

The Azalea Clipper

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Northern Virginia Chapter Azalea Society of America

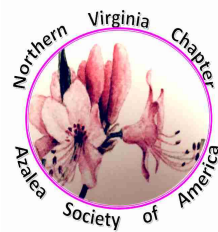


Photo from Charlie Andrews, with grandkids, on the Appalachian Trail, Blood Mtn., GA

Charlie Andrews sent along some background information which you'll enjoy reading:

I am a retired systems analyst and project manager. I have too many interests and activities: genealogy, history, Lions Club, church work. I'm also a native azalea nut. I love many things—rhododendrons, viburnums, hollies, magnolias, dogwoods, silverbells, camellias, osmanthus, daphne, evergreen azaleas, hellebores, iris, hosta, trillium, bloodroot, and so on. But native azaleas are in the top three of my loves, with trout fishing and Mardi, my wife of 49 years. I discovered azaleas while trout fishing in north Georgia as a teen. You could smell the sweet azalea (*Rhododendron arborescens*) before you finally saw it hanging over the stream.

I have this insatiable desire to know every detail about them: their history, their distribution, their characteristics. For me, the literature has often been disappointing, superficial, inconsistent, contradictory, and sometimes erroneous. Years ago, I started researching and collecting every reference I could on North American azaleas and deciduous azaleas in general.

(continued on p. 4)

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING:

MARCH 31
SUNDAY
1:00 - 4:30

Charlie Andrews

Native Azaleas

Remember:
Plant Exchange!

Refreshments: L - Z

**Kirkwood
Presbyterian Church**
(directions on the back)



Carolyn and Paul Beck, photo courtesy Dave Nanney

Where do our babies come from? (Plants, that is ...)

by **Barry Sperling**, with a lot of help from **Carolyn Beck**

Magic appears at many Northern VA Chapter events. Hundreds, or even thousands, of potted azaleas pop up, green and bushy, attractive for sale or trade. Sometimes it's at plant exchanges. Sometimes it's at the annual club auction/sale. Sometimes it's at public plant sales. Always in amazing numbers. Volunteers rush to set up tables, cover them in plastic and arrange the pots alphabetically, or by hybridizer. Afterward, the many volunteers break down the setting and reload the unsold plants into cars, vans and trailers, which head out to ... where? A magic kingdom where the plants are grown and gently tended until the next event.

No secret: this magic kingdom consists of the yard of Carolyn and Paul Beck.

(continued on p. 4)

Barbara Bullock Retires!
see p. 3



President's Message

First of all, thanks to everyone's renewal of their membership! We have set the bar for others to meet!

With some more tangible signs that spring is on the way, we are kicking off the 2019 chapter year with what should be a very informative and enjoyable talk on Sunday, March 31st. Charlie Andrews, Vice President of ASA, has had two very good articles in recent editions of the Azalean and will provide us with a presentation on native azaleas. This meeting will also provide the opportunity to hear the latest from the ASA National Convention held mid-March.

The chapter has a number of events in the months ahead that should offer something for everyone. We have a very active chapter and a wide variety of interesting activities. Volunteers are going to be needed to help in the planting of the Legacy Project at Meadowlark Gardens in April and also the May Green Spring Gardens sale in mid-May. You'll find information on p. 7. Please look over the schedule of events to see where you might be able to take part. With your support the chapter will continue to thrive and we will all benefit. Hope to see you soon at one of the activities. Happy Gardening!

Lars

To all of you,

This message is to all of you – wonderful volunteers who've helped me out or supported the Azalea Collections in the past 29 years that I was it's curator. I am going to be retiring this summer, sometime in early July. I will not be scheduling any more weekend work days, and I wanted you to know what was up. This summer I will be turning 62 and well, that seems to be about the right time to retire.

I will definitely remain in the area. My home email is barbazalea@yahoo.com and I hope to continue to work with plants in some capacity, be it design, illustration, consulting or getting my hands dirty. I cannot imagine stopping. My plans for retirement also include visiting many of our state and national parks in the country; biking, canoeing or hiking; going to music festivals; visiting friends in other states; doing art whether it be drawing, painting or water colors or doing crafts.

All of you have been invaluable in helping me to get the job done to make the National Arboretum's azalea collection the best that it can be. I appreciate each and every one of you. The list is probably longer than I can recount but you're all been there for me in many different ways. Please feel free to share.

So thank you! Thank you. And keep up the good work. You've inspired me in my life.



Sincerely,

Barbara

Credits: p. 2 top 2 from Sperling; others from Newlin except bottom right Sperling, p. 3 Middle photo Newlin, other 2 Sperling p. 7 Beck p. 8 Sperling



Charlie Andrews continued

For over 35 years, I have explored woods, balds, fields, and waterways, looking for these plants in the wild, and I have found they are a very complex group. I am learning a lot; still am. One thing I am pretty certain of is that most of the botanists who described these plants spent too much time in the herbaria looking at dried specimens, and too little time in the field. I am not sure these taxonomists have them classified correctly. There is too much overlap as well as too much variation within the currently defined 17 North American species. These botanists want to draw lines where lines may not exist, or are awfully fuzzy. For the most part, our native azaleas are a promiscuous bunch and will share spit with each other, given half a chance. It is possible that most of our azaleas are not “pure”, whatever that means, but have in their DNA from past millennia a mix of genes derived from the wide pool of section *Pentanthera* of subgenus *Hymenanthes* of genus *Rhododendron*.

My presentation will look into how natural hybridization takes place, list some of the barriers, give many examples, and raise questions about the difference between hybrids and gene introgression from one species into another.

I am serving as vice president of the ASA and am immediate past president of the Azalea Chapter, ARS. My memberships are in the Vaseyi Chapter ASA and Azalea Chapter ARS as well as various associate memberships, including the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA and Potomac Valley Chapter ARS.

Carolyn's Plants continued

For years, this duo has processed cuttings and up-potted both small and large plants in a continuing cycle, moving from small sticks, to nestling in garden beds throughout the DC area. Those gardens provide more cuttings, endlessly.

I contacted Carolyn and she was happy to detail her process.

Cuttings are obtained during the summer and fall from a wide variety of sources, she said: the Cosby garden in central VA, the club's annual cutting exchange, vacation visits around the country, member's gardens, and Mike White's nursery. Some are even mailed to her by enthusiasts with special collections.

In recent years, the bias has been toward varieties within groups that the club has a special interest in preserving, collectively labeled “Legacy Plants”: <https://azaleas.org/legacy-project/>

Carolyn has shared the knowledge below many times in talks at the club.

Working with cuttings, she pinches off the terminal buds, and then strips off the bottom leaves. The lowest inch needs to be wounded if the stem has hardened off. Branched cuttings are preferred for slow growing varieties, such as the Satsuki group. For all cuttings, Dip-and-Gro, diluted 1:10, is applied to the bottom inch.

About 24 hours before potting, a horticultural grade peat moss and coarse perlite are mixed 1:1. [Details on p. 5] Those are wet, as they are mixed, to the point of holding their consistency as a handful is squeezed. No moisture should drip from this clump. The mass should break apart when dropped back into the mixing tray. Five cuttings are stuck in a 4” pot, two pots with labels are put into a small plastic bag, a 10” florists stake is positioned in the center to keep the bag from collapsing. The bag is inflated by breath, and then twist-tied.

These pots are kept on 18” x 48” 5 shelf rolling racks in Carolyn's driveway, covered on 3 sides and the top with white plastic, allowing access from the fourth side. About 800 plants can be held on each rack. As the weather cools, the plastic is taken off the racks. When freezing weather arrives, the racks are rolled into the garage. {continued on p. 5}

Carolyn's Plants continued

On cold days, fluorescent light are kept over the racks 24 hours a day. The racks are rolled outside anytime the temperatures get into the high 30s, and back into the garage whenever temperatures are anticipated to be below 33°.

On a humid or rainy day the next spring, the twist tie is taken off, and the top is opened a little, allowing the internal humidity to drop to more natural levels. Plants that are doing well are taken out of the bag, though they could be reinserted if they falter, the bags inflated and a little water added. Successfully rooted cuttings are moved into their own 4" pot. These are given winter protection at the end of the season.

The second spring is the time to verify good growth and roots, taking them out of their 4" pots and up-potting to ¾ or 1 gallon sizes. Hollytone is applied at this time, as well as in the March/April period and in midsummer. This is also applied when the plants are up-potted. The fertilizer is added at less than recommended levels.

If a plant isn't growing compactly, it might be pruned in spring and midsummer.

Many of the cuttings will be ready for sale the third year!

A plant growing well is fitted with a bar coded tag by Paul, and he places the barcode information in the NV-ASA website inventory database.

Throughout this long process, volunteers share in a portion of the work. Some will tend a number of plants themselves. We appreciate that Lars Larson, David and Patsy Meadows, Dan and Joanne Neckel, and Fred Newlin have helped with this care! Some will come by and help out in the long, tedious process of up-potting in the spring, and throughout the growing season. Also, the Cosby's have been growing plants from cuttings for the chapter.

Currently Mike White is growing about 500 azaleas a year for our chapter from cuttings we provide. These will be purchased by NV-ASA for a nominal fee when the plants are two years old and ready to be placed in a gallon size pot. Members will be asked to provide space and care for them until they are ready for sale.

The hard work goes on, and has for many years. This work is vital to support the activities of the club, such as the newsletter and our end-of-year donations.

Nothing is forever, however. Carolyn and Paul are interested in finding assistants who would be willing to share in the various tasks related to fundraising. Please let one of the board members know if you can help out with this intense work, grab the wand and continue the magic!

Carolyn's Potting mix for rooted cuttings and larger plants:

Ingredients:

16 cu' Virginia Fines, a medium-fine pine bark available at Merrifield Garden Center in bulk or by the bag
6 cu' Superfines (also known as Pine Fines), a fine pine bark available at Betty's Azalea Ranch in bulk or by the bag

3.8 cu' compressed peat moss

Note: Preferred peat moss: horticulture grade (e.g. Sungro horticulture Canadian Peat moss 3.8 cu' compressed, or New Brunswick grower grade Peat Moss coarse blend sphagnum 225 liters) available from Maryland Plants and Supplies

4 cu' coarse perlite available from Maryland Plants and Supplies

3 of the 60 pound bags coarse sand appropriate for landscaping use.

Mixing and Storing:

Spread a large tarp on a flat surface, like a driveway.

On one end of the tarp, spread the various potting mix ingredients in layers. {Continued on p. 6}

Carolyn's Potting Mix continued

Note: You may want to save the bags to use for storing the completed mix.

Add some water (less than you ultimately will want)

Shovel the mix from one end of the tarp to the other.

Add enough water to make the medium moist, but not wet.

Shovel the mix back to the original end of the tarp.

Note: The mixture should hold its shape when compressed in your hand. No water should drip from the mass.

If needed, add more water. The mix should be shoveled again to the other end of the tarp each time water is added.

Place the mix in plastic bags or containers (5 gallon buckets work well). Close the containers to retain moisture.

Growing Cuttings and Rooted Cuttings on Rolling Racks

Cuttings are placed on rolling racks (available from Costco). One rack (18" x 48") with 5 shelves. Only 4 shelves are used for the cuttings as top is covered with plastic in the initial phase. This configuration will hold a total of 800 cuttings, 5 per 4" pot.

Rooted cuttings are planted 1 per 4" pot. Pots are placed in trays of 15. All 5 shelves of the rolling racks are used, each shelf holding 3 trays. The rack holds a total of 675 of the 1 year old azaleas.

The rolling racks are space savers as because of the vertical positioning of the plants. Our driveway is sunny in the morning and has afternoon shade on the south side. Racks are rolled from one side of the drive depending on the amount of sun and the temperature that day.

During the winter, the racks are moved into the garage when temperatures are expected to dip below freezing. If the days are cold for more than one day, fluorescent lights on vertical stands are turned on. These, plus the ceiling lights, are left on 24 hours a day.

Since the sun in summer is more overhead than the slanting of light we have during the winter, during the summer, if there is space in the yard, the trays of rooted cuttings are put on the ground so that they can have more sunlight, particularly in the morning.. This location also has the advantage of easier watering, both from sprinkler irrigation and rain.

The trays are moved back to the rolling racks when the weather cools and the sun is again shining from a lower angle.

Carolyn Beck

Providing Window Light for Azalea Cuttings

Window light is often an good alternative to growing cuttings on a rack or within a coldframe, especially for those cuttings that are harvested late in the season (late September-October). This location provides more heat than they would get outside.

In fall through early spring, it is safe in our area to place the cuttings near a south-facing window since the sun is not strong enough to cause the amount of heat gain that would damage them. Care should be taken as the weather warms in spring to make certain that the temperature within the bags is not elevated. This can be done by feeling the bags each day, especially when it is sunny.

If the temps are still too cold during the night to place them outside, the containers can be moved farther away from the windows until outside conditions improve.

The cuttings are placed in a plastic container just in case there leak should develop in one of the bags.

The rooted cuttings are transitioned to the racks when the weather warms in the spring.

Carolyn Beck



Propagation



Cuttings Rack

Klimavicz Legacy Garden Planting at Meadowlark

April 1st, 10:00 AM - 2:30 PM

On Monday, April 1st, our chapter will be planting the Klimavicz Legacy Garden at Meadowlark Botanical Garden in Vienna. This will be NV-ASA's first Legacy Garden and we are very excited to be introducing Joe's azaleas in this public place.

This is to be a cooperative effort between Meadowlark Botanical Gardens (MBG) and the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Azalea Society (NV-ASA). We are supplying the azaleas (over 100 at this time) and have agreed to provide 20 hours of volunteer help in this area during the months of April to October. MBG designed the display, they have prepared the site, and marked the bed with the location of each plant. Some of their staff will be working with us, especially during this initial phase. MBG will also supply the required mulch and will see that the plants are adequately watered.

The day of the planting will begin at 10:00 AM and we hope to finish by 2:30 PM. We will meet in the lobby of their visiting center. MBG has all the tools and materials we will need.

Please bring a lunch. It would probably be helpful to bring a lawn chair.

The rain date for this event is Monday, April 8th. Please let Carolyn know if you are available to help. carolyn.f.beck@gmail.com or 703.860-5676

The Ayr Hill Garden Club Plant Sale will take place in Vienna on **Saturday, May 11th**, from **8:00 AM** until **1:00 PM**. Set up will begin at **7:00 AM**. Please let Carolyn Beck know if you are available to help that day. carolyn.f.beck@gmail.com or 703.860-5676

The Green Spring Gardens Plant Sale is scheduled for **Saturday, May 18th** from **9:00 AM** to **3:00 PM**. We plan to set up that day starting at **7:30 AM**. The break-down process will probably be completed by **4:00 PM**. Please contact Lars Larson if you can volunteer for any of this time. Lars.Larson@cox.net or 703.505-5733)

Directions to Kirkwood Presbyterian Church

8336 Carrleigh Parkway, Springfield, VA 22152, 703-451-5320 Kirkwood.office@verizon.net

From the East: Rte 95 exit 169B, Franconia Rd West, which becomes Old Keene Mill Rd (Rte 644) about 3 miles, passing Irving Middle School, to a Right at a light on Carrleigh Parkway
Make a U-turn at Dabney Avenue

From the West: Fairfax County Parkway (Rte 286)

East on Old Keene Mill Rd (Rte 644) about 3.5 miles, passing Rolling Road
to Left at a light on Carrleigh Parkway ; Make a U-turn at Dabney Avenue

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Find your editor's *Essay Blog* at

<https://thegardenedge.blogspot.com>

A new one posted about the 20th of each month.

Also, a *Photo Blog* resides at

<https://thegardenedge.home.blog>

currently with a photo explanation of *flower types*



Executive Board Meeting, October 2018

Schedule

March 31 1 pm – 4:30 pm Joint meeting with
PVC/ARS Charlie Andrews, Native Azaleas,
Kirkwood

April 1 10 am Klimavicz Garden planting,
Meadowlark Gardens (rain date: April 8)

April 27-28; May 4-5 Member Open Gardens
(check with Rick Bauer's Monthly Email)

May 11 Ayr Hill Plant Sale, Vienna

May 16-19 ARS Convention, Philadelphia

May 19 9 am – 5 pm White's Nursery Open House
and Sale

July 14 1 – 4:30 pm Cutting Exchange; Kirkwood
September 28 Fall Sale and Auction, Kirkwood

October 27 1 pm – 4:30 pm Fall Meeting with
speaker; Kirkwood

December 8 Holiday Social

President: Lars Larson 703-277-3441
lars.larson@cox.net

Vice Pres.: Diane Marcus 301-983-1098
dianemarcus@starpower.net

Secretary: Joanne Neckel 703-690-6013
vaneckel@verizon.net

Treasurer: Paul Beck 703-860-5676
pabeck@gmail.com

Corresponding Secretary and Clipper Editor:
Barry Sperling 703-765-7062
bsperling@cox.net

