

14 Northwoods Road, Radnor, PA 19087

Chapter's Website: [www.ValleyForgeARS.org](http://www.ValleyForgeARS.org)

## NEWSLETTER

August / September 2020

Unless specified otherwise, meetings are at Jenkins Arboretum in Devon

### *Calendar at a Glance*

- August 16 (Sun.)      **District 8 Cuttings Exchange and Auction *CANCELED***  
Sept. 13 (Sun.)      **GP ARS Plants for Members Sale, Morris Arboretum or another venue**  
Sept. 25-27          **ARS 2020 Fall Conference in Gettysburg, PA *CANCELED***

### *President's Message*

I hope everyone continues to do well during the Covid-19 pandemic and I want to begin this message on a positive note. Even during difficult times Rhododendron enthusiasts always come through and show their true "Rhododendron colors" because the GP & VF ARS 2020 Photo Album was a huge success. We received a total of 229 photos of stunning Rhododendrons in all their glory. I'm sure everyone had as much fun as I had logging in each evening to see what new plant or beautiful truss was posted on the website. It was the perfect virtual garden tour where everyone could view beautiful Rhododendrons during the peak bloom season. And speaking for all the Chapter Members, I would like to extend a big thank you to Steve Henning for setting up this very successful photo display on the Drop Event website. It was the perfect format for this period of social-distancing. **Thanks Steve!!!**

Our annual picnic in June is the occasion we use to elect/reelect Chapter officers and directors. Since we were unable to meet this year, we also took the virtual path to hold this year's election. And again, the Chapter Members came through with sufficient Yes votes to retain the existing Officers and Board. Alice Horton will stay on as Vice President and Bob Smetana and Joan Warren

will remain Treasurer and Secretary respectively. Bob Horton, Perc Moser, Darlene Henning, Kathy Woehl and Steve Wright remain as Directors and I will continue to serve as President. In addition, Erin Van Yahres has been elected as a Board member. Thanks to all of you for serving on the Board.

Unfortunately we must cancel yet another Chapter event, our Aug 16<sup>th</sup> District 8 Cutting Exchange and Plant Auction. We looked at organizing it as an outside event on the deck at Jenkins Arboretum but, in the end, the Covid-19 threats would still be there and we decided not to take the risk.

However, for those who might be interested, Steve set up a virtual Cutting Exchange (see page 2).

I look forward to continue working with all of the Chapter members as we continue to "encourage interest in and disseminate knowledge about Rhododendrons and Azaleas." And to repeat what I said in our last newsletter, I'm really looking forward to when we once again meet together in one location as the Valley Forge Chapter ARS.

Please stay safe.

*Sincerely,*

Jerry O'Dell, (610) 608-2018,

[westdell@verizon.net](mailto:westdell@verizon.net)

VF ARS website: [www.ValleyForgeARS.org](http://www.ValleyForgeARS.org)

# **The District 8 CutX & Auction is CANCELED; The ARS Fall Meeting in Gettysburg is CANCELED;**

## **Virtual Cutting and Plant Exchange**

The District 8 Virtual CutX & Auction Forum is at <https://d8cutx.freeforums.net/>

In place of the annual District 8 Cutting Exchange and Auction, we have an online forum where ARS members in the Greater Philadelphia, Lehigh Valley and Valley Forge Chapters can post their desires and offerings.

Members are invited to post which cuttings they desire and which cuttings they can make available. When another member sees something they want or has something someone else wants, it is an opportunity for the two

members to arrange how to achieve the exchange. We advise they observe all COVID-19 precautions in doing this.

If you wish to make a donation to the ARS for cuttings, please make a check out to VF ARS; with the note D8CutX; and send the check to VF ARS treasurer, Bob Smetana:

**Valley Forge Chapter, ARS  
14 Northwoods Road  
Radnor, PA 19087**

All proceeds go to ARS Endowment Fund and the ARS Research Foundation.

## **Rooting Rhododendron and Azalea Cuttings by Don Hyatt**



1. Make short cuttings, 2 to 3 inches long. Remove flower buds and excess foliage. Long cuttings can often be cut into several sections. Azaleas root very easily during the winter months. Take a look at Don's special page on [Dormant Azalea Cuttings](#).
2. On rhododendrons, "wound" the base of cuttings by removing some bark on both sides with a sharp knife.
3. Dip the end of each cutting in a rooting hormone such as Rootone or Dip 'N Grow.
4. Insert the bottom inch of the cutting into container filled with potting medium ( 1/2 Peat, 1/4 Sand, 1/4 Perlite). Medium should be damp but not wet since excess moisture causes rotting.
5. Optional: If insects or disease had been present, spray cuttings with insecticide / fungicide mix.

6. Enclose containers in clear plastic bags, and place in bright window out of direct sun or preferably under fluorescent lights with "long day" conditions (16 to 24 hours of light each day).
7. Cuttings should root in 2 to 4 months but sometimes it is better to leave them undisturbed for 6 months or more so that a substantial root system will be present before repotting. Even after they are well rooted, still keep on the "dry side" to encourage root growth. Continue to grow under lights or provide cold frame protection the first winter. Very weak fertilizer may be applied to well rooted cuttings but too much will encourage disease problems too, especially under low light conditions such as fluorescent tubes provide.



## GP & VF ARS 2020 Photo Album

Since we didn't have the GP & VF ARS annual flower show this spring, we encouraged members to post photos of their plants and gardens online for other members to enjoy. It was a huge success. 17 people posted 229 beautiful photos.

To see the photo album, go to <https://dropevent.com/gpvfars2020/>.

You can view the photos either of 2 ways. On the opening page there are small pictures of all photos. You can click on a small picture to see

the larger picture. The other way is to click on Slideshow to see all of the photos one at a time. It shows each picture for 6 seconds with a music accompaniment. The entire slide show takes about 23 minutes. If you like you can let it run continuously and enjoy the music.

**We are not accepting any more photos. The Photo Album will be available online through October.** Then it will be taken down, but all photos will still be available by contacting Steve Henning at [rhodyman@earthlink.net](mailto:rhodyman@earthlink.net).

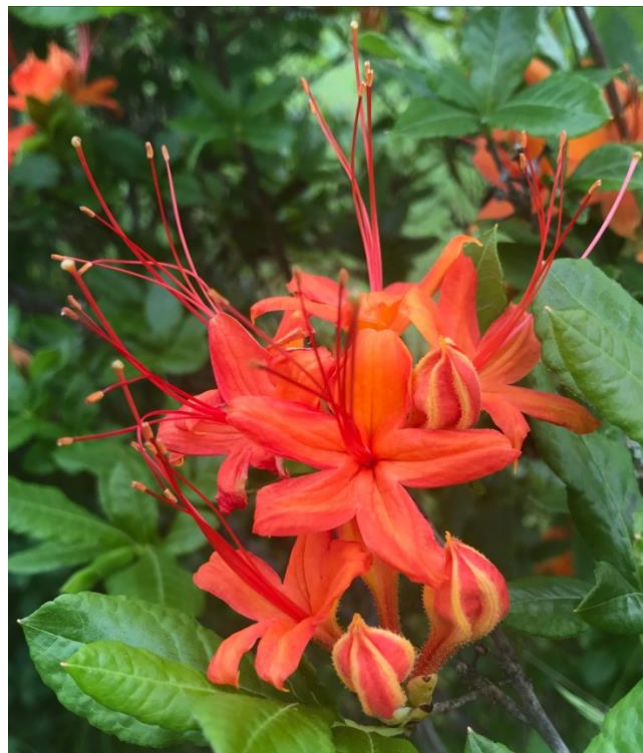
Special thanks to the following who contributed photos to our virtual flower and garden show:

Tom Ahern (39 photos)	Michael Mills (12 photos)	Bob Smetana (7 photos)
Vijay Chandhok (5 photos)	Joe Minahan (2 photos)	Renee Thomson-Hohl (2 photos)
Mimi Favre (10 photos)	Perc Moser (17 photos)	Erin Van Yahres (5 photos)
Steve Henning (1 photo)	Myo Myint (3 photos)	Jim Willhite (84 photos)
Randell Jessup (35 photos)	Jerry O'Dell (5 photos)	Barbara Winter (5 photos)
Elena Limonik (4 photos)	Shirley & Robert Rogaski (3 photos)	

The following is a sampling of some of the amazing photos posted:



*'Dream of Kings' by Michael Martin Mills*



*Native Azalea by Mimi Favre*



*'Olin O. Dobbs' by Michael Martin Mills*



*'Verdie' (Sommerville) by Jim Willhite*



*"Bob Furman's Big Yellow by Joe Minahan*



*R. cal. "Augie's Red" by Jim Willhite*



*'Angelina Dee' by Tom Ahern*



*'Francesca' by Randell Jesup*



*Florida Flame Azalea by Renee Thomson-Hohl*



*Photo 4 by Perc Moser*



*'Calsap' by Bob Smetana*



*'Courtney' by Myo Myint*



*Pale Pink by Vijay Chandhok*



*'Purple Splendour' by Jerry O'Dell*

## Susquehanna Chapter Members Transfer to Mason-Dixon Chapter

The Susquehanna Valley Chapter has disbanded. The members all transferred to the Mason-Dixon Chapter. Since Susquehanna Valley was in our district, District 8, and Mason-Dixon is in District 9, the net result is that Districts 8 & 9 will both have 3 chapters.

The Susquehanna Valley Chapter funds, about \$5,000, were divided between the Mason-Dixon Chapter, the ARS Endowment Fund, the ARS Research Foundation, the ARS General Fund, and Hershey Gardens.

Their actions are very commendable. It is sad that a chapter with so many accomplishments to its name has come to this point. But their action makes the best of a bad situation.

Starting in 1972, Tom Schuetz and Glenn Wise would drive all the way from Mechanicsburg to Valley Forge to attend our meetings when they became a members of the Valley Forge Chapter. Earl Cordy, a member of the Susquehanna Valley Chapter was already a member of the Valley Forge Chapter in 1971. It was in 1981 that a group of Rhododendron enthusiasts in central Pennsylvania formed the Susquehanna Valley Chapter. They not only served members that had been driving to the Philadelphia area, but they also attracted 36 members new to the ARS from areas around York, Mechanicsburg, and Hannover, PA.

They had 2 treasures, Dr. William Rhein and his garden. He had 15 acres filled with rhododendrons from Gable, Dexter, Hardgrove, Shammarello, and many other remarkable rhododendrons and thousands of daffodils as well as evergreen and deciduous azaleas. He hybridized many beautiful and hardy hybrids, especially yellows, flowers with prominent blotches, and flowers with delicate shadings. 'Rhein's Picotee' was one of those. It comes as no surprise that Dr. Rhein met

Joseph Gable when he was getting started planting his garden. Later, his daughter Caroline Gable joined the chapter. By 1989, his years of hybridizing had created many new plants, including 8 which he named. Dr. Rhein received the ARS Bronze Medal in 1991 after spending 27 years growing and hybridizing rhododendrons. Fortunately, some of us in the Valley Forge chapter got to know Dr. Rhein and enjoyed his company and his plants. When he died in 1999, he had named 50 of his hybrids including 'Rhein's Luna', a hardy blue Lepidote often compared to the beautiful but tender *R. augustinii*.



*'Rhein's Luna'* (photo by Dr. Rhein)



*'Rhein's Picotee'* (photo by Randell Jesup)



*'John Paul II' (photo by Joe Minahan)*

Joe Minahan is also a hybridizer we know best for his amazing red hybrid, 'John Paul II'. Joe joined the Philadelphia Chapter in 1963, 4 years before the Valley Forge Chapter existed. Joe has named at least 7 of his hybrids. There is even one of his plants, 'John Paul II', in Germany in Hachmann's Rhododendron Nursery.

Fortunately we usually get to see Joe each May when he enters our Flower Show. Joe received the Susquehanna Valley's Bronze Medal in 2003.

Other Bronze Medal recipients include John Bartlett, Lew and Linda Brown, William Hersh, Laura Hershey, Dr. Marvin Keagy, Dr. Phillip Laucks, Raymond Miller, Joe Minahan, Robert Peters, Dale and Maybelle Rohrbaugh, Tom Schuetz, and Betty Wilson. These, along with other members had a very active chapter with garden tours, pre-

meeting covered dish meals, plant auctions, truss shows, seed planting parties, picnics, plant sales, banquets, plants-for-members, the Rhein Study Committee, bus trips, and participated in regional shows such as the York Flower & Garden Show, Country Market and the Garden Expo in Mechanicsburg and Hershey Gardens.

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**Some photos from Susquehanna Valley Chapter's member's gardens:**



*Barry & Jane Black's Garden*



*Joe & Winnie Minahan's Garden*



*Tom & Fran Schuetz's Garden*



*Raymond & Dorothy Miller's Garden*



ARSSStore.org

Where every purchase benefits the  
American Rhododendron Society

*We hope you are and your loved ones are staying safe during this Pandemic.*

*If you are doing online shopping during these challenging times, please remember to use the ARS affiliate stores, AmazonSmile, Walmart or Target.*

### **Stay Safe!**

COVID-19 precautions and community impact have changed our lives. The first priority is to stay safe and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. We owe our first responders and medical staffs a HUGE THANK YOU. They are our heroes in these troubled times. We also must be grateful to those that are manning other essential activities so the we can keep our lives as normal as possible.

*It is important to stay in touch with our friends and neighbors.*

### **Do you want to avoid going out?**

Many of us, especially those in the more vulnerable population, are avoiding going out during this pandemic. We try to get groceries delivered. We order more things on line. If we dare venture to go out, some of our "non-essential" stores have closed. Stores that are open have in place social-distancing rules and may be out of some hard-to-find items. This is a time when many of us are turning to online shopping so we don't have to go out to

### **Quick Links:**



[Walmart.ARSSStore.org](http://Walmart.ARSSStore.org)



[Target.ARSSStore.org](http://Target.ARSSStore.org)



[Amazon.ARSSStore.org](http://Amazon.ARSSStore.org)

looking for items that we can't get delivered locally. The good news is that ARS online affiliate stores such as Walmart, Amazon, and Target have many of the items we need. Since these stores are affiliated with the ARS, if you go to them through the ARSSStore, they give the ARS a donation at no cost to you, their customer. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [manager@arsstore.org](mailto:manager@arsstore.org)

### **AmazonSmile is our Amazon now.**

If you use [Amazon.ARSSStore.org](http://Amazon.ARSSStore.org) you will be automatically taken to the ARS AmazonSmile store. I am sure some of you might have been surprised to see this, but AmazonSmile is our only Amazon option. If you are an Amazon customer, you can enter through [Amazon.ARSSStore.org](http://Amazon.ARSSStore.org) and still receive all your normal perks.

### **Target and Walmart Have Store Pickup.**

The ARS also has [Target.ARSSStore.org](http://Target.ARSSStore.org), and [Walmart.ARSSStore.org](http://Walmart.ARSSStore.org) online ARS affiliate stores to use. These stores donate up to 4% to the ARS. A growing number of ARS members are using these stores, especially in these troubled times. **Target**, and **Walmart** have most anything **Amazon** has, especially **Walmart**, and some things **Amazon** doesn't have such as store brands. **Target** and **Walmart** have home delivery as well as free store pickup. They have similar low prices. In many cases, home delivery is free.

*Use these links for the ARS affiliate store of your choice.*



# The Rhododendron & Azalea Owner's Manual

## The right site

Many gardeners think azaleas and rhododendrons prefer to grow in deep shade. The truth is they need some light to do well. Too much shade can lead to leggy growth, sparse foliage growth, and few to no flowers. The ideal location is one that gets morning sun and afternoon shade – or dappled light all day under a tree canopy.

Azaleas and rhododendrons can perform well in woodlands and under trees, but they cope best when they grow up along with the trees. Many an azalea or rhododendron has died when their shallow, fine roots were unable to compete for nutrients and moisture when inserted later among the much bigger, established roots of mature trees.

## The right soil

Azaleas and rhododendrons despise poorly drained clay and the compacted “builder’s soil” left behind by so many home builders. The periodic soggy soil and poorly aerated conditions those beget are the No. 1 killer of azaleas and rhododendrons. They won’t tolerate lousy drainage.

To solve that, either start with a superbly drained site or amend the soil big-time before planting. To gauge drainage, dig a planting hole that’s three to five times as wide as the plant pot or rootball but only as deep, then filling it with water. Let the water drain, then fill it again. If all of the water isn’t gone in about an hour, you have some soil-improving to do. To improve conditions, add enough amendments to equal the soil you removed for the drainage test and mix it all together. One good amendment formula is half coarse sand or crushed lava rock and half compost, bark fines, and/or peat moss. The added amendments will give you a raised bed that’s going to drain very well as well as “breathe” better like azaleas and rhododendrons want.

## Nutrition and acid?

While you’re addressing the soil, it’s a good idea to run a soil test. The report will tell you what nutrients, if any, you’ll need to add. It’ll also give you a reading on the soil’s pH, which is a measure of how acidic it is. Azaleas and rhododendrons like it acidic – a pH between 4.5 and 6 on a scale in which 7 is neutral. If your soil isn’t acidic enough,

use sulfur or ferrous sulfate to drive down the pH. Don’t use aluminum sulfate that’s in some soil acidifiers because excess aluminum is toxic to azaleas and rhododendrons. You particularly might need to acidify if you’re planting near a foundation, sidewalk, or driveway where lime leaching from concrete can raise the pH.

## Planting

Another common destructive practice is planting too deeply. As with lousy soil, this also increases the odds of root-rotting and suffocating the roots in a lower-oxygen setting. Plant so the rootball is two to three inches above grade and never, never, never below grade. This is also why the hole should be dug only as deep as the rootball – so there’s no chance of loosened soil settling and causing the planted rootball to sink. Fray out plant roots as much as you can before planting, and backfill and water the soil after setting the plant and removing any wires, strings, or burlap. Cover the soil with two to three inches of mulch, keeping it back from touching the trunk by several inches. Chunkier mulches that breathe well, such as bark nuggets or wood chips, are better than shredded mulches that knit together and clump. Pine needles also make an excellent azalea and rhododendron mulch.

## After care

The last main “operator-error” way to kill azaleas and rhododendrons is over- or under-watering them. These aren’t very drought-tough plants – especially in the first two to three years before the roots have grown out very far. Your goal is to water often enough so that the soil in the root zone stays consistently damp but never so much that it’s soggy. Figure on watering every three or four days when a good rain doesn’t happen for at least the first two full seasons. Then weekly wettings in dry weather are usually enough. From then on, all you have to do is worry about the bugs and diseases that can attack your azaleas and rhododendrons, such as lace bugs, borers, thrips, phytophthora root rot, phomopsis dieback, etc. Oh, yeah... and deer, which find azaleas and rhododendrons particularly tasty in winter.

[Based on a Harrisburg Patriot PennLive article by George Weigel that was based on the ARS website, [rhododendron.org/plantcare.htm](http://rhododendron.org/plantcare.htm).]

Steve Henning, editor  
103 Acer Place  
Lancaster, PA 17601



## **NEWSLETTER**

*August / September 2020*



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<b>ARS websites:</b>	Steve Wright ('19-'22) (267) 481-0175
<a href="http://rhododendron.org">rhododendron.org</a> <a href="http://ARSStore.org">ARSStore.org</a>	Darlene Henning ('19-'22) (717) 735-7116
<a href="http://ARSOoffice.org">ARSOoffice.org</a> <a href="https://ars75.org/">https://ars75.org/</a>	Perc Moser ('18-'21) (610) 525-3651
<b>Use <a href="http://arsstore.org/">http://arsstore.org/</a></b>	Kathy Woehl ('18-'21) (610) 688 9173
	Membership: Darlene Henning (717) 735-7116
	Newsletter Editor: Steve Henning (717) 735-7116
	Plant Sale: Alice Horton (610) 430-0196
	Plants-for-Members with Greater Philadelphia Chapter
	Truss Show (VF): Debby Schmidt (610) 388-8573
	Webmaster: Steve Henning (717) 735-7116
	<b>VF Chapter's web site: <a href="http://ValleyForgeARS.org">ValleyForgeARS.org</a></b>

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