

# RHODOGRAVURE

NEWSLETTER OF THE DELAWARE VALLEY RHODODENDRON SOCIETY ..... AUTUMN 2023

## *The fall season on Channel DVRS*

A program meeting at Tyler Arboretum and a November banquet

Behold the first fall meetings of the Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society. In October, we gather at Tyler Arboretum for a presentation by Tyler's director of horticulture, and in November chapter members return to the St. Davids Golf Club in Wayne for the Annual Banquet.

The local chapters of the American Rhododendron Society have a long history with Tyler. John Wister, a key leader of the Philadelphia Chapter in its first years, was the founding director of Tyler as a public garden. ARS mini-confabs and joint Valley Forge-Greater Philadelphia truss shows have taken place at Tyler, and the local ARS propagation program helped repopulate the Tyler Wister Collection with rhododendrons it had lost over the years. Currently, an ARS-supported trial garden of the plants of local hybridizers is being developed at Tyler [see article on subsequent pages].

On Sunday, Oct. 15, Mike Karkowski, Tyler's director of horticulture, will entertain Delaware Valley members with an overview of Tyler, which has been evolving in recent years. Indeed, the meeting will take place in one of its newest attractions, the Edible Garden Building.

The meeting begins at 1:00 p.m. The building is a moderate stroll (on paved path) from the Tyler parking lot. We hope to have a golf cart available for the less-ambulatory.

Members of the test garden Task Force will be available to escort people to the garden site after the meeting.

Tyler Arboretum, 515 Painter Road, Media, Pa. 19063.

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The merged chapter's first Annual Banquet will take place Sunday, November 12. The site is the familiar St. Davids Golf Club in Wayne, Pa.

The program features Don Hyatt of McLean, Va. As many members know, Don is exceptionally knowledgeable about our favorite genus – and he is a witty entertainer, a wiz with projected images. Some of which will likely morph before your eyes. (The unavoidable question when the curtain rises on a Don Hyatt performance is whether Bubba will make an appearance.)

The luncheon event will also incorporate the hoary Greater Philadelphia plant exchange known as Rhododendron Roulette. Guests are asked to bring a plant for each reservation – rhododendrons and



Tyler's Edible Garden Building, site of the October 15 meeting. The cladding is terra cotta tiles. (Photo: Digsau architects.)

**Visit the DVRS website:**

<http://dvchapterars.org/>

azaleas are the norm but any non-invasive companion plant will do. Through the magic of a special algorithm, attendees will receive a plant to take home; there's no telling who will get what.

Arrive as early as 12:00 noon for beverages and cocktails (cash bar) during the gathering hour. The buffet luncheon will begin at 1:00. A reservation form has been sent to all members via email, and accompanies distribution of this issue of the RhodoGravure.

St. Davids Golf Club, 845 Radnor Street Road, Wayne, Pa. 19087.

## *An update on the trial garden at Tyler Arboretum*

Propagated cultivars are getting to size

**By Tom Ahern**

In March of 2020, Karel Bernady, Perc Moser and I met with Joe Minahan to rekindle an idea that had been talked about for years: setting up a rhododendron hybrid test garden at Tyler Arboretum. Sadly, just after that meeting, Joe was diagnosed with terminal cancer. At the time of Joe's funeral in July 2020, the three remaining of us determined that we would take the concept forward.

In August 2020, this Task Force met with Tyler's Executive Director, Mandy Santiago, the Director of Horticulture, Mike Karkowski, and Olivia Kirkpatrick, Curator of the Wister Rhododendron Collection. We then asked Michael Martin Mills to join our Task Force so that we could take advantage of his knowledge of rhododendrons. We were also keen on tapping his writing expertise and experience as North American rhododendron registrar. From that meeting a focus was agreed on: to provide an opportunity for eastern hybridizers to introduce, trial and display new rhododendron hybrids for the enjoyment of the general public. The scope included both lepidote and elepidote hybrids of current and past hybridizers living within 150 miles of the arboretum.

A process was then developed on how to choose the plants for the garden.

Once a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed, a ten-member selection committee was formed, and solicitation letters went out to hybridizers and interested parties, asking for plant nominations. The committee consisted of the four Task Force members and Ron Rabideau, then Greater Philadelphia ARS president; Steve Wright of Jenkins Arboretum; Carol Segree, Potomac Valley ARS president; Peter Zale of Longwood Gardens; and Mike Karkowski and Christian Stoltz of Tyler Arboretum.

While the plant selection process started to take shape, Tyler took up its responsibilities. Immediately after the MOU was signed, Tyler removed eight large trees from the designated garden area, creating light for the garden. Also, three applications of herbicide were applied to eradicate poison ivy, briars and other difficult weeds.

Steve Henning developed a software program to collect nominations for the garden. Approximately eighty plants were nominated by the entry deadline. Using photographs and a point system for desirable traits, the committee evaluated the nominees and chose 40 hybrids, along with six alternatives in case plants were unavailable or failed to root. I created a poster with plant photos and a listing of their hybridizers. It shows the diversity of the plants and who created them. There are still a few of these 24x36 posters available for purchase (see image on Page 5).

Six cuttings of each chosen plant were taken from August through November 2022. A big thank you to Karel Bernady and his crew for coordinating the taking of the cuttings and sticking them. A high percentage wintered over and rooted nicely at the Steven Kristoph Nursery and put out healthy new growth in the 2023 growing season.



Year-old propagations for the test garden.  
(Photos: Task Force)

The MOU that was signed also determined how the expenses of the garden would be split between the Task Force and Tyler. Each would pay half of the initial start-up costs and then an annual fee to be determined by the expense of a part-time intern to perform maintenance. Tree removal alone cost \$18,000. Thanks to the generous startup donations of the Greater Philadelphia, Valley Forge and Lehigh Valley Chapters, along with



From left: Tyler  
volunteers Tom  
Renke, Brian Layton;  
project coordinator  
Christian Stoltz; Karel  
Bernady, Perc Moser;  
Horticulture Director  
Mike Karkowski;  
Michael Martin Mills;  
Executive Director  
Mike Skuja; Tom  
Ahern.

individual donations, we were able to pay our \$9,000 share. Another payment of \$4,000 was made this spring. Tyler will continue to prepare the garden and complete the landscape process until the plants are ready to go into the garden.

Since the Task Force is responsible for 50 percent of the ongoing costs of developing and maintaining the garden, we would value your support. Here are instructions on how to donate, either for the first time or again:

Checks should be made out to American Rhododendron Society, with “Tyler Garden” written in the memo space. They can be given to any Task Force member or sent to Perc Moser, 301 Caversham Road, Bryn Mar, PA 19010. Donations can also be made via PayPal and as stock donations; for details, contact Perc Moser at [percmoser@gmail.com](mailto:percmoser@gmail.com). All donations fall under the ARS’s 501c3 status and are tax deductible.

The Task Force thanks ARS chapters, foundations, and individual members for their very generous contributions. They will ensure the financial success of our project. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Karel, Perc, Michael, or Tom.

## *In memoriam*

Alice K. Horton, 1947-2023

Alice Horton, longtime Valley Forge ARS member and founding board member of the Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society, died August 14 after a heart attack. She and her husband, Robert, were recipients of the Valley Forge Chapter’s Bronze Medal in 2019. The native of Philadelphia was an avid gardener and was known for her gardens, and worked the horticulture section of the Goshen Country Fair for several years. She was a volunteer with the Goshen Fire Company, participating in the EMS Division, and was president of the Goshen Fire Company Auxiliary. Alice is survived by her husband, Robert, also a longtime ARS member, sons Robert and Allen, and five grandchildren. Services were in August.

Nancy H. Greenwood, 1941-2023

Nancy H. Greenwood, of Wayne, Pa., died peacefully in her sleep on April 21. A native of Bethel Park, Pa., she was an alumna of Bucknell University and became a teacher. She was a lifelong gardener and lover of plants and flowers, and she volunteered over many years with the Philadelphia Flower Show, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and Jenkins Arboretum. As a member of the Valley Forge Chapter, she served as vice president and



program chair and was a recipient of the Bronze Medal in 1997. The citation accompanying that award noted her “energy, time, vast horticultural knowledge, and organizational talent” and characterized her as “an ambassador for the genus Rhododendron.” Nancy was the widow of Robert F. Greenwood and is survived by their children Tom, Dan and Julie, as seven grandchildren.

## *Calendar*

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

**October 15, Sunday, 1 p.m.** Chapter meeting. Tyler Arboretum. See article on Page 1.

**November 12, Sunday** Annual Banquet, St. Davids Country Club. Cocktails and conversation at 12:00 noon, luncheon at 1:00. **See article on Page 1.**

**November 21, Tuesday, 7 p.m.** Board of Directors meeting, Jenkins Arboretum.

**January 28, 2024, Sunday, 1 p.m.** Chapter meeting. Jenkins Arboretum.

**February 18, Sunday, 1 p.m.** Chapter meeting. Uwchlan Meeting House, Lionville, Pa.

**March 17, Sunday, 1 p.m.** Chapter meeting. Tyler Arboretum.

**April 28-30** District 9 mini-conference, Annapolis, Md. Info: <http://dvchapterars.org/files/2024Dist9Flyer.pdf>

**May 2-5** ARS National Conference, Bellingham, Wash.

## Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society A chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

[DVChapterARS.org](http://DVChapterARS.org)

### Officers

President: Karel F. Bernady (2023-24), 610-827-0113; bernadk @ verizon.net  
Vice President: Jerry O’Dell (2023-24), 610-608-2018; westdell @ verizon.net  
Treasurer: Bob Smetana (2023-24), 610-996-0661, vfarssmetana @ yahoo.com  
Secretary: Kim Kopple (2023-24), kopple.kim @ gmail.com

### Directors

Terms expiring 2024: Craig Conover, Darlene Henning, Steve Henning, Maris Ogg, Steve Wright  
Terms expiring 2025: Stuart Brooks, Bill Halberstadt, Linda Hartnett, Perc Moser  
Terms expiring 2026: Michael Martin Mills, Ron Rabideau, Kathy Woehl

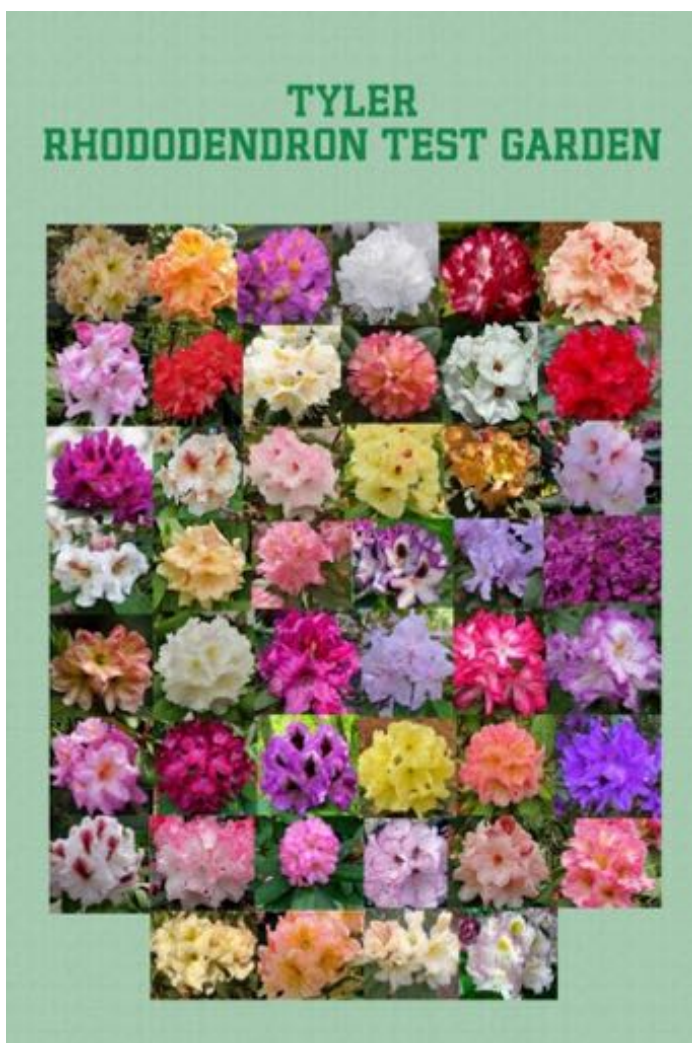
### Committees

Finance: Bob Smetana, chair  
Plant Propagation and Sales: Karel F. Bernady, chair  
Membership: Maris Ogg and Steve Wright, co-chairs  
Program: Jerry O’Dell, chair  
Communications: Michael Martin Mills, chair

Mailing address: 14 Northwoods Road, Radnor, Pa. 19087

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](http://www.rhododendron.org), is a trove.

The Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society is the result of the recent merger of the Greater Philadelphia and Valley Forge Chapters of the ARS, and serves rhododendron and azalea enthusiasts in Philadelphia, Southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey and Delaware. The group typically gathers monthly (except July and December) for program meetings, summer picnic, autumn banquet and multiple plant sales. Activities are at various locations, mostly on Sunday afternoons. Dues are \$40 per year, for combined chapter and national membership and a subscription to the Journal. Contact the president or treasurer (see above) for a form or go to [DVChapterARS.org](http://DVChapterARS.org); in the Table of Contents, click on “Join.”



This handsome poster, created by Tom Ahern, is being sold to support the expenses of the Hybridizer Test Garden at Tyler Arboretum. It shows the cultivars chosen by the Selection Committee to be propagated and planted in the garden. The size is 24 by 36 inches, and it is being offered at \$60. Limited availability! Contact Tom at [tcahern@ptd.net](mailto:tcahern@ptd.net).