After marrying 12 years ago, Kim and husband Craig Conover moved into a striking 1969 house in the West Mount Airy section of Philadelphia, with a large semi-wooded lot that borders Fairmount Park. The original landscaping largely survived, with a fine Japanese-style garden at the front entrance of the house. What should it include but 'Delaware Valley White' azaleas, and elsewhere on the property were other



Kim Kopple, Craig Conover

plants of (unknown) azaleas and rhododendrons.

And thus Kim and Craig became poster children for one of the chapter's goals. They wanted to know more about taking care of their azaleas and rhododendrons, so they joined the ARS. Not only did they learn, but they got involved, and not that many years later, Kim is the chapter president.

Part of that involvement in chapter activities has been Kim's ongoing work on the exhibit for the Philadelphia Flower Show. Kim has designed many exhibits, or taken committee ideas and turned them into an executable design. "It's a great deal of fun," she said the other day. "It's always great to figure out to present rhododendrons and azaleas to the public — something that reflects the theme in some way without being too literal. We've improved over the years,

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Winners at the truss show

A hard winter and late spring had a major effect on this year's competition

Be nice to your in-laws and you might win a trophy. It seems to have worked for Randy Dalton.

An entry of R. 'Mary K' from the garden of Randy and Michael Mills took Best In Show at the May 10 Cut-Flower Competition (a.k.a. truss show) at Morris Arboretum. The cultivar, you see, is a Joe Gable hybrid, named for Mary Katherine Gable, his daughter-in-law. Mary Katherine's husband, James Gable, was the son of Joseph B. and Mary Dalton Gable, making Randy and Mary Katherine cousins-in-law. And Randy and Michael have been treating 'Mary K' very nicely, so much

that she came through the wicked winter of 2014 with unblemished foliage and nary a blasted bud in the tall truss.

Wicked winter indeed. The competition usually draws 250 or more entries. This year there were only 86. Varieties that normally bloom right at truss show time were tight as could be, and many of the delayed early bloomers produced partial trusses. Such are the vicissitudes of spring flower competitions.

Susan and Marc Thomson won two trophies, both for deciduous azaleas. Their 'Firecracker' was judged Best Deciduous Azalea

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The winning R. 'Mary K'

We're being squashed

Blame it on vegetables. That would seem to be a logical conclusion from a fascinating New York Times article in May.

Headlined "You're Planting That Old Thing?," the article by Michael Tortorello spills a fair amount of ink about species and cultivars that have fallen out of favor. The catalpa tree is the principal example. Once found in many a garden, good luck picking one up at *any* garden center or nursery today. Likewise crinum and *Prunus mume*.

One of the depressing factoids is that only 17 percent of plants are bought "at dedicated garden centers," with Lowe's.

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Plants and Propagation: Karel Bernady & 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 the excellent, full-color quarterly *Journal of the ARS*, and fosters plant research and conservation. Its website, 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.

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; click on "Join us."

Home Depot and their ilk commanding 47 percent of the market (2012 figures). Here is a passage that should give pause: "In a broad sense, American homeowners have stopped spending money on all types of trees and shrubs. Bruce Butterfield, the market research director for the National Gardening Association, recorded a 46 percent drop in landscaping purchases in the four years after the financial panic (the 2008 edition). During roughly the same period, food-gardening sales increased 40 percent."

So the declining numbers of rhododendrons and azaleas that we sell at our May sale are right in line with national trends.

To read the full article, go to: www.nytimes.com/2014/05/15/garden/youre-planting-that-old-thing.html.



Marc and Susan Thomson A bounty of ribbons, trophies

Truss show

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(the Walter Kern Trophy), and *R. austrinum* 'Millie Mac' took Best Species (Francis Sholomskas Trophy).

A new clutch of sister seedlings by Joe Minahan of Camp Hill, Pa., is beginning to make its mark. He took the Joe Becales Hybridizer Trophy with an entry of 'John Paul II' X 'Orange Ruffy'. (The seed parent, of course, is Joe's well-noted red cultivar, which itself won the trophy in 1981; 'Orange Ruffy' is a cross by Tom Ahern.)

The Dalton-Mills entries took a few other prizes: *R. schlippenbachii* for Best Foliage, 'Mary K' for Best Rhododendron Hybrid, and 'Coral Bells' for Best Evergreen Azalea (the third time their 'Coral Bells' has won that trophy). Randy and Michael also won the Judi Meade Sweepstakes Trophy for most points.

Judges this year were Judy Allison, Malcolm Boyd, Frank Brouse, Peg van Patton, Tom Schuetz – all seasoned veterans – and, in his maiden outing with our truss show, Harold Sweetman, director of Jenkins Arboretum. The trophies were presented at the chapter picnic at Chanticleer in Wayne, Pa. A complete list of trophy and ribbon winners will be posted soon on the chapter website.

If you're thinking of registering a rhododendron or azalea...

For the past several years, ARS stars Don Hyatt and Don Voss have been developing a PowerPoint how-to on registering rhododendron and azalea names. Now they've "published" it, and ARS members can access it for free.

Michael Martin Mills, the Greater Philadelphia member who became the North American Regional Registrar for rhododendrons in 2013, considers the Hyatt-Voss program excellent. There are sections on choosing a name (more complication-prone than one would expect), measuring flowers (the step with the most errors, according to Michael), and determining color with an approved color chart (tip no. 1: don't even think of using an

online color chart).

Michael recommends that anyone with notions of registering a name go through the presentation – not just neophytes, but also past registrants, who will almost certainly learn a thing or two.

The presentation – with occasional instances of classic Hyatt drollness – can be downloaded from <http://arsstore.org/programs/php>. It is available in .PPT, .PDF, and also as an online program that can be viewed with a browser. There is a free PowerPoint viewer available for Windows users that allows it to be viewed with Don's elaborate transitions. When viewed as a PDF or using a browser, these transitions are lost.

New president

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gotten cohesion as a group, common ideas about design. It's coming together nicely." Flower Show Committee members love working with Kim's precise drawings.

It's at the University of Pennsylvania that those precise Kopple drawings come into play on a professional basis. Kim is director of planning, design and construction for Penn's Veterinary School, splitting her time between West Philadelphia and the Vet School's New Bolton Center in Kennett Square. She designs and retrofits labs, clinics and academic facilities, and is leader and manager of projects. (Architecture is something of the family business, involving not only Kim but also her father, brother-in-law and, in a nondesign capacity, her mother.)

Until Kim and Craig got their house and garden, nature and plants were largely appreciated in public garden settings. This summer Kim will truly expand on that approach by visiting Sissinghurst, Kew and other legendary gardens in the south of England. In late July, she'll be in England as a member of the choir of the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in Chestnut Hill. The St. Martin's Choir will be in residence at Exeter Cathedral for a week of daily evensongs and other choral liturgies, followed by singing Sunday services at the namesake church, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square. When most of the choir returns to Philadelphia, Kim will be staying in England a few days longer – so many gardens, so little time!

Back home in late summer, the 2015 Flower Show will be putting claims on her time, as well as the fall program year for the chapter. "I am amazed and constantly astounded by the depth of knowledge and talents of the members of the society," Kim said. "I'm looking forward to getting to know them better and being educated.

Editor's aside: The first president of the chapter was Betsi Kelius, serving 1957-59. Almost 30 years passed before another woman was chapter president, Betts Layman. But now the chapter is a paragon of gender parity. Of the 10 most recent presidents, five have been men, five women.

Calendar

Important: If you do not receive this newsletter electronically, you will not receive email reminders a week before meetings. Please use this calendar to mark your own.

August 12, Tuesday Board of Directors meeting, 7:30 p.m., home of Kim Kopple, 1100 W. Allens Lane, Philadelphia.

August 17, Sunday Cutting Exchange and Auction, 1:30 p.m. Home of Debby Schmidt, 51 Blue Stone Drive, Chadds Ford, PA 19317; 610-388-8573.

August 23, Saturday Propagation workday; sticking new cuttings. 9 a.m. and after, Kristoph Nursery, central New Jersey. Contact Karel Bernady for info and directions (phone and email on Page 2).

September 14, Sunday Chapter meeting, 1:30 p.m. Plants for Members sale. Morris Arboretum, Widener Visitor Center.

September 20, Saturday PHS Fall Garden Festival, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Our chapter will have a sales booth and needs helpers; please contact Linda Hartnett (phone and email on Page 2). South Broad Street, Philadelphia Navy Yard.

September 26-28, Friday-Sunday ARS Western Regional Conference, Everett, Wash. Info: www.rhododendron.org.

October 12, Sunday Chapter meeting, 1:30 p.m. Speaker: Kate Deregisus of Morris Arboretum. Morris Arboretum, Widener Visitor Center.

October 20-25 New Zealand Rhododendron Association's 70th Jubilee International Conference. Dunedin, South Island, New Zealand. Info: www.rhododendron.org.nz/conference_info.php.

November 9, Sunday Chapter meeting, 1:30 p.m.. Morris Arboretum, Widener Visitor Center.

January 11, 2015, Sunday Chapter meeting, 1:30 p.m. Speaker: Michael Martin Mills. Morris Arboretum, Widener Visitor Center.

May 6-10, ARS annual convention, Sidney, British Columbia (just north of Victoria).



Picnickers, with sunglasses The chapter picnic and annual meeting, held at Chanticleer in Wayne, Pa., was blessed with sunny skies and good food. A spiffy greenhouse, now empty for the summer, was the gathering spot. From left: Maris Ogg, Mary Ammon, Gary Ammon, and Liz Ball. Gary was elected to the board of directors.

*New members;
new address*

The Greater Philadelphia Chapter welcomes:

William R. Halberstadt
Hilltown, Pa.

Lester and Melinda Martin
Colts Neck, N.J.

Catherine and Michael Schack
Haverford, Pa.

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The ARS Board of Directors requests that all mail to ARS Executive Director Laura Grant be sent directly to her home in Canada. Her address: 27 Taylor Dr., Toronto, ON M4C 3B4, Canada.

A first-class letter to Canada costs \$1.15 (for the first 2 ounces), and there are international “forever stamps.” (The society will maintain its U.S. address for legal and tax reasons.)