

RHODOGRAVURE

NEWSLETTER OF THE DELAWARE VALLEY RHODODENDRON SOCIETY ::::::::::: SPRING 2026

Most wonderful time of the year So bloomin' much to do!

It's usually mid-April when the ultimate rhododendron enthusiasts turn their thoughts to quitting their jobs and sending any leftover kids to boarding school, both immediately. Otherwise, there just isn't enough time to do it all, rhodo-wise. Heck, in the Philadelphia area it would take many days to check out the rhododendrons and azaleas at all the majestic public gardens and the to-die-for private gardens of our friends. But just speaking chapter-wise . . .

The Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society again has the capacity and audacity to mount two plant sales in conjunction with local arboretums.

First up is the sale at Jenkins Arboretum the last weekend of April. Garden-size rhododendrons propagated by the chapter are a hallmark of the sale, with varieties that no garden center will be offering. There will also be alluring azaleas and the distinctive Jenkins inventory of native wildflowers and shrubs. The sale is open to the public Friday, Saturday and Sunday, April 24-26, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The preview party, Thursday, April 23, is a fundraiser with open bar; go to [Jenkins Sale Party](#) for details or call Jenkins, 610-647-8870.

A mere week later, DVRS does a reprise at Tyler Arboretum: remarkable and hard-to-find rhododendrons (chapter grown), plus choice azaleas, in the midst of the rather sophisticated shrubs-perennials-annuals sale that Tyler mounts. Open to the public Saturday and Sunday, May 2-3, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. On Friday May 1, only Tyler members may shop; go to [Tyler Members Day](#) for details on how to join and shop on Friday with reserved timed tickets.

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In a change from past years, the chapter's annual Cut-Flower Competition (the truss show) is the first Saturday in May instead of Mothers Day weekend. This change is not about avoiding mothers; rather, the past few years have amply demonstrated that our favorite genus is blooming earlier. The shows in 2024 and 2025 had scanty numbers of evergreen azalea entries, simply because most azaleas were already bloomed out.

The show is Saturday, May 2, at Jenkins Arboretum. The deadline for entries is 9:30 a.m. (come as early as 8:00). The show will be open to the public around 12:30 p.m. Competition in the show is open

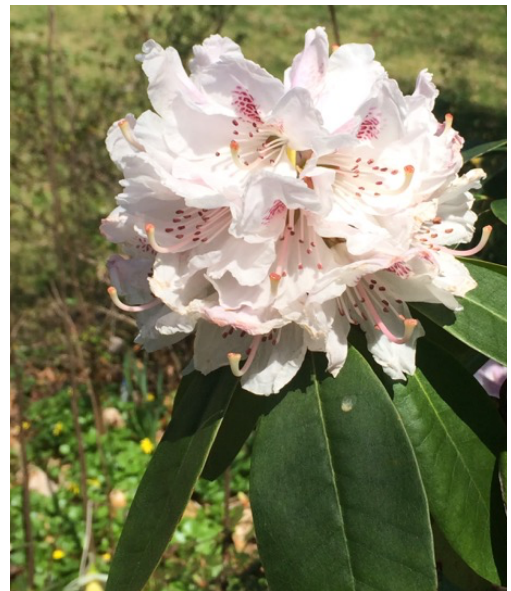


Photo by Michael Martin Mills

'Bosutch' is a reliable early April cultivar. It's a Joe Gable hybrid ('Boule de Neige' X *R. sutchuenense*) from 1933.

to anyone, not just ARS members – encourage your neighbor to cut some of her trusses and get tips from you.

The brochure with rules and the catalogue of previous entries (for help in completing entry tags) are on the chapter’s website at <http://dvchapterars.org/files/2026ShowBrochure.pdf> and <http://dvchapterars.org/files/2026ShowCatalog.pdf>.

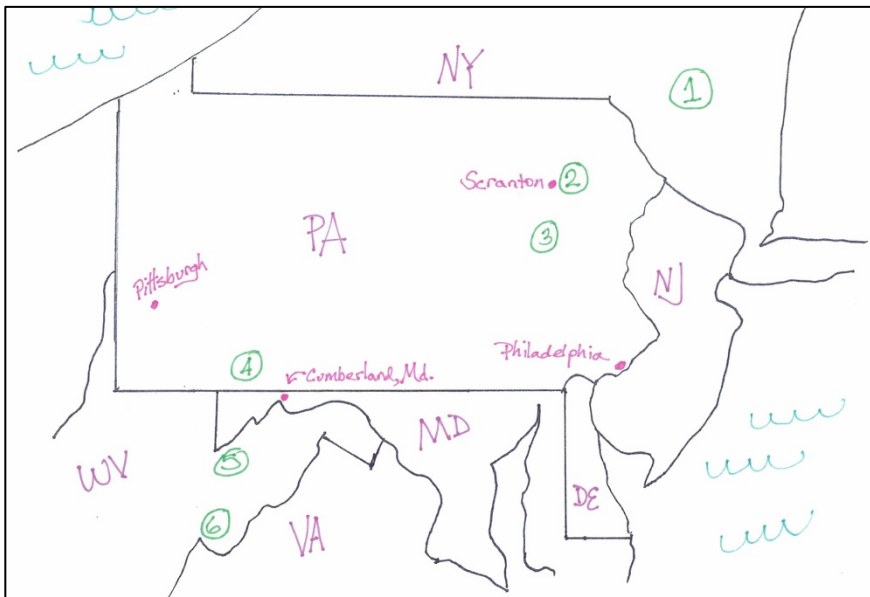
The entry tags have been redesigned (the chapter had only a handful of the old ones remaining); participants who (wisely) prepare their entry tags the night before at home should contact show Chairman Michael Martin Mills (mmm19119@gmail.com or 215-527-7145) so he can mail blank tags to you, or answer questions. Tip to all: it’s faster (and more legible) if you use return-address labels instead of writing in your name and address.

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Put away the flipflops and spike heels, because there’s a nifty nature hike on Saturday, May 9, at French Creek State Park, which straddles Berks and Chester Counties near Elverson, Pa. The quest is pinxterbloom (*Rhododendron periclymnoides*) and terrestrial wild orchids blooming together. ARS members will be led by one of the park’s experts on the local flora. Hikers should arrive at the park by 9:00 a.m. Other details have not been settled with the park but will be emailed to members as soon as things are set.

Petal peeping trip tips

Swaths and stands of wild native azaleas, not so far away



Karel Bernady, speaker at the chapter’s March meeting, showed fine images of native azaleas in bloom in the wild, at several sites within reasonable driving distance from Philadelphia (a half day or less). Here is a recap with the sites and target times for blossoming.

Finding these places for the first time can be challenging – they are just little dots in the near-wilderness, after all. Some are Nature Conservancy properties, others in state or federal forest preserves, and the websites and online maps take differing approaches to providing directions.

1. Giant ledge.
2. Eales Preserve.
3. Thomas Darling Preserve.
4. Mount Davis.
5. Dolly Sods Wilderness.
6. Spruce Knob.

The crude map here is basically for general orientation; numbers 1 through 6 refer to the sites mentioned below. Consult the

websites for specifics and feel free to contact Karel, who knows the geography of each quite well.

1. Giant Ledge, Catskill Mountains, Ulster County, New York (elevation 3,140 feet). *R. prinophyllum* (early azalea), prime bloom: early June. www.scenicHUDSON.org/explore-the-valley/outdoor-adventures/adventure/giant-ledge

2. Eales Preserve, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania (elevation 1,570 feet). *R. periclymenoides* (pinxterbloom, formerly *R. nudiflorum*), prime bloom: mid to late May. www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/dick-and-nancy-eales-preserve-at-moosic-mount (Route 247; roughly 10 miles east of Scranton).

3. Thomas Darling Preserve, Pocono Mountains, Monroe County, Pennsylvania (elevation 1,680 feet). *R. canadense* (rhodora) and *R. prinophyllum* (early azalea), prime bloom for both: mid to late May. www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/thomas-darling-preserve-at-two-mile-run (about 3 miles from Exit 284 of Interstate 80).

4. Mount Davis, Somerset County, Pennsylvania (elevation 3,213 feet). *R. prinophyllum* (early azalea), prime bloom: mid to late May. *R. arborescens* (smooth azalea), prime bloom: mid to late June. <https://elibrary.dcnr.pa.gov/GetDocument?docId=3695120&DocName=FD04%20Mount%20Davis%20NA%20factsheet.pdf>. (Look for the large pink-flowered specimen in the picnic area; it has been named and registered as 'Karel Bernady'.)

5. Dolly Sods Wilderness, Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia (elevation 3,945 feet). *R. prinophyllum* (early azalea), prime bloom: early June. www.fs.usda.gov/r09/monongahela/recreation/dolly-sods-wilderness (go to picnic area; trail between Red Creek campground and Bear Rocks preserve recommended).

6. Spruce Knob, Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia (elevation 4,861 feet). *R. prinophyllum* (early azalea) and *R. calendulaceum* (flame azalea), prime bloom for both: early June. www.fs.usda.gov/r09/monongahela/recreation/spruce-knob-and-spruce-knob-observation-tower (Route 28, near Circleville, WV. Flame azalea is sparse; most likely along Saw Mill Run Road).

(Farther away is Whitetop Mountain in far western Virginia, about a seven-hour drive from Philadelphia. There will a group outing organized by Don Hyatt and Carol Segree in late June to see *R. calendulaceum* in bloom. More information and contacts are on Page 7 of the [Winter 2026 RhodoGravure](#).)

In memoriam

Anne Howe, 1931-2026

One of the true stalwarts of our chapter, Anne Howe, died March 29, two weeks short of her 95th birthday.

She and her late husband, Win Howe, were indispensable members of the Valley Forge Chapter. For many years Anne was the tabulator at the annual District 8 auction and cutting exchange and cashier as well, a role she continued after the chapter merger and creation of the Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society. It was through Anne that the February meeting at the Uwchlan Meeting House became a special annual event, and her contributions to the groaning board were not to be missed.

Anne Alicia Martin was born in New Haven Conn., the oldest of six siblings. She received a bachelor's degree in teaching from what is today Southern Connecticut State University, and she taught in Connecticut and as a substitute elementary teacher in Lower Merion School District.

Anne and Win were married for six decades until his death in 2016, and she is survived by daughter Rebecca Howe and son Martin Howe, who escorted Anne to chapter activities in recent years.



Anne Howe in 2025

An informal celebration of Anne's life will take place on Saturday, June 13, 2026, 12 noon-4 p.m. at the Uwchlan Meeting House, 5 N. Village Avenue, Lionville, Pa.

Chapter elections

At the Annual Meeting and Picnic of the Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society in June, the following positions will be filled by the customary membership election: vice president, treasurer and secretary for a two-year terms, and three members of the Board of Directors, for three-year terms. The winners will take office August 1.

Any member in good standing is eligible. If you would like to recommend a member, or yourself, please submit name(s) to chapter secretary Kim Kopple (kopple.kim@gmail.com) no later than May 17. At its May meeting, the board will form a recommended slate. Nominations from the floor may also be made at the Annual Meeting.

Two of our digitally adept members

Those who don't read the Yahoo rhododendron discussion forum may be unaware of the extent of the hybridization activities of Ron Rabideau. Last summer he provided the chapter's propagation team with cuttings of some of his beauties, and presuming rooting and/or grafting were successful, they will be available at future chapter sales. He has prepared a digital album of them to whet your appetite. Go to [Rabideau hybrids](#). Click on an image for identification.

Another local ARS member who plays with pollen is Tom Ahern. In addition to creating new hybrids, he creates exquisite bird carvings. Annually, he has a nifty show of the carvings in his rhododendron garden outside Bethlehem, Pa., this year on May 16 and 17, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. The address is 1360 Puggy Lane, Fountain Hill, Pa. 18015. Go here to watch Tom's three-part YouTube video on his carving art: [Ahern's birds](#). Give yourself plenty of time!

Brrr, baby, brrr

The recent winter certainly seemed cold. That is, in comparison to several winters preceding it. The RhodoGravure offers this commentary from the first year of the Eisenhower presidency to send shivers down your Zone 7 back.

A letter from Joseph Gable to John Creech, National Arboretum, January 1, 1954

But this I know. If we ever get back to our normal winter climate again in the eastern U.S. the present great fringe area where thousands and millions of these plants are being grown now for some 8-10 years it is going to be practically wiped out and a lot of varieties and species will disappear from the more favored sections too. And the so-called "hardy" Gable azaleas will get a black eye too – perhaps both eyes. We have had several periods of mild winters in my azalea growing experience with a corresponding buildup in the number of varieties and amount of plant material which we lost when a hard winter came but never such a long continued series of mild ones as this.

We used to cut ice for summer use and store it every winter. We thought it had to be six inches thick to be of any use. Until we got our electric refrigerator I never knew a winter when we did not get plenty of it and once cut ice two feet thick – too d - - n thick for the guy who has to do it! Now I do not think we have had six-inch ice on our pond in ten years or more. I have no record and may be wrong but it has been a long time. Could it be that we will never see twenty below again? Around zero and that only for a night or two has been all we have gotten lately. Once we had about a week when the temperature staid below the whole time or nearly so. I do know that it was seven below at noon one day when a neighbor came and asked me to help dig a grave in 28 inches of frozen soil where it was bare. There was two, four feet of snow among my plants.

Well let's hope those extremes of around twenty below are no more anyhow.

– Transcribed by Donald Hyatt



DVRS at the Philadelphia Flower Show

A relatively new thing at the Flower Show is a combo exhibit comprising information and plants from several plant societies. This year, our chapter joined the group with the display at left.

Leslie Morris-Smith, DVRS board member, is the overall organizer of the joint exhibit, and Ron Rabideau was the key person for forcing the plants into March bloom.

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.

April 21-25 ARS Convention, Vancouver Island, Canada. “Rhododendrons and Companions in a Changing Climate.” <https://marsrhodos.ca/2026-ars-convention>

April 24-26 Chapter plant sale, Jenkins Arboretum. See article on Page 1.

May 2-3 Chapter plant sale, Tyler Arboretum. See article on Page 1.

May 2, Saturday Cut-flower competition (truss show), Jenkins Arboretum. Deadline for entries: 9:30 a.m. To receive entry tags for advance completion, contact show chair Michael Martin Mills (mmm19119@gmail.com, 215-844-6253). See article on Page 1.

May 19, Tuesday Board of Directors meeting. Via Zoom, 7 p.m.

June 28 Annual Meeting and Picnic, location to be determined

Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society

A chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

DVChapterARS.org

Officers

President: Stuart Brooks (2025-27), 609-268-7007, sabnj100 @ gmail.com

Vice President: Perc Moser (2024-26), 610-635-8290, percmoser @ gmail.com

Treasurer: Bob Smetana (2024-26), 610-996-0661, vfarssmetana @ yahoo.com

Secretary: Kim Kopple (2024-26), kopple.kim @ gmail.com

Directors

Terms expiring 2026: Michael Martin Mills, Ron Rabideau, Kathy Woehl

Terms expiring 2027: Mimi Favre, Maris Ogg, John Weygandt

Terms expiring 2028: Bill Halberstadt, Linda Hartnett, Leslie Morris-Smith

Committees

Finance: Bob Smetana, chair

Plant Propagation and Sales: Karel F. Bernady, chair

Membership: Maris Ogg and Steve Wright, co-chairs

Communications: Michael Martin Mills, chair; 215-844-6253, mmm19119 @ gmail.com

Website: Steve Henning; rhodyman @ earthlink.net

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, 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.”