DELAWARE VALLEY

RHODOGRAVURE

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

Notable in November

Two chapter events, two weeks apart



Will Ryan, Nov. 1 speaker

It isn't our usual autumnal meeting pattern, so mark your calendar right away: There will be two November meetings for the Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society – Sunday Nov. 1 and Sunday Nov. 15, the latter being the annual banquet. This is a change from the previously announced Oct. 18 meeting, which will not take place but has been reset for the first Sunday in November.

The Nov. 1 meeting will feature the new Director of Horticulture and Land Stewardship at Tyler Arboretum, Will Ryan. Most appropriately, the meeting will be at Tyler. Dr. Ryan's resume brims with horticultural and natural endeavors. In its announcement of his appointment, Tyler cited his field botany expertise and nature science acumen combined with 25 years of institutional, commercial and restoration experience.

Arrive as early as 1:30 p.m., with the program beginning at 2:00. (In addition to being All Saints Day, this is the day clocks are set back to standard time. If you fail to adjust your wall clocks, trust your smart phone.)

Two weeks later, on Nov. 15 the chapter convenes for its annual banquet, which this year will be a buffet luncheon at the St. Davids Golf Club on the Main Line.

The banquet speaker will be Ethan Kauffman, the founding director of Stoneleigh, the Philadelphia area's newest big public garden. Except that it's 150 years old, and therein lies Mr. Kauffman's story for us. Stoneleigh was the monumental home and estate of the Haas family, as in Rohm & Haas. And for all its decades of landscaping and garden crews, there was never a thought of focusing the living collection on, ahem, native species, as in local wild things. Times have changed (Ixnay Achysandrapay!), for nowadays at Stoneleigh the natives are restless – and winning. It only took 10 years.

A banquet reservation form accompanies this edition of the RhodoGravure. Canapes and cocktails (cash bar) from noon, with dining commencing at 1:00 p.m.



Ethan Kauffman, Nov. 15 speaker

A hybrid with a mission



Meet ‘Queen Celeste’ (pictured at right) . She recently raised a generous sum for a very worthy cause, and got her new identity in the process.

Just about everyone in the chapter knows that Perc Moser is devoted to hybridizing rhododendrons. But he’s even more devoted to his granddaughter Eleanor, who has a rare medical condition known as nevus.

For the recent fundraiser put on by the local unit of Nevus Outreach, Perc perused his proto-forest of one-of-a-kind hybrids and singled out a fine-flowered child of Gable’s ‘Marybelle’ (pollen of ‘Marybelle’ was used to fertilize a yellow elepidote whose identity has been lost). The naming rights for this handsome specimen were donated for a silent auction.

Talk about rhodo-power! The winning bid to name the cross was $600. Next spring when ‘Queen Celeste’ is bloom, Perc will be collecting all the relevant data and submitting a registration application.

In memoriam

Joan Roberts, 1930-2026

Longtime chapter member Joan Roberts died June 18. She was the widow of Howard Roberts, a president of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter and home hybridizer. ‘Smarty Joan’s’ is the hybrid he named for her. Joan’s memorial service will be Saturday, Oct. 17, 11:00 a.m., at St. Asaph’s Episcopal Church, 27 Conshohocken State Road, Bala Cynwyd, Pa. 19004. Her obituary may be read at www.legacy.com/legacy/joan-roberts

Taxonomy antics

Our gardens seem to be drowning in excess syllables

Here’s a surprise for a fair number of local rhododendron enthusiasts: odds are pretty good that you have one, two or more large and attractive benthamidias in your garden. Most likely *Benthamidia florida* and *B. japonica.* And odds are very good that you have no recollection of ever having acquired and planted any of these bentha-whatsits.

The invisible battalion of plant scientists known as taxonomists has done it again. Those are the new Latin names for the well-loved *Cornus florida* and *C. kousa*, flowering dogwood and kousa dogwood respectively. What used to be an amiable genus, cornus, has been sliced and diced and renamed with only two relatively uncommon species unscathed and unrenamed.

This annoying situation was brought to the attention of DVRS members who attended the chapter meeting with Pam Morris Olshefksi speaking about native plants to augment a rhododendron garden. That topic inexorably included dogwoods, or Benthamentality whateverensis.

Many folks also grow red-twig dogwoods, shrubs that enhance the winter landscape with bright red stems. Nope, not a cornus anymore, but not a benthamidge either. Voilà, it's now *Swida sericea*.

If you hew to staying current, here is list of the changes. Start making new tags.

classic Latin name	**common name**	**new Latin name**
Cornus florida	flowering dogwood	*Benthamidia florida*
C. kousa	kousa dogwood	*Benthamidia japonica*
C. nuttallii	Pacific dogwood	*Benthamidia nuttallii*
C. alternifolia	pagoda dogwood	*Swida alternifolia*
C. controversa	giant dogwood	*Swida controversa*
C. sericea	red-twig dogwood	*Swida sericea*
C. alba	tatarian dogwood	*Swida alba*
C. sanguinea	blood-twig dogwood	*Swida sanguinea*
C. amomum	silky dogwood	*Swida amomum*
C. obliqua	silky dogwood	*Swida amomum*
C. racemosa	gray dogwood	*Swida racemosa*
C. mas	cornelian cherry	unchanged
C. officinalis	Japanese cornelian dogwood	unchanged
C. canadensis	bunchberry	*Chamaepericlymenum canadensis*

Sure looks like a dogwood (photo at left)! But a groundcover? This is bunchberry, formerly *Cornus canadensis*. In 2025, the RhodoGravure's delegate to the ARS convention in Nova Scotia laid eyes on the real thing for the first time, in its prime only a block from the convention lodgings (and not too many kilometers from the Bay of Fundy). The "canadensis" part of the Latin name should be a tipoff as to why it was a total failure when planted at RhodoGravure headquarters. There being no hope of growing it in the DVRS region, there's no need to memorize its preposterous new Latin name: *Chamaepericlymenum canadensis.*



Photo by M.M. Mills

Bunchberry in Wolfeville, Nova Scotia.

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At least we deal with plants and not animals. It's one thing for taxonomists to change the Latin names that we've diligently absorbed. The animal taxonomists also change the common names, and can get quite miffy if the public doesn't go along. Consider birders, who since childhood could recognize a Baltimore oriole or a slate-colored junco. The latter (*Junco hyemalis*) is now the dark-eyed junco, thank you very much.

The oriole tale verges on the hilarious. In 1973 "Baltimore" got the heave-ho and *Icterus galbula* became the northern oriole. The RhodoGravure editor, formerly an editor at the Philadelphia Inquirer, once received an indignant communique from an ornithological sort regarding the naughty continued printing of "Baltimore oriole" in non-baseball contexts. Spare us, thought said editor. Well, well, in 1995 the northern oriole was renamed the – ta-da! – Baltimore oriole. Guess which sports team, yea even which city, never flinched.

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.

November 1, Sunday, 2:00 p.m. Chapter meeting. Speaker: Will Ryan, Tyler Arboretum's Director of Horticulture and Land Stewardship. Tyler Arboretum. Arrive as early as 1:30, program begins at 2:00 p.m. See article on Page 1.

November 15, Sunday Annual banquet luncheon. Presenter: Ethan Kauffman, director, Stoneleigh. St. Davids Golf Club, 845 Radnor Street Rd, Wayne, PA 19087. Conviviality and cocktails (cash bar) begin at noon, with a buffet luncheon beginning at 1:00 p.m. See article on page 1. Reservation form accompanies the newsletter or may be found at http://dvchapterars.org/files/2026DVARSBanquet.pdf

November 17, Tuesday Chapter Board of Directors meeting, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

January 10, 2027, Sunday Chapter meeting. Location and program pending. Arrive as early as 1:30, program begins at 2:00 p.m.

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 conferences, publishes the thrice-yearly 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. Contact the president or treasurer (see above) for a membership form or go to DVChapterARS.org; in the Table of Contents, click on “Join.”