

RHODOGRAVURE

NEWSLETTER OF THE DELAWARE VALLEY RHODODENDRON SOCIETY :::::::::: AUTUMN 2024

A touch of voyeurism at the banquet

Nicole Juday introduces her book 'Private Gardens of Philadelphia'

The last time the national ARS held its annual convention in the Philadelphia area, many of the visiting rhododendron devotees were bowled over by not one, not two, but many fabulous public gardens – Chanticleer, Morris, Winterthur, Longwood, Jenkins, and more. Yep, we have a plenitude.

Public indeed (though rarely free). But, oh, their counterpoint: stunning, sumptuous private gardens, in both suburbs and city. And indeed private.

Attend the Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society's annual banquet, and you can take a look into some of those marvelous private domains. The speaker will be Nicole Juday, author of the freshly published *Private Gardens of Philadelphia*, which features the exquisite photography of the premier garden cameraman of our area, Rob Cardillo.

Nicole, who has been a speaker at previous chapter meetings, continues a distinguished career focused on horticulture, with previous stints at the Barnes Foundation Arboretum, historic Wyck in Germantown, and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. She and Rob are now a very privileged duo, having had extensive access to a score of edens.

Our chapter is excited to present Nicole Juday as the November 17 luncheon banquet speaker to give us some of her insider's knowledge of these special spaces. One of her deft insights, from the book's introduction, is that "the need to work with or against limiting factors, whether it's terrible soil, difficult terrain, or a tight budget, is often the starting point for the most interesting gardens." You may never be invited to a party at these most interesting gardens – so be sure to come to the banquet instead.

Copies of *Private Gardens of Philadelphia* will be available for purchase (\$60) and signing by the author. Payment may be by cash, check, Venmo, or Zelle.



Nicole Juday, Philadelphia gardenologist of note and fine gardener, returns for an encore presentation to the chapter.

The event will conclude with the fun plant exchange known in the chapter as Rhododendron Roulette. Each attendee is asked to bring a plant, not necessarily from our beloved genus, for the exchange. By means of an arcane algorithm, folks will go home with another plant, plus a rooted cutting from the chapter's propagation program.



The venue is again the St. Davids Golf Club in Wayne, Pa. Arrive at noon for an hour of mingling (cash bar), followed by a fine buffet at 1:00 p.m. Accompanying this issue of the RhodoGravure is a reservation form. The deadline for the chapter to receive reservations is November 12.

LEFT: An unnamed, pre-1952 Mollis deciduous azalea in the Swarthmore garden of Charles Cresson – one of the gardens featured in 'Private Gardens of Philadelphia.'

M. Mills photo

This has been more than just a dry spell

Assorted thoughts on the recent weather, with a salute to ironclads

Philadelphia just set a record that can't be broken. October 2024 was the driest month in Philadelphia recorded meteorological history – no measurable rain. None, zip, zero, nada, nil. (The only way to beat such a record is if climate change goes turbo and results in negative rain. You know, when lots of drops come out of the ground and go straight up into the atmosphere. Just saying.)

The current issue of Journal ARS has two very informative articles on dealing with rhododendrons struggling in atypical dryness, coming from the extremes of the continent, Cape Cod and Vancouver Island.

CJ Patterson of the Massachusetts Chapter has a wealth of information, with observations going back to a wickedly dry year, 1997. Linda Derkach, national ARS president, lives on the eastern side of Vancouver Island, where she and her garden endured the deadly Pacific Northwest heat dome of 2021. Her Journal article has a succinct list of steps to take to help a rhododendron collection get through extreme dryness and heat. Both articles cite species and hybrids with better track records.

It turns out that many of the cultivars they cite are among the so-called "ironclads" and/or have species native to Eastern North America in their parentage. Indeed, ironclads for the most part are hybrids of *R. maximum*, *catawbiense* or *carolinianum*. In a serendipitous bit of timing, the chapter's October meeting featured Steven Kristoph, nurseryman and college instructor from central New Jersey, whose topic was ironclads. These hybrids were first described in the nineteen-teens, with lists from E. H. Wilson and Cornell's Ralph Curtis. The point was to identify rhododendrons that would survive the winters of the northeastern United States, given that so many cultivars from

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<http://dvchapterars.org>

England died or were grimly set back when America's deep freeze winters locked in. (For more details and to see lists, go to [Ironclad info.](#))

Here are some other takeaways from the Journal articles and Steve's presentation:

- Older cultivars that have stood the test of time are likely to be better at standing the test of the future. Keep in mind that our summers can be like ovens now.
- A surprising number of almost-local hybrids make the drought tolerance cut – cultivars bred by Joseph Gable of York County, Pa.
- Yellows and oranges may be doomed. It took forever to breed some winter-hardy ones, and it turns out they are real wimps in hot dry spells.
- Truly appropriate planting conditions are more important than ever. Drainage, drainage, drainage plus lots of organic content. The way the weather is going, if you plant a rhododendron in a marginal site don't be surprised by marginal results. And if you don't mulch – not for weed prevention but to minimize drying of the soil – you're a nincompoop.
- Whoever heard of 'Lady Grey Egerton'? This lilac-tinged white is an English hybrid by Waterer, pre-1890, cited by CJ Patterson in her Journal article as the "most drought-tolerant ironclad I know of." It may be an English cross, but the key parent is the American native *R. catawbiense*. Even Joe Gable extolled its performance in dry spells.

In memoriam

Howard R. Kline, 1926-2024

One of the longest members of Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society and its antecedent Valley Forge Chapter, Howard R. Kline, died on September 10, 2024, in Wernersville, Pa. He was 98 and had been an ARS member for 52 years.

People in the chapter who interacted with Howard remember him as a rhododendron grower par excellence and perhaps the most gentlemanly member in our midst. He was born in Philadelphia, spent childhood on a Berks County farm, and graduated from Reading High School and Temple University. As a CPA, he working in both Philadelphia and Reading. For more than 50 years, he lived on a 12-acre plot in Penn Township, where he and his wife, Catherine, raised five children – and planted hundreds of rhododendrons and other garden beauties. He generously shared plants and knowledge, was a frequent truss show judge, and received the Valley Forge Chapter Bronze Medal in 1991.

Howard was one of our home hybridizers, particularly of deciduous azaleas. Two of his elepidotes were named and registered: 'Catherine Josephine', named for his wife but now believed to be extinct, and 'Philadelphia'. The latter is *R. fortunei* 'Lu Shan' x *R. fortunei*, a cross made c. 2001, named with his permission by Michael Martin Mills and registered in 2023. The Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society has begun propagating 'Philadelphia' and more plants will be available in the coming years.

Howard Kline is survived four children, nine grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. Services were private.

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A RhodoGravure profile of Howard Kline may be found at [Spring 2017 RhodoGravure](#).

In 2007, Dennis MacMullan registered 'Howard Kline', an elepidote described as having a peach-colored presentation. The RhodoGravure has been unable to ascertain if it is being grown in the area (or anywhere); if anyone is aware of a living specimen, please alert the chapter leadership.

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.

A note on meeting times: With the exception of the Annual Banquet, the time of all regular Sunday afternoon meetings: Gather as early as 1:30 p.m. for coffee and conversation; the program will begin at 2:00 p.m.

November 17, Sunday Annual Banquet luncheon. **See article on Page 1.** 12:00 noon (with cash bar), buffet and program beginning at 1:00. St. Davids Golf Club, 845 Radnor Street Rd., Wayne, Pa. 19087. Deadline for receipt of reservation: November 12. Reservation form accompanies this issue of the RhodoGravure.

November 19, Tuesday Board of Directors meeting. Jenkins Arboretum, 7 p.m.

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

January 26, 2025, Sunday Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum, 1:30, program (to be announced) at 2:00.

February 16, 2025, Sunday *TENTATIVE* Chapter meeting, Uwchlan Meeting House, 1:30, program at 2:00.

March 18, 2025, Tuesday Board of Directors meeting. Jenkins Arboretum, 7 p.m.

May 7-9, 2025 Azalea Society of America national convention. Desmond Hotel, Malvern, Pa. More info: [Azalea convention](#).

May 10, Saturday Cut-flower competition (truss show), Jenkins Arboretum.

June 5-8, 2025 ARS national convention, Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society

A chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

DVChapterARS.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 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; in the Table of Contents, click on "Join."