

GREATER PHILADELPHIA **RHODO GRAVURE**

Newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, American Rhododendron Society : : : : : Summer 2019

We did it

The May convention receives rave reviews from attendees

What was that giant whooshing sound on May 20? None other than the exhalations and sighs of relief by the host committee for completion of the 2019 national ARS convention. The committee (list below) was drawn from the chapters of ARS District Eight.

The weather was stunning, attendance was above expectations, the few glitches were dinky, and the out-of-towners could not stop saying what a good time they were having.

The tours particularly wowed attendees, and the wow factor started with the very first garden, Chanticleer in Wayne. Getting folks back on the buses there was a challenge – and then they went to Winterthur.

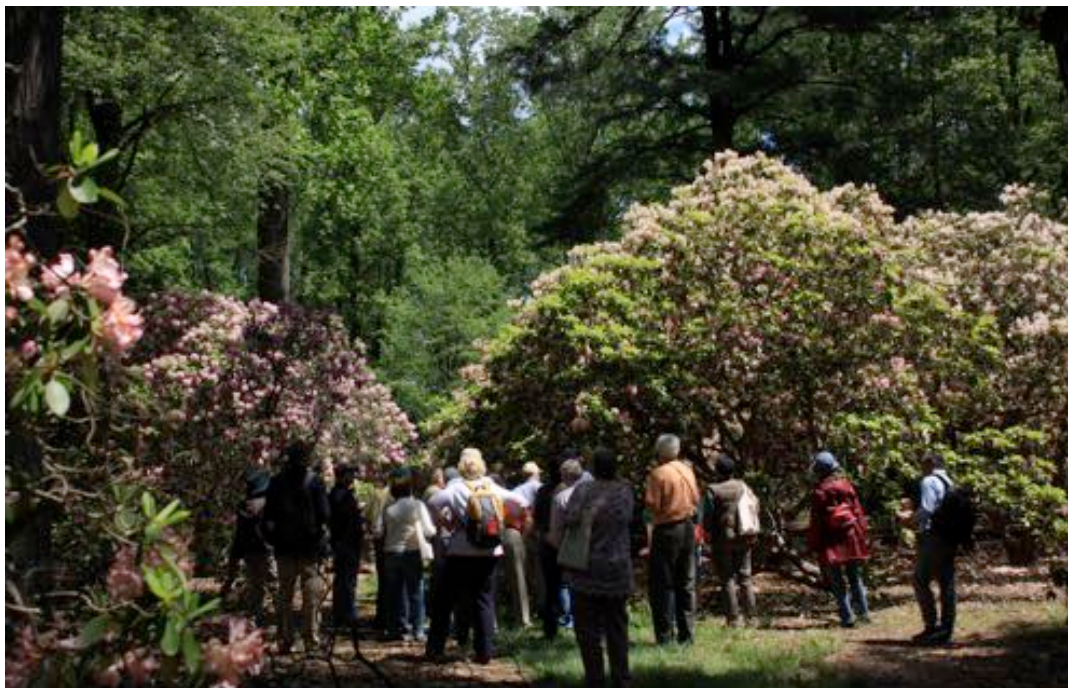
Perhaps people didn't read the description of the event at Jenkins Arboretum, or perhaps it wasn't explained clearly, but there was a large contingent of bus riders who were unsure what the deal was. About 10 minutes after arrival, with a bar and buffet on the Jenkins patio, they were in bliss. And that was before they worked their way down to the pond and the salmon bar. The RhodoGravure pronounces the evening a smashing success.

And so it went through midday Sunday. Here are some additional jots, tittles and factoids:

◆ Total registered attendance: 225

- ◆ Average dinner/banquet/buffet participation: 159 (71 percent – not bad, not bad in this business)
- ◆ Salmon trumped beef, 56 to 39 percent, at the banquet (5 percent vegetarian)
- ◆ Number of awards/citations to living people: 2 (Steve Henning, Barbara Bullock). To deceased people: 1 (Charles O. Dexter).
- ◆ Number of lunches procured: at least 590
- ◆ Number of bee stings reported to committee: 0
- ◆ Number of times it rained hard: 1 – while people were in the Helicopter Museum for dinner, hooray!
- ◆ Public gardens visited on bus tours: 8
- ◆ Private gardens visited on bus tours: 3
- ◆ Private gardens hosting do-it-yourself tours on Sunday afternoon: 6
- ◆ Number of bus captains who actually led tours every single day: 2 (Bud and Marilyn Gressman)
- ◆ Proportion of bus drivers who were pleasantly surprised that they got to eat the same thing everyone else did, including at Jenkins and Helicopter Museum: 100 percent
- ◆ Major donations: 2 (Lois Sheinfeld and Anthony Amsterdam)

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Linda Derkach photo

Convention Host Committee

- Karel F. Bernady, co-chair
- Stephen M. Henning, co-chair
- Paul Beck
- Victoria Buckley
- Craig Conover
- Linda Hartnett
- Michelle Hawk
- Darlene Henning
- Kim Kopple
- Michael Martin Mills
- Myo Myint
- Jerry O'Dell
- Maris Ogg
- Debby Schmidt
- Robert Smetana
- Harold Sweetman
- Kathy Woehl
- Steven Wright

Tyler Arboretum's enormous rhododendrons impressed conventioners.

Bring your checkbook

Cutting Exchange and Auction in August; Plants for Members in September

Twice in this quarter there will be noteworthy plant-purchase opportunities for rhododendron lovers.

On Sunday, August 18, the annual District 8 Cutting Exchange and Plant Auction will be mounted. This year's venue is Jenkins Arboretum. Less than a month later, it's Plants for Members, the sale of rooted cuttings and graft propagations, Sunday, September 8, at Morris Arboretum.

The cutting exchange is an old-fashioned way to introduce cultivars into your garden, hands-on and ultra-cheapo. All attending the event are encouraged to donate cuttings (details below). When the (metaphorical) starter's pistol sounds, folks get to go through the cuttings, choosing cultivars to prepare for home rooting. The bags of cuttings are amazingly affordable: 25 cents. Really! Just 25 cents for a bag of five or so cuttings ready to be rooted.

But in recent years the bigger draw has been the plant auction. What will be on offer is unknowable, since the plants are donations. There will be plenty of rhododendrons and azaleas, many from the chapters' propagation enterprises, others donated by members. Plus, there are the non-rhodos that are donated, some of which can be super rare and oh so desirable. One year there was a Gray's lily (*Lilium grayi*), a truly rare, lovely native American species that Win Howe grew from seed. Another year, different trilliums were offered. If the stars are aligned, John Bartlett of Gettysburg Gardens and Steve Wheeler of State College will again travel great distances and bring some intriguing donations.

As has become tradition, the man with the gavel will be Karel Bernady. He has one request of plant donors: attach a succinct description to each donation. That way he can offer the bidding audience some details and, given Karel's auction skills, goose the bidding.

There's a good reason to push the bids to the next level(s): all proceeds are donated to the ARS Endowment Fund and the ARS Research Foundation.

The event begins at 1:30 (if donating cuttings, please arrive earlier). The auction is anticipated to get under way at

2:30. After the auction, Frank Brouse has been engaged to give a tutorial on the process of rooting cuttings.

Brown-bag lunching is most welcome. Beverages will be provided. After the auction, dessert will be served. All are encouraged to bring a contribution to the cookie-cake-and-pie table.

How to take cuttings

Use a separate plastic bag for each cultivar, clearly labeled. Cut four to six large-leaf (elepidote), small-leaf (lepidote) or evergreen azalea cuttings. Best to take cuttings early in the day, preferably the day of the event, though day-old refrigerated cuttings are fine. Ideally cut 5-inch long pieces of current year growth from the lower portions of the shrub and avoid the largest, overly robust shoots (they don't root as easily). If there has been a dry spell, water the plant the night before. Place cuttings in a plastic bag with a few drops of water. No unidentified cultivars, please! Please label the bags with a waterproof marker or pencil and add, if possible, information about characteristics or parentage. It being August, transporting the bags in a cooler is a good idea.

Plants for Members

For a devotee of the genus *Rhododendron*, this is The Event. Karel Bernady and his team of propagationists annually create new plants that simply cannot be found for sale at any commercial establishment. Karel trolls the eastern states every summer for the rarest and the choicest and the newest and almost-lost-heirloom varieties of elepidote and lepidote rhododendrons, even an occasional evergreen azalea. The prop crew spends hours taking the cuttings Karel has obtained and preparing them for a future life as a free-standing shrub.

And you don't need to raid the piggybank, because Plants for Members propagations are truly affordable: \$5 for rooted cuttings, \$12 for one-gallon size plants (grafts, older rooted cuttings, seedlings, tissue culture beings).

This sale will take place at the Sunday, September 8, chapter meeting at Morris Arboretum, starting at 1 p.m. Lists of available cultivars will be made available electronically later.

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Plants and Propagation: Karel Bernady & 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 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 mobile, with a banquet, plant sale and picnic at various sites. Latest meeting information may be found at www.GPChapterARS.org.

Dues are \$40 per year, for chapter and national membership and a subscription to the *Journal*. Contact the president or treasurer (see list at left) for a form or go to www.GPChapterARS.org; click on "Join us."

www.GPChapterARS.org

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.

July 26, Friday, 9 a.m. Propagation work day (potting grafts). Kristoph Nursery, central New Jersey. Please contact Karel Bernady for directions and details (484-888-8244 or bernadk@verizon.net).

August 18, Sunday, 1:30 p.m. District 8 Cutting Exchange and Auction. See article on Page 2.

August 24, Saturday, 9 a.m. Propagation work day (sticking cuttings to root) Kristoph Nursery, central New Jersey. Please contact Karel Bernady for directions and details (484-888-8244 or bernadk@verizon.net).

September 8, Sunday, 1 p.m. Chapter meeting, Plants for Members sale, Morris Arboretum. See article on Page 2.

September 27-29 ARS Fall Conference, Parksville, British Columbia, "Rhododendrons by the Seaside." More information: <http://marsrhodos.ca/ars2019/>

October 10, Sunday Chapter meeting with potluck brunch. Morris Arboretum.

October 17, Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Valley Forge Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum. Speaker: Ken LeRoy, "Thomas Meehan: Father of Philadelphia Parks."

November 10, Sunday Valley Forge Chapter Luncheon Banquet and Greater Philadelphia monthly meeting. St. David's Golf Club.

January 12, 2020, Sunday, 1:30 p.m. Chapter meeting, Morris Arboretum

We did it

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- for plant propagation; John Bartlett, companion plants for sale)
- ♦ Truss show winners: 2 (Bruce Feller of New York, Best Elepidote and Best Deciduous Azalea; Michael Martin Mills, Philadelphia, Best Evergreen Azalea and Best in Show)
 - ♦ Moment when it felt like Thanksgiving weekend: Opening night of the plant sale, Thursday night, when the pent-up buying frenzy was just like the start of Black Friday sales for Christmas. (But no blood was spilled.)
 - ♦ Plants sold in 3.5 days: 896
 - ♦ List (inevitably incomplete) of tasks accomplished by local volunteers: registration desk, plant sale setup, plant sale check-out, photo contest and truss show setup, flower arrangements, setup and execution at Jenkins, Helicopter museum drink ticket sales, silent auction setup and execution, bus captain for tours, arranging tour lunches (a different provider every day!), dealing with trash after tour lunches, packing and shipping of sold plants, goody bag stuffing, badge printing and assemblage, registration form design, finding speakers, finding writers for Journal articles.



Linda Derkach photo

Steve Henning (center) receiving the ARS Gold Medal from society President Ann Mangels and Journal Editor Glen Jamieson at the May convention's Saturday banquet.

Gold Medal for Henning

There were really only two big "unknowns" during the May convention, and both turned out to warrant many thumbs up. The first was the weather: in the rainiest time in Philadelphia since the Jurassic, it was just about perfect.

The second was who – if anyone – would be recognized by the ARS Honors Committee at the Saturday banquet. The convention host committee is expected to include an awards segment during the course of the evening, but it's always a major secret. (An exception to secrecy involves posthumous honorees such as this year's Pioneer Achievement Award recognizing Charles O. Dexter.)

A single Gold Medal was bestowed at the banquet, to Stephen M. Henning, co-chair of the convention and a long-time doer of great deeds for the ARS on the local (Valley Forge) and national levels.

Here is the text of the citation:

"You have immersed yourself fully in a wide variety of activities that support the American Rhododendron Society. These include maintaining Henning's Rhododendron and Azalea pages for over 20 years. This publication provides a wealth of educational material on almost every aspect of rhododendrons. You have written excellent articles and provided rhododendron photos for the ARS Journal. You launched on your personal website both the Rhododendron and Azalea Bookstore and later, the ARS Store, with all proceeds directed to the ARS. You also acted as the Registrar for the very successful 2018 joint spring convention between the ARS and the German Rhododendron Society. Most recently, you served as co-chair for the 2019 ARS Spring convention. For your outstanding contributions, the American Rhododendron Society is pleased to present the Gold Medal to Stephen M. Henning. May 18, 2019, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Barbara Bullock, the recently retired curator of the azalea collection at the National Arboretum, was also recognized, with an Award of Merit.

The votes are in

Hewing to its unofficial but consistent practice of peaceful, rancor-free electoral proceedings, the Greater Philadelphia Chapter took a few minutes at the June picnic and Annual Meeting to conduct the election for several officer positions with expiring terms. This year, all the incumbents were unanimously reelected to new terms.

They are Craig Conover, president; Ron Rabideau, vice president; and, as members of the Board of Directors, Karel Bernady, Kate Deregibus and Kimberly Kopple.

Did someone say “picnic”? On a late June day with the best weather in weeks, the chapter combined with the Valley Forge Chapter to feast and socialize at the Bryn Mawr home of Perc and Sally Moser, where the burgers were scrumptious – and the rhododendrons very numerous (Perc’s doing) and beautifully deadheaded (take a bow, Sally).

This is the second year that the chapters had a combined June picnic, and it felt so natural that there seems no point in doing otherwise in the future.

Perc Moser, picnic host, with a fraction of his seedlings.



Michael Mills Photo

More convention and picnic photos



At Winterthur
(above), the peonies
stood out.
Jenkins Arboretum
(right) had food
stations all over the
garden.



Don Hyatt Photos

Right: Erica Enos and Nan Ray of Northern California taking in a Longwood Gardens conservatory.

Below: Dee Denari with a special tree at Stoneleigh (and special sunglasses).

Below right: Ann Mangels and Barbara Bullock touring the garden of Perc and Sally Moser. Ann completed her term as the ARS's first woman president at the convention.



Don Hyatt photos



Michael Mills Photos

June picnic at the Moser home

Left: Joan Warren, Karel Bernady, Bob Smetana.

Above: Host Perc Moser at far left; Frank Brouse in foreground.