

GREATER PHILADELPHIA RHODO GRAVURE

Newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, American Rhododendron Society :::::::::: Winter 2017

Eureka!

Rhodos, Victoriana and redwoods at April's ARS convention

An ARS convention on the West Coast always means voluptuous flowers that we Eastern gardeners simply cannot grow. Species with vast leaves and cabbage-size trusses, yellows to die for, fascinating gems for the rock garden, and the one native deciduous azalea that *will not* survive on the East Coast, *Rhododendron occidentale*.

All of these await ARS members who book passage to the national convention in Eureka, Calif., on the last weekend of April. Tours include the Humboldt Botanical Garden and several private gardens, and speakers include Steve Hootman of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, French hybridizer Marc Colombel, and botanist Peter Raven, formerly of the Missouri Botanical Garden, noted for his conservation and biodiversity advocacy. It's all so, so alluring.



R. occidentale

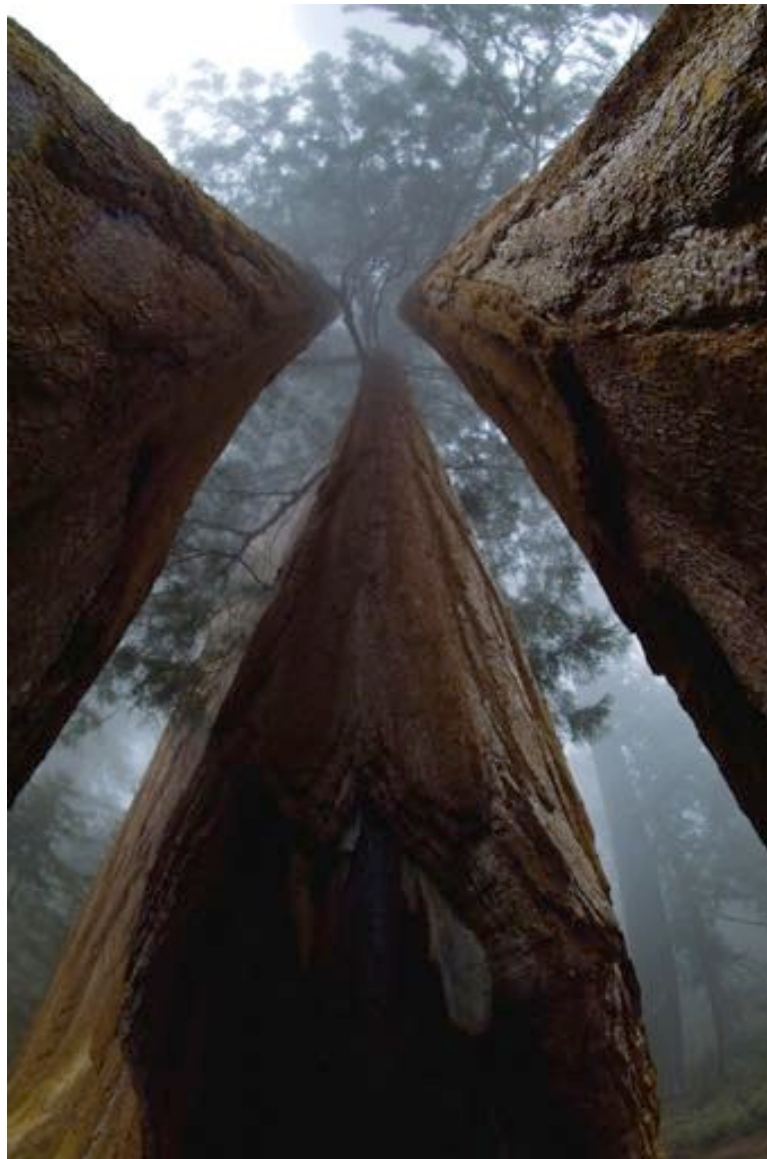
But there's something about this convention locale that no other venue can top: redwoods, *Sequoia sempervirens*. Drive south toward Mendocino, and there's a state highway that's named Avenue of the Giants, for all the soaring specimens that dwarf us pipsqueak motorists. There's a tree you can drive through (not the one that fell on Jan. 8, farther south), and a gondola ride that takes you high through the trees. Go to

<http://avenueofthegiants.net> to download a map and brochure, or have them mailed to you.

Or head north, to Redwood National Park and several affiliated state redwood parks, which are designated as a World Heritage Site as well as an International Biosphere Reserve. You might add a few days to your rhododendron trip to camp in the parks or stay in nearby lodges. The National Parks Service's website has much information: <https://www.nps.gov/redw/index.htm>.

Meanwhile, back in Eureka, the local architecture rivals the rhododendrons for color and flamboyance. On Saturday, ARS members will have the option of taking an architectural tour of Eureka and nearby Ferndale, which the Los Angeles Times called "the best preserved Victorian village in California." The tour includes breakfast at the

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The scale of redwoods challenges photographers – best to go see them in situ.

Remembering Ted Stecki

Former ARS president dies at 80

The rhododendron world lost one of its most dedicated participants in late 2016 with the death of Theodore S. Stecki, at the age of 80.

Ted hooked up with the ARS in 1972 by joining the Philadelphia Chapter, and he rose all the way to the top, serving as the national president in 2009-2011. En route to the presidency, he had a hand in so many of the society's activities at the local and national

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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 and January at Morris Arboretum. February through August we are more mobile, with a banquet, 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 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.”

February joint meeting

Are you an enthusiast of rhododendron species? The February meeting is one not to miss.

Ron Rabideau, formerly of RareFind Nursery and now greenhouse manager at Mercer County Community College, will discuss nonnative species that are well-suited for our region. For instance, members of the brachycalyx alliance, which includes *R. sanctum*, *dilatatum* and *reticulatum*. Plus a new elepidote – that is, new to western gardening – *R. yuefengense*.



R. yuefengense

Sunday, Feb. 19, Uwchlan Meeting, Lionville, Pa., with wine and noshing afterward.

Free ticket opportunity

That annual opportunity to escape late winter without paying for a plane ticket requests your participation. The Philadelphia Flower Show takes place March 10-19, and for the 55th year the Greater Philadelphia Chapter will mount an exhibit.

The overall theme of the show is Holland, which is slightly challenging for a plant society not dedicated to bulbs, but the exhibit designers have come up with a clever two-fer: flowers in the late winter exhibit are, *ipso facto*, forced, and in Holland azaleas and rhododendrons are widely treated as plants for the greenhouse-forcing trade. So, let the forcing be with us.

ARS members are needed for two tasks: setting up the exhibit on Tuesday, March 7, and serving as docents throughout the run of the show. Set-up starts at 10 a.m. and usually lasts until midafternoon; tasks include grooming plants, placing props, shoveling mulch, and the like. Docent shifts are 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; 2-6 p.m.; 6-9 p.m. Docents work in pairs and serve as ambassadors for the ARS and the genus *rhododendron*, answering visitors’ questions about the exhibit and about rhododendrons and azaleas in general. The great bonus of being a docent is that it gets you into the Flower Show for free – a bargain considering that the advance ticket price for two is \$59.

To work on set-up, please contact Linda Hartnett (lindahartnett@gmail.com or 215-287-0731).

Michael Mills will be circulating an email sign-up for the docent shifts, but you may get ahead by emailing him with your desired shifts at mmm19119@gmail.com.

Little by little

For five months, the days are getting longer

We’re just a few weeks past the very darkest time of year, the winter solstice on Dec. 21. However incremental, we’re getting more daylight every day, hallelujah. About 160 days from now we max out with 15 hours of daylight. (Think of those folks in the tropics – all year long, sunrise and sunset are close to the same time. Boring, but no snow.)

The following chart will assist your planning – whether it’s what time to schedule a twilight cocktail party or when you have to carry a flashlight to continue late-day weeding. Times are for Philadelphia. (Interesting factoid: the 75th meridian runs through Philadelphia, meaning that astronomical and clock noon are basically the same, compared with, say, Detroit, where astronomical noon is a half to three-quarters of an hour past 12:00.)

| | <i>Sunrise</i> | <i>Sunset</i> | <i>Daylight hours</i> |
|----------|----------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Jan. 21 | 7:17 a.m. | 5:07 p.m. | 9 hours 50 minutes |
| Feb. 21 | 6:45 a.m. | 5:44 p.m. | 10 hours 59 minutes |
| March 21 | 7:02 a.m. | 7:14 p.m. | 12 hours 12 minutes |
| April 21 | 6:14 a.m. | 7:45 p.m. | 13 hours 32 minutes |
| May 21 | 5:40 a.m. | 8:15 p.m. | 14 hours 34 minutes |
| June 21 | 5:32 a.m. | 8:33 p.m. | 15 hours 1 minute |
| July 21 | 5:50 a.m. | 8:24 p.m. | 14 hours 34 minutes |
| Aug. 21 | 6:18 a.m. | 7:48 p.m. | 13 hours 30 minutes |
| Sept. 21 | 6:48 a.m. | 6:59 p.m. | 12 hours 11 minutes |
| Oct. 21 | 7:18 a.m. | 6:12 p.m. | 10 hours 54 minutes |
| Nov. 21 | 6:53 a.m. | 4:40 p.m. | 9 hours 47 minutes |
| Dec. 21 | 7:19 a.m. | 4:39 p.m. | 9 hours 20 minutes |

Source: timeanddate.com

Ted Stecki

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levels. He was a Greater Philadelphia officer and director, co-founder and nine-year president of the Pine Barrens Chapter, and, for 18 years, chair of the national ARS budget and finance committee, a remarkable commitment. He received the Greater Philadelphia Chapter's Bronze Medal in 1985.

According to his daughter Suzanne, Ted got into rhododendrons and azaleas because little else would do well in the acidic soil of his home in the Jersey Pinelands. That bit of serendipity led to a homestead billowing with specimens of the genus, and a nursery that specialized in them and their propagation. Through his friendship with hybridizer Al Reid, Ted's Hillhouse Nursery was key in the dissemination of Reid's Linwood Hardy Azaleas. Among them is R. 'Theodore S. Stecki', registered in the 1980s.

To Philadelphia-area ARS members, the utterly indispensable Ted Stecki legacy was his role in the chapter's exhibits at the Philadelphia Flower Show. He utterly mastered all the arcane steps that the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society requires of exhibitors. More critical was Ted's role in forcing



R. 'Theodore S. Stecki', one of Al Reid's Linwood Hardy Azaleas.

plants into bloom at his nursery. This is no simple matter, with tricks and nuances that fluctuate with the weather and the various cultivars. Perhaps he had things written down, but to those who worked on exhibits with Ted, he seemed to just know it all. The result was an annual display of luscious flowers. To have such expertise at the chapter's disposal was an immeasurable boon.

Many an older garden in the region has plants that Ted touched, for he was a key figure in the Plants for Members program and in the plant sale. An under-noticed talent was his skill in caring for forced Flower Show plants *after* the exhibit. He understood the stress the plants had been through, as well as their special needs. Pruned and coddled and flush with new branching, they would go on sale later in the year, instead of being tossed in a compost pile.

This was all avocation. Ted Stecki's engineering-tech career followed degrees from Clemson and Rutgers Universities and included stints at RCA and Lockheed-Martin. He was also an amateur musician (accordion). He is survived by his wife, Joan, and children Suzanne, Michael, Stephen and Jeffrey.

Calendar

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

January 15, Sunday, 2 p.m. Valley Forge Chapter meeting. Speakers: Bob & Rosa McWhorter. "Gardens of Germany and Denmark.

February 14, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Board of Directors meeting. Home of Kim Kopple.

February 19, Sunday, 2 p.m. Joint Greater Philadelphia-Valley Forge Chapters meeting. Uwchlan Meeting House, Lionville, Pa. Speaker: Ron Rabideau, "Rhododendron Species for the Mid-Atlantic Region." See article on Page 2.

March 10-19, Philadelphia Flower Show, Pennsylvania Convention Center. See article on Page 2.

March 16, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Valley Forge Chapter meeting. Speaker: Steve Wright on evergreen azaleas.

April 11, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Board of Directors meeting. Home of Kim Kopple.

April 15, Saturday, 6 p.m. Greater Philadelphia Chapter Annual Banquet, Whitemarsh Valley Country Club. Speaker: Janet Novak, "Wildflowers of Our Region."

April 27-30 ARS Annual Convention, Eureka, California. See article on Page 1.

May 11-13 Greater Philadelphia Chapter plant sale, Morris Arboretum.

May 14, Sunday Joint Greater Philadelphia-Valley Forge Flower Show (Truss Show), Jenkins Arboretum.

June 11, Sunday Greater Philadelphia Picnic and Annual Meeting.

June 13, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Board of Directors meeting. Home of Kim Kopple.

August 8, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Board of Directors meeting. Home of Kim Kopple.

August 20, Sunday District 8 Cutting Exchange and Auction.

May 21-26, 2018 ARS Annual Convention, Bremen, Germany, with pre- and post-convention tours.

May 16-19, 2019 ARS Annual Convention, Desmond Hotel, Malvern, Pa.

Eureka meeting

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flabbergasting Carson Mansion in Eureka.

If action is what you want, you might even skip the Saturday night banquet and head for the roller derby at nearby Redwood Acres Fairgrounds, featuring competition by such all-female teams as the Redwood Rollers and the Widow Makers Exposition.

For full information on the ARS convention, go to <http://eurekaarhody.org/convention.php>, which has a registration form, hotel information and more. The deadline to avoid a late-registration fee is March 22.

For information on all sorts of things to do in and around Eureka and Humboldt county, check out this website: <http://101things.com/humboldt/category/activities-attractions/tours-activities-attractions>.



On view in Eureka and Humboldt County:

An exuberant Victorian house and two forms of *R. occidentale*.

