

RHODOGRAVURE

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER PHILADELPHIA CHAPTER, AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY :::::::::: SUMMER 2021

Five receive Bronze Medals

Honors were bestowed at the June picnic

Highlighting the June 20 picnic and Annual Meeting of the chapter was a quintuple Bronze Medal presentation. Kate Deregibus, Paul and Carolyn Beck, and Kim Kopple and Craig Conover were the honorees.

In the American Rhododendron Society, the Bronze Medal is a chapter's highest honor (Silver and Gold Medals are awarded on the national level). Three past Bronze Medal honorees – Karel Bernady, Maris Ogg and Michael Martin Mills – read the citations for the gathered members, and as ever, a look of surprise took over each recipient's face when the names were revealed.

Because of illness, Kate Deregibus was unable to attend the picnic, but with cellular connectivity, she was reached at home and heard the presentation in real time. Her plaque and medal were presented to her at home after she recovered.

As has become recent custom, the picnic was a joint affair with the Valley Forge Chapter, and took place at Fort Washington State Park, where a large, covered picnic pavilion allowed an open-air but shaded setting in the midst of the pandemic that just won't end. To avoid issues with shared food, the chapters treated members to boxed lunches, which many raved about.

The principal activity of the Annual Meeting is the election of officers and board members for positions whose terms have expired. All the Greater Philadelphia officers are in the middle of their two-year terms, but three board seats were filled after a unanimous vote of acclamation: Karel Bernady (incumbent), Stuart Brooks (incumbent) and Perc Moser.



Craig Conover and Kim Kopple, both past presidents of the chapter



“The Bronze Medal is awarded to Kim Kopple and Craig Conover for outstanding service. **Carolyn and Paul Beck (center and right), with Karel Bernady, who presented the award to them**

was in need. For many years, Kim has been a deft designer and vital member of the team that mounts the annual exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show. Craig has acquired materials and lent vehicles for transportation of plants, props, and more. Kim continues to be the point person for scheduling speakers. Their presidencies were calm and steady, with Craig ably handling increased duties when the 2019 national conference came to town. In their time in our chapter, their rhododendron collection has grown almost as much as our esteem for them.”

“The Bronze Medal is awarded to Kate Deregibus for exceptional service. As the Morris Arboretum staff liaison to our chapter, Kate Deregibus went well beyond the job description, becoming a friend and advocate for us through plant sales, scheduling, and much more. To have her on the chapter’s side made all the difference in the world. She now completes an invaluable ten-year stint as a member of the chapter’s board of directors. We both lament and celebrate her retirement after 27 years on staff at the arboretum, as she is now at liberty to redouble her talents as a potter and free to take the time to scale the Green Mountains of Vermont.”

“The Bronze Medal is awarded to Paul and Carolyn Beck for their abundant generosity. These Virginians have selflessly supported the chapter and the American Rhododendron Society at large. Paul designed a user-friendly online database and system for plant sales, donating it for use by our chapter and the 2019 ARS national conference. Carolyn prodigiously propagates evergreen azaleas and has donated many plants for the chapter’s Plants for Members sales. Her excellent photographs are a key component of the sales database, and her registration of many cultivars is a boon to the society and gardeners. Together they strengthen our and the gardening public’s love of the evergreen azalea segment of the genus Rhododendron.”

Attendees were encouraged to bring flowers and foliage from their garden to decorate the tables, and Richard Ziadie of the Princeton Chapter wowed many with his collection of elepidote trusses. He explained that his garden in west-central New Jersey is typically about two weeks behind Philadelphia gardens.

Following are the citations for the Bronze Medal recipients.

This presidential couple – she in 2014-17, he 2017-19 – have readily stepped up whenever the chapter

Get ready to buy uncommon rhodos

Cutting Exchange and Auction is in August,
Plants for Members sale in September

Barring late changes in current pandemic restrictions, rhododendron enthusiasts of our region have two boffo buying opportunities coming up.

After a year's hiatus, the District 8 Cutting Exchange and Plant Auction will take place at Jenkins Arboretum on Sunday, August 22. For those who wish to do some propagation on their own, there will be bags of fresh cuttings (dirt cheap, by the way) to take home and stick. The big event is an auction of plants donated by members and chapters, with Karel Bernady reprising his customary role of auctioneer. Although there will be plenty of rhododendrons and azaleas on offer – no doubt including some of Perc Moser's getting-to-size seedlings – other woodies and perennials are typically among the choices, oftentimes some wonderful and hard-to-find gems.

People donating cuttings or plants should arrive between 1:00 and 1:30 p.m. Cutting donors are asked to take cuttings early in the day, best from lower branches, with the plant watered the night before if rain has been scarce. No unidentified varieties, please. Place 3 to 6 cuttings in a sealable plastic bag with a few drops of water. Clearly label the bag and add information about color or parentage of rarities. Given that it's August, transporting them in a cooler is a good idea.

You may brown-bag a lunch and/or dessert for yourself. Bottled water will be provided.

Proceeds benefit the ARS Endowment Fund and Research Foundation.

Just four weeks later, on Sunday, September 19, the Plants for Members sale takes place at Morris Arboretum (Bloomfield Farm section). There will be numerous rooted cuttings, plus seed-grown deciduous azaleas and grown-on plants from the Greater Philadelphia propagation program.

The sale will be basically outdoors like last year, using a large garage bay at the arboretum's operations center. The sale begins at noon.

This is the best plant sale around if you want choice, rare rhododendron cultivars that you'll never find at a commercial outlet. Lists of available cultivars will be made available in mid-September.

Ron Rabideau joins national leadership team

During the electronic virtual meeting of the ARS Board of Directors at the time of the June national convention, Greater Philadelphia Chapter President Ron Rabideau was chosen to be Eastern vice president.

The ARS leadership structure includes a president, who serves a two-year term, and Eastern and Western vice presidents who serve overlapping four-year terms. When a president completes the two-year stint, the vice president completing a four-year term moves up to president. Thus this year, Ken Webb of British Columbia left office after two years as president, and Bill Meyers of Maryland moved up to the presidency. Ron was chosen to fill the vacancy for Eastern vice president. Barring the unforeseen, he will become national ARS president in 2025.

In memoriam

Joseph F. Minahan, 1937-2021

After an extended battle with cancer, Joe Minahan of Camp Hill, Pa., died on July 18. He was 84 years old and is survived by his wife, Winnie; five sons, Joseph, William, Michael, Frederick, and Daniel; and seven grandchildren.

Joe's ARS home was the Susquehanna Valley Chapter, but as an associate member of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter and reliable entrant in the annual truss show, he was well known in Philadelphia rhododendron circles, which is apt, since he grew up in Philadelphia.

One of the previous century's rhodo gurus, George Arrington of Bucks County, turned Joe into a hybridizer by telling him that if he wanted a really good red he should breed one himself. Did he ever: 'John Paul II' has become a popular red-red in these parts.

Not many people name rhododendrons for popes, but doing so was an apt reflection of Joe's deep faith. As mentioned at his funeral Mass, to engage in a religious conversation with Joe Minahan was like going up against a great theologian, who could quote saints and divines with ease. He recently registered 'Cause of Our Joy' and 'House of Gold', both names being ancient appellations for Mary, mother of Jesus.

The Minahan approach to hybridizing was methodical and patient. He actually made relatively few crosses, but he grew the seedlings for years to determine how

good a plant really was – shapeliness, foliage, hardiness, in addition to the quality of the flowers. (An essay on hybridizing for yellow rhododendrons was dictated by Joe to Perc Moser this summer and will be published in a future issue of the RhodoGravure.)

By the time of his death, Joe had registered 12 elepidotes and named a number of others, the registrations of which will be facilitated by Karel Bernady and Perc Moser.

Joe's career was with the U.S. Navy's supply depot in Mechanicsburg, where he was head of procurement. He took early retirement, which gave him almost 30 years to grow and assess his rhododendron crosses and to win a great number of ribbons and trophies from the truss shows of the Susquehanna Valley, Valley Forge and Greater Philadelphia Chapters. His trophy count is prodigious, including 46 from Greater Philadelphia, 18 of which were for his crosses in the Best New Hybrid class.



Karel Bernady photo

Pampering rhododendrons, Minahan style (2019)

In memoriam

Judy Allison, 1952-2021

She was born and died during peak rhododendron bloom time, May 18 and May 23, respectively – how appropriate for a granddaughter of Joseph B. Gable. Her death in spring was unexpected, from an aneurysm.

Of all Gable's grandchildren, Judy was the one most "into rhododendrons," and she brought her husband, Malcolm Boyd, into the club. When they married in 1973, she carried a Gable "first truss," the first time the seedling 'Cadis' X 'Kluis Sensation' bloomed. It was later registered as 'Judith Boyd' by her aunt, Caroline Gable, even though Judy never took Malcolm's surname.

Judy received a bachelor's degree in chemistry at the University of Delaware, which is where she met Malcolm. Her Ph.D. was from Caltech. In her 24 years at Rohm & Haas, she received two patents (one for improving PVC window frames, the other for a smoke suppressant for airplane interiors). After leaving Rohm & Haas, she pursued career development and coaching for scientists and technicians.

Judy and Malcolm were avid tandem cyclists, completing 56 trips of a week or more on their bicycle built for two. They even did a 300-mile trip.

For many years they lived in Medford Lakes, N.J., with a rhododendron collection that was challenged by the oh-so-rare problem of drainage that was "too good" due to the sandy soil. They moved to Sedona, Ariz., in retirement, fulfilling a dream from their Caltech days to live in the West again. They were members of the Pine Barrens Chapter, then the Greater Philadelphia Chapter.

In addition to Malcom, she is survived by her siblings, Bob (as in Gable's *R.* 'Robert Allison'), Jim ('James S. Allison') and Maryann Dubbs ('Maryann').

Fall conference is free

And entirely online; ergo, no travel expenses either

The national ARS Fall Conference will be an online event this year, Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 23-24. With the title "Fall Into Gardening," it is being presented by the three Vancouver Island organizations, the Mount Arrowsmith and Nanaimo ARS Chapters and the Vancouver Island Master Gardeners Association.

There will be four presentations each day, from noon to 4 p.m. Eastern time. Speakers include Germany's Hartwig Schepker on Sichuan, China; David Millais of the United Kingdom on conserving heritage rhododendrons; and California hybridizer Don Wallace on fragrant rhododendrons.

While it's free to any and all, registration is required. Go to <https://mailchi.mp/9151e79e2a98/fall-conference-2021> to register.

For more information on the scheduled speakers, visit https://www.rhododendron.org/Fall_2021_Conference.pdf.

These links may be shared with any gardening friends, not just ARS members.

The Flower Show, al fresco

Thanks to the pandemic, the PHS extravaganza was in FDR Park

It was a first on several levels: the first Philadelphia Flower show in June, the first outdoors, the first that was evacuated due to severe lightning, and the first during a modern pandemic. And the Greater Philadelphia Chapter was there in the midst of it, with a small but well-received exhibit, titled “Fairies Dancing in the Woods.”

The sloping tableau included deciduous azaleas (American species and hybrids among them), kalmia, blueberries, a lusciously fragrant sweet bay magnolia, and numerous perennials.

There’s no denying that it was a challenge for the Flower Show design and installation crew. For one thing, most rhododendrons bloom in May, and placing May bloomers in a chilled space for six weeks to attempt delayed flowering was out of the question. Thus, later-blooming deciduous azaleas were selected.

After years of exhibiting on the concrete floor of the Convention Center, it was something of a mind-bender to begin work by digging a small trench in FDR Park in South



Barbara Olejnik photos

The chapter’s display at the outdoor Philadelphia Flower Show



Installation crew at work (from left): Stuart Brooks, Michael Martin Mills, Maris Ogg, Linda Hartnett, Ron Rabideau

Philadelphia. That trench became the footer for the “stone” walls that were erected and then filled with mulch to give the design a bit of contour. The crew was more than a bit annoyed to learn just before setup that the site for the ARS exhibit had been moved from a partly shaded area to full sun. Some of the plants suffered as a result, and watering was a challenge. You’d think it would be less complicated than running

hoses inside the Convention Center, but FDR Park is definitely a low-spigot zone. Although there were enormous plastic tanks of water during setup, most were gone once the show opened, and they had no pumping capacity. Ron Rabideau brought a nifty device that uses an electric drill to move water through a hose, but it was closer to a trickle than what the plants really needed.

The exhibit included several small figurines of fairies tucked among the flora, and Linda Hartnett was taking bets as to how long before one or more would vanish. Amazingly, none took flight. Not so the Indian pinks (*Spigelia marilandica*). This attractive perennial drew a fair amount of attention (as far as the RhodoGravure was able to determine, no other exhibit included it), and four of the five specimens were pinched between the show's closing and takedown two days later.

The all-volunteer crew that designed, set up, and took down the exhibit included Linda Hartnett, Barbara Olejnik, Kim Kopple, Karel Bernady, Maris Ogg, Stuart Brooks, Perc Moser, Alan Kirkby, Bill Halberstadt, Ron Rabideau, Craig Conover, and Michael Martin Mills. Bob Smetana, Mary and Gary Ammon, and Mimi Favre, along with several of the design/setup crew, served as docents.

The big question now is whether this is the Flower Show's new home. Word from PHS is that a decision on using the Convention Center in 2022 will be made this autumn. It's logical to assume that a return to the Convention Center is therefore the goal. That's not surprising, for overall attendance was a fraction of that of the typical March indoor event.

Calendar

All listings should be considered tentative pending coronavirus developments. Members will be advised by email of changes and cancelations.

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.

August 22, Sunday, 2 p.m. District 8 Cutting Exchange and Plant Auction. Jenkins Arboretum. **See article on Page 3.**

September 19, Sunday, noon-4 p.m. Plants-for-Members sale of chapter-propagated plants. Morris Arboretum's Bloomfield Farm garage. **See article on Page 3.**

October 17, Sunday, 12:30-3:30 Chapter meeting and pot-luck brunch. Morris Arboretum's Bloomfield Farm office lounge. (Brunch is tentative depending on the state of the pandemic.)

October 23 & 24, Saturday & Sunday, noon-4 p.m. (EDT) ARS Virtual Fall Conference. Presented by three British Columbia chapters and clubs. Speakers include Don Hyatt, Hartwig Schepker of Germany, and David Millais of Britain. **FREE**, registration required via <https://mailchi.mp/9151e79e2a98/fall-conference-2021>. More information: https://www.rhododendron.org/Fall_2021_Conference.pdf. **See article on Page 5.**

Greater Philadelphia Chapter American Rhododendron Society

www.GPChapterARS.org

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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 quarterly Journal of the ARS, and fosters plant research and conservation. Its website, www.rhododendron.org, is a trove.

The Greater Philadelphia Chapter typically 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. Several events are held in conjunction with the Valley Forge Chapter of the ARS. 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 above) for a form or go to www.GPChapterARS.org; click on “Join us.”

Chapter Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting,
Greater Philadelphia Chapter, American Rhododendron Society
April 13, 2021

In attendance by video conference: Karel Bernady, Stuart Brooks, Kim Kopple, Michael Mills, Myo Myint, Ron Rabideau, Maris Ogg

Treasurer's report: Myo Myint reported that the chapter's account balance is in line with the figures from 12 months previous. [Editor's note: Details of the accounts are not published online. Members in good standing are welcome to contact the treasurer to obtain such information.]

Plant Sale: Karel Bernady has been coordinating with Austin and Mike from Tyler Arboretum. The sale will be in-person from 4/30 to 5/2. Friday April 30 (members only) hours are from 11AM until 7PM, Saturday 5/1 from 8AM until 2PM and Sunday 5/2 from 8AM until 2PM. Linda and Karel will travel to White's nursery this Friday to purchase azaleas, which they will deliver to Tyler on Saturday morning around 8AM. Karel will then travel to Steve's to pick up our own plants and drop them off later that morning at Tyler. Michael will assist. We will probably have about 100 plants, some from our inventory and some from Steve Kristoph's in addition to the 70 or so plants that we purchase from White's. We will probably offer about 45 elepidotes. Tyler will create labels with a bar code and Karel has already sent them pricing and plant information. They will affix labels to the plant pots. We will provide hang tags. Tyler is asking us to set up Wed April 28. Tyler will put plants in our sale area which we can then arrange. Karel will be at the sale on Friday (April 30) and Sunday. We need volunteers to assist. Karel will check with Tyler to find out if ARS members will be allowed to come to the "members only" portion of the sale.

Truss show: Michael Mills said that no decisions have been made on the truss show, but his recommendation is that we cancel the show. The risk of enticing the public into a relatively small indoor space to view our trusses is probably too high, even in May. The Board discussed this proposal and agreed that the show should not be held this year. Michael made a motion which was unanimously passed. We will inform the Valley Forge Chapter.

Picnic: Michael has reserved the largest pavilion at Fort Washington State Park for June 20. The capacity is 200 people with picnic tables so there will be more than adequate social distancing and also cover if the weather is questionable. The pavilion is reserved for the entire day and we will begin to assemble around 1PM. The chapter will provide a box lunch. Michael and Maris will research the options and give members a choice of sandwich. We will invite Valley Forge members and ask that the chapter share the cost. Members will be asked to bring plants that are in bloom so that we can share our gardens in part. The election will be held around 1:30. There will be a bronze medal Presentation. Karel will help Michael with citation writing.

2021 Elections: no officers terms expire this year. Three Board seats expire, Kate, Karel and Stuart. Karel and Stuart agreed to stand for re-election. The Board discussed possible new BOD members. We decided to invite both Janet Novak and Perc Moser to join our Board. Michael will talk with Janet and Karel will talk with Perc.

Flower show: There will be a meeting of the committee tomorrow, April 14. We have selected some plants from Natural Landscapes Nursery for the exhibit that should be blooming at the time of the show. The nursery can be flexible as we approach the date. Linda will be on vacation at end of April, so we may need to assume some of her responsibilities with PHS in that time window.

Cutting Exchange. Ron will talk with Jerry O'Dell about the cutting exchange in August. This is a district wide event. Valley Forge has historically taken the lead. One idea is to hold that event at the home of Rick Ray if he is amenable. For the past few years, the meeting was at Jenkins.

New Business. Our new liaison at Morris Arboretum, since Kate has retired, is Vince Marocco. Kim has tried to reserve our fall dates but has been unable to get a response from Vince.

Karel wants to get some dates for a work day to pot cuttings. He proposed Sat, May 8. That is tentatively on the calendar at 9AM at Kristoph's nursery.

Karel asked the Board to agree to supply plants for the sale at the national convention in Atlanta in 2023. They are looking for about 400 elepidotes. The Board agreed to participate. We will need to stick the cuttings in August.

– Maris Ogg; Michael Martin Mills, ed.