DELAWARE VALLEY

RHODOGRAVURE

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

Opportunities for garden greatness

August auction and September's Plants By Members Sale

Are you a gardener on a budget? Do you just love a good find at a great price? The Delaware Valley Rhododendron Society is your friend, with two chances to dress up your garden and not break the bank.

First up is the Cutting Exchange and Plant Auction, Sunday afternoon, August 16, at Jenkins Arboretum.

What's a "cutting exchange"? you may wonder. It's sort of like insider trading – the good kind. Chapter members with way cool and never-at-the-garden-center rhododendrons and azaleas bring cuttings from their stupendous plants, typically six in a Ziploc bag, which you can purchase for the princely sum of $1 a bag. There will be experts on hand who can tell you how to root them (no, *not* in water!). By and by, your garden will rival the best of your subdivision.



Will something like this come up at the April 16 auction? You'll have to attend to find out.

Plus there is an auction of plants: rhododendrons, of course, but also woodies and perennials not of the rhodo persuasion. There can be some real gems and rarities. And there's no predicting what will be available – were Randy Dalton still with us, he'd be calling it the T.J. Maxx plant auction, as in, never ever the same thing twice.

Proceeds from the sale are donated to the ARS endowment and the Research Foundation.

If you wish to contribute cuttings, please be sure the plants have been recently irrigated. Take 6-inch cuttings, ideally in the morning, and place in a plastic bag with the cultivar clearly indicated. Add a few drops of water, refrigerate overnight as needed. Six cuttings per bag is ideal. Fine plants you're your garden are also sought for the auction, woodies or perennials. Donations of cuttings and plants should arrive at Jenkins between 1:00 and 1:30; the cutting sale starts at 2:00, followed by the auction. (Brown-bagging your lunch is an option for those pinched for time.)

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OK, home rooting may not be your idea of a jolly time. So, go DVRS and leave the rooting to us. All you have to do is show up at Jenkins again, on Sept. 20, for the truly excellent Plants By Members sale.

This sale accomplishes two fine things. One, members (and hangers-on) can acquire chapter-propagated plants that are utterly unavailable commercially, and at excellent prices. Two, these

uncommon hybrids are sent forth into gardens, beautifying America and helping keep the uncommon cultivars from going extinct.

Every late summer and fall, the chapter's propagation team, led by Karel Bernady, prepares and sticks scores of cuttings at Steve Kristoph's nursery in deepest New Jersey, where the chapter pays for hoophouse space. Plus, there is late-fall grafting of cultivars known to resist success at simple rooting. In the late spring, those that have successfully put out roots over the winter are potted up. Thus the name Plants By Members – most of the varieties come from the gardens of our rhodo-hoarding subset of members, and all the propagation work is done by members.

Both year-old rootings and larger plants that have been grown on for at least another year will be for sale. A list of available plants will be posted to the chapter website about a week before the sale.

To prevent a horticultural version of a Filene's Basement sale mob scene, there's a clever system whereby members are admitted to the sales area in groups of five, chosen in an utterly random fashion. After all ARS members have had an opportunity to make their first choices, nonmembers may shop, and after that it's a free for all, so anybody can buy 10 or 30 more plants (it has definitely been known to happen). Tell your non-ARS friends to come shopping with us. The sale begins at 2:00 p.m., and members need to have signed in by then to be a part of the random selection process.

Taking home the silver

Trophies from May's truss show are presented at annual picnic



Jenkins' Steve Wright with (most of) the trophies won by arboretum entries.

Continuing tradition from the previous century, trophies from the spring Cut-Flower Competition were presented at the June picnic and annual meeting, which was hosted by board member Maris Ogg and her husband, Bob Smith, at their charming home in Flourtown, Pa.

Diverging from tradition, the truss show was not Mothers Day weekend, but a week earlier. It had become evident in recent years that peak bloom of our favorite genus was on the move, that is, it has been peaking earlier in spring. Shifting the competition to the first Saturday in May struck most participants as a wise decision. For instance, in marked contrast to 2025, there were plenty of evergreen azalea sprays entered this year.

Jenkins Arboretum, which a year ago won three trophies, upped its game and took home four trophies this year, including Best in Show. For the first time, the Joseph F. Minahan Hybridizer's Cup was awarded, to Perc Moser for his creation of 'Mary Belle' X 'Early Light'. (The previous trophy for new hybrids was retired, as there was no more room to engrave new winners. Since Joe Minahan had won it an astonishing 18 times over the years, the board

thought it only appropriate to inaugurate a new trophy in his memory.)

Judges for the show were John Bartlett, proprietor of the noted Gettysburg Gardens; Charles Cresson, esteemed Swarthmore gardener; Tom Lloyd, longtime chapter member; Patrick McGinty, Garden Manager, Stoneleigh; Carol Segree, president, Potomac Valley Chapter; and Tom Smarr, Executive Director, Jenkins Arboretum. The winners they chose:

Best in Show, John Wister Trophy: 'Golden Pleasure', Jenkins Arboretum
Best Species, Karel Bernady Trophy: *R. canescens,* Jenkins Arboretum
Best Deciduous Azalea, Steven Wright Trophy: 'My Mary', Bud and Marilyn Gressman
Best Evergreen Azalea, Lloyd Partain Trophy: 'Ruth May', Jenkins Arboretum
Best Rhododendron Hybrid, Mr. & Mrs. James Sorber Trophy: 'Golden Pleasure', Jenkins Arboretum
Hybridizer's Cup, Joseph Minahan Trophy: 'Mary Belle' X 'Early Light', Perc Moser
Best Foliage, Dan and Betts Layman Trophy: 'Pure Sex', Michael Martin Mills
Sweepstakes for Most Points, Judi Meade Trophy: Michael Martin Mills

Election results

At the Annual Meeting segment of the June picnic, three officers and three directors were elected by acclamation. Kim Kopple and Robert Smetana were re-elected secretary and treasurer, respectively, and Michael Martin Mills was elected vice president, all for two-year terms. Ron Rabideau and Kathy Woehl were re-elected as board directors, and Stuart Rubin was elected, all for three-year terms.

With the resignation of board member John Weygandt, the Board at its July meeting chose Maurice Hampton to serve out the balance of John's term.

Climate trends, garden trends

Random thoughts from a random editor

There's been a new summer burst of color in these parts, which has some intriguing precedents, none of which are related to rhododendrons other than by being in the same gardens.

With the concurrence of an astute gardener or two in the region, the Principal Landscape Analyst at RhodoGravure headquarters has declared late July and August of 2026 to be the Great Crape Myrtle Florescence. They're everywhere and they are big and loaded with flowers. Red, deep pink, light pink, deep purple, almost white.

Used to be, crape myrtles were not really hardy in the Philadelphia area. A fellow at the National Arboretum in Washington thought that a pity, and began hybridizing for cold winters – and he gave most of them the names of Indian tribes. Gardeners in our area were told to buy only the likes of 'Cherokee', 'Seminole' and (oh dear) 'Tonto'. Presumably they did, and then climate change kicked in, and these things are huge this year.

Another plant has been flourishing this year, likewise one that had been billed as marginal for our winters: crocosmia, a.k.a. montbretia. The hardiest clone is said to be 'Lucifer,' a red hummingbird magnet that when happy makes quite a statement. They are July bloomers, and the number of gardens sporting them in northwest Philadelphia seems to have tripled. Maybe some were gifts, for a happy patch is an expanding patch.

Two year ago, we had the stunning Kousa June, blazingly white dogwood flowers on the Asian *Cornus kousa*. The RhodoGravure's unofficial but stealthy garden snoop was amazed at how many gardens had them – it was as if throngs of gardeners planted kousas in, say, 2016 and they all hit maturity

the same late spring. (This has echoes of the short run of Prunus 'Okame', a flowering cherry introduced by Morris Arboretum c. 1980. It was a member dividend one year at the now-defunct plant sale, and large specimens were sold as well. A few years later, northwest Philadelphia and nearby suburbs were adorned with the excellent pink flowers every year around March 31. Until the 'Okames' started dying at about age 25.)

Spigelia marilandica is also having a moment. In a single summer, this native American perennial can have three flushes of nifty red tubes lined with yellow, and time was when the plants at RhodoGravure headquarters were unknown to 90 percent of visitors. When the Philadelphia Flower Show went outdoors due to the pandemic, the chapter's June display included four pots of spigelia, also known as Indian pinks. They drew a lot more questions than the lovely deciduous azaleas in the tableau – and were rare enough that someone stole them before the chapter could dismantle the exhibit at the end of the show. Well, not so rare anymore, if drive-by sightings are a reasonable gauge. The fact that they readily self-sow may have something to do with it.

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.

August 16, Sunday Cutting Exchange and Plant Auction, Jenkins Arboretum. See article on Page 1.

September 15, Tuesday Chapter Board of Directors meeting, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

September 20, Sunday Plants By Members sale, Jenkins Arboretum. See article on Page 1.

October 11-13 Joint miniconference, Potomac Valley and Middle Atlantic ARS Chapters, Winchester, Va. Contact Carol Segree for information: csegree17@outlook.com.

October 18, Sunday, 2:00 p.m. Chapter meeting. Speaker: Will Ryan, Tyler Arboretum's Director of Horticulture and Land Stewardship. Tyler Arboretum, 2:00 p.m.

October 29-November 1 New Zealand Rhododendron Association conference, Christchurch, South Island, New Zealand. Including "an escorted walk with Wolfgang Bopp, Director of the Christchurch Botanic Gardens to view the rhododendron and rock garden followed by a special dinner experience." More information: https://rhododendron.org.nz/conference/2026-festival/

November 15, Sunday Annual banquet luncheon, St. Davids Golf Club.

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

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
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Directors

Terms expiring 2027: Mimi Favre, Maris Ogg, Maurice Hampton
Terms expiring 2028: Bill Halberstadt, Linda Hartnett, Leslie Morris-Smith
Terms expiring 2029: Ron Rabideau, Stuart Rubin, Kathy Woehl

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
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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.”