

The Azalea Clipper

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Northern Virginia Chapter Azalea Society of America



NEXT CHAPTER MEETING:

SUNDAY MARCH 20
1:30 - 4:30

MARTHA BRETTSCHEIDER

*The Garden as Mindfulness Mentor:
How Digging in the Dirt Brings Focus
to Mind, Spirit, and Camera*

Kirkwood Presbyterian Church

Plant Exchange too! Any type!
please label and sign your name

Refreshments: L - Z

Directions on back page



Photo by **Melissa Maillett**

Fairfax County Master Gardener, author, blogger and award-winning photographer **Martha Brettschneider** will weave together her passions for gardening, photography, and mindfulness in a slide show presentation for the Azalea Society. Along with practical tips to take your garden photography to the next level, Martha will share how her garden introduced her to the practice of mindfulness long before the term was popular in the media.

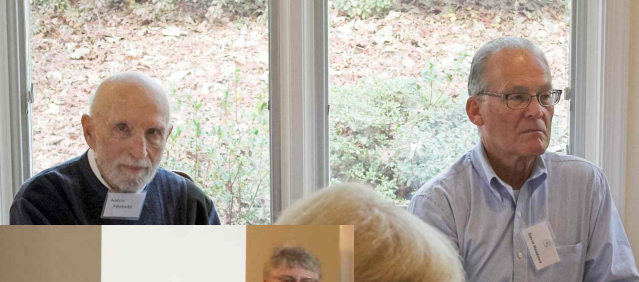
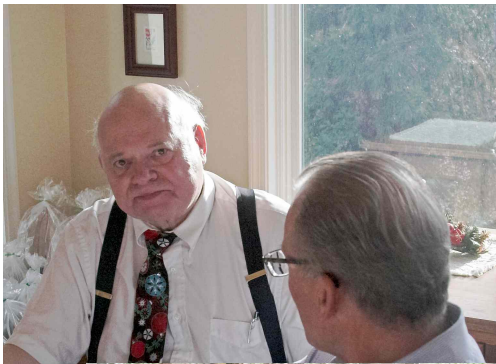
She stumbled upon mindfulness teachings after breast cancer forced a reorientation of every aspect of her life – body, mind, and spirit. Martha insists her garden has helped her grow much more than the other way around. She lives in Vienna, Virginia with her husband, two sons, and a rascally golden retriever puppy who takes great pleasure in eating her garden.

Her new book, *Blooming into Mindfulness: How the Universe Used a Garden, Cancer, and Carpools to Teach Me That Calm Is the New Happy* (January 2016) is available on Amazon. You can learn more about the book on Martha's website

<http://www.marthabrettschneider.com>

INSIDE: Photos from the Social, President's Message (p. 3), Essays (p. 4 and 5)

COMING SOON: A complete listing of the Klimavicz hybrids and the completion of the Bowie Mill hybrids.



President's Message

Though we've had some rough weather, the intermittent warm spells and Punxsutawney Phil have me cautiously optimistic that spring will be upon us soon. This will be a busy spring for our chapter...the biggest event being the joint ASA/ARS National Convention in Williamsburg from 20-24 April. More information is on the convention website <http://www.arsasaconvention2016.org/> and in the Winter 2015 edition of **The Azalean**.

This should be an enjoyable convention with a great historic location, beautiful gardens and outstanding speakers. In addition, we will have a large variety of azaleas, rhododendron and some companion plants in our plant sale. This is a great opportunity to fill out your garden with missing varieties. A complete listing of available plants will be on the convention website on 1 March. We hope to see a large turnout from our chapter and I hope I can count on many of you to lend a hand in final preparations and during the convention. The more folks we have helping, the less each one has to do.

I'm also excited about our upcoming chapter meeting on 20 March. We have an interesting speaker, Fairfax County Master Gardener, author, and award-winning photographer **Martha Brettschneider** who will be speaking

on the topic - **The Garden as Mindfulness Mentor: How Digging in the Dirt Brings Focus to Mind, Spirit, and Camera**. Susan and I have both attended courses on mindfulness in the past and I'm looking forward to hearing our speaker talk about using the garden to help focus. We will also be conducting a plant exchange. This is always an opportunity for chapter members to share their extra plants (it's amazing how plants start self-propagating when they mature!) and to find additional plants for their garden. More information is provided elsewhere in this edition of **The Azalea Clipper**.

Finally, two of the other chapters co-sponsoring the convention, the Middle Atlantic Chapter and the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, have once again invited our members to join them on a North Carolina Nursery Trip 4-6 March. If you are interested, more information is available on the chapter calendar on our website or by clicking

<http://www.nv-asa.org/attachments/50>

Thanks again to all of our members who continue to support our chapter and its programs. I look forward to seeing you on 20 March. Bring a friend!

Rick Bauer

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Visit our **website** for the latest information on chapter activities, including the convention

<http://www.nv-asa.org>

Captions

p. 2 Holiday Social pictures top-bottom, left-right –

Joe Klimavicz, Larry Martin, David Meadows, Paul Davis, Pati Gabaldoni, Budne Reinke. Rick Bauer, Paul Davis, Pati Gabaldoni. Budne Reinke, David Meadows. Marvin Friedman, David Meadows, Barbara Krabill, Diane Marcus, Susan Bauer. Diane Reinke, Carolyn Beck. Paul Beck, Jack Fowler, Larry Martin, Norma Merritt, Brenda Klimavicz, John Kirkwood [photos by Sperling]

My Azalea Journey

By California Rose (name withheld to protect the incompetent)

I LOVE Azaleas! Alas, Azaleas don't love me. Well, at least maybe not in the same way they love you. I suspect Azaleas have caught on to my imposter status as they were not a common item where I grew up in the dusty California desert. I suspect they smelled the blood of a casual, hippie granola-eater when we first met in the buttoned down Washington DC area of their birth.

We were delighted to see them rimming the deck in the backyard of our new house we moved into one November. Neatly trimmed. Prim. Proper. I was told they flowered. And flower they did into beautiful red blooms next spring. It was the beginning of the end.

My spouse very dutifully trimmed them into a nice square shape all through the next summer and fall. We smugly expected the bloom-burst next spring, but alas, we received only a grinchy few blossoms. Must have been too mild a winter. Or too rainy a fall. Or the sun shined a bit too much. Any way, it was all bad luck vice user error. We used the Azaleas as an excuse to pull out some old, overgrown, prickly, holly bushes that had overwhelmed the windows in the lower level of the house and were practically useless. We now had some space for something that would have lovely spring blooms.

About this time I noticed the bushes of the neighbors and realized they generally had more than a half dozen flowers each spring. Generally. Naturally this realization led me to blame said spouse about the amount of shaping these bushes needed or could tolerate. We agreed these wee Azalea bushes we were going to put in the front would need no pruning since they were so tiny.

Despite our less than sterling track record, I went down to the local nursery and defiantly purchased about twenty "red" Azalea bushes. I returned and proudly planted twenty completely different red shaded, leaf-shaped, hodge podge of small and large Azaleas. About eight of the ones that survived were similar but two were not. And of course they were not planted next to each other making it look like we didn't know what we were doing...which of course we didn't.

Fast forward several moves, several more houses, and a lot of reading about gardening in general and some about Azaleas. We made a pilgrimage to see them at the National Arboretum and discovered "red" actually isn't just one color or size, and has far fancier names, most of it unpronounceable unless you had the requisite few years worth of Latin training. We also found an Azalea sale at Kirkwood Presbyterian, reportedly with some rare types. Spouse and I went to the sale, cautiously bought a few,,, remembering how many actually survived our first outing.

The members of the Azalea group were so friendly and patient and never once let on that we were really dumb about this lovely flower. OK, we weren't really dumb, just really eager and without the smarts to back it up. Neither of us were gardeners. Biology wasn't our field. However, maybe with time and training our black thumbs could be improved. We figured knowledgeable club members would help. And meetings! I actually went to one and spent my time smiling and pretending I understood what was being said. At the end of it, we were invited to take home an Azalea because members were so successful at propagating these little critters that they had extra. To give away! For free! Now there were times I could have easily given away a couple of extra kids but I have never had extra plants I could part with. I tried not to let the Azalea I inherited pick up on the fact that it was almost certainly heading to its death.

We tried another meeting where people brought cuttings. Carolyn Beck's briefing on how easy it is to propagate Azaleas actually convinced me this was something I could do. I took several packets with beautiful flowers that weren't red. But I wasn't particular, for goodness sake. [see next page]

. They were Azaleas. And if I followed the simple steps, I could have dozens of plants in just a year. And then an Azalea garden in the back. And then plants all around the yard.

So I took my cuttings and gathered my pots, my gallon baggies, and made the Azalea soil from sand, pine fines and peat moss. I couldn't find the plastic markers for labeling all my precious cuttings, but I did have a bunch of popsicle sticks left over from children's craft projects and those are really the same thing, right? By the time I was done, we had a small flotilla of trays. Even assuming I only got 25 to 50%.—like most do—I still believed next summer I too would have my own colorful army of Azaleas.

Unfortunately, popsicle sticks have a love affair with mold, which they passed along to my cuttings. *Small setback*, I thought, as I removed bare Azalea sticks and plucked off browned, dying leaves. One by one, my cuttings succumbed to the black thumb. By summer, only three gasped along. Delusional, I decided three wasn't bad and if I had had only one pot of cuttings, I would actually have a 60% success rate. Unfortunately one of those didn't make it through the winter.

I flashed forward to planning for next year. I would scrub those pots, use new soil or bake the old soil, and find those plastic stakes. I would have everything ready for cutting-arrival day, in which I would pot them quickly in one or two weeks. I was so proud of my work and I even took a picture of my babies so I could remember how my Azalea garden began.

I was on the verge of claiming success when the first dreaded brown leaf appeared. I immediately removed the offending plant; lest the others get any ideas, but the death toll continued. I reinforced the survivors with an anti-fungal spray, figuring that was the secret. But soon enough, the black plague took over the remaining cuttings.

I heard some propagators take cuttings throughout the summer and into the fall. In desperation, I went outside and took cuttings from my unnamed azaleas that were there when we moved in. As of today, I have four pots of dead sticks and three pots with one cutting. Perhaps this is not my thing. Or maybe Azaleas just aren't that into me. I have several pots of rooted Ficus and Schefflera. Maybe I can sneak them into the plant exchange.

The above was thrown over the transom of the Clipper editor's office in the old NVASA building. The perpetrator escaped detection. The below is a random thought your editor dwelled upon for too long:

Pumpkin Pie in the Heat Of July?

As the weeds finally green up in my lawn this spring I'm reminded of an event many years ago. There appeared a vine with very large blue flowers on a pole in a neighbor's yard. I didn't remember seeing it before on my jogs past that house and decided that it must have just been planted. A month later the vine and flowers were still there, exactly as they had appeared the first day. Come the fall and then the winter, those large flowers on the vine were still shining as gloriously as the day they were made in some Chinese factory.

Is that better than planting the vine, waiting for the flowers and then cutting it down when it turns brown in November? I tried to think of why and then I remembered how much the tiny crocus' are enjoyed in the brown dirt, snow patches and dead leaves of late winter. Months had passed since the fall flowers and nothing else was around for competition. [see next page]

Why do I like the yellow and blue Warblers of spring more than the birds that visit my feeder? The warblers only pass through during a brief window in May whereas the Chickadees, Cardinals and Blue Jays are always here.

The dominance of azaleas in May, a mass of color in the landscape, are like no other display and I'd rather be in my backyard than anywhere else. And of course they fade, but while our time with them is short, it is special.

We don't eat pumpkin pie and drink eggnog in July. The few times that we enjoy them are memorable. Christmas lights look great in the winter evenings, but a neighbor keeps a small evergreen lit with them all year and it just becomes part of the woodwork.

For many people, seeing family at Thanksgiving is better and more relaxing than having them live next door (OK, not for everyone...).

The flower colors of spring, the dark green dominance of summer and the leaves of fall are pleasures that haven't been seen in a year and we always look forward to the show.

I hate winter: cold, windy, icy, dark. But I grudgingly admit that without that contrast the spring wouldn't be as great. So I'll raise a cup of hot chocolate to the collapsing thermometer, wait for the first crocus' and give winter its due.

Barry Sperling

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

2016

Mar 4-6 ARS North Carolina Nursery trip

Mar 20 Meeting with speaker Martha Brettschneider, Kirkwood Presbyterian Church; Plant Exchange

April 20-24 ASA/ARS Joint Convention, Williamsburg

April 30 – May 8 Member garden tours

May 14 Green Spring Gardens sale

Late May (TBD) – Tour of Arboretum Bonsai collection with Joe Gutierrez

July 10 Cutting Exchange, Kirkwood Pres. Ch.

Sept 17 Auction with Daylily Soc., Kirkwood Presbyterian Church

Oct 22 Executive Committee Meeting

Oct 23 Meeting with speaker

Dec 4 Holiday Social

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