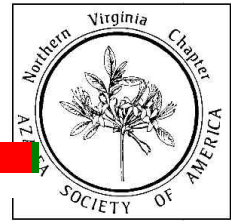


The Azalea Clipper

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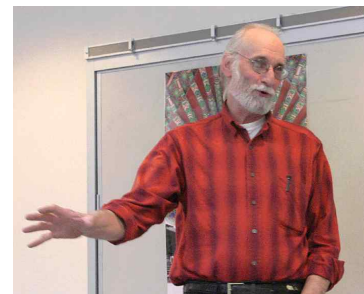
Northern Virginia Chapter Azalea Society of America



A small sampling of the colors and forms available at our biggest event of the year, the Fall Auction and Sale! Upper-left Holly Springs Pink Persuasion, Upper-right Holly Springs Crimson Queen, Lower-left Marshy Point Lavender Miss, Lower-right Holly Springs Cindy Voss; photos: C. Beck

The fall **Azalea Sale and Auction** at the Kirkwood Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Saturday September 23 from 1 – 4:30, is one of our two major fundraisers for the year...and it's always a lot of fun. **Bob Harrison** (right) will be our auctioneer and will entertain us as he encourages us to open our pocketbooks. This is a great way to get special plants that the local nurseries do not have. [See the back page for directions.]

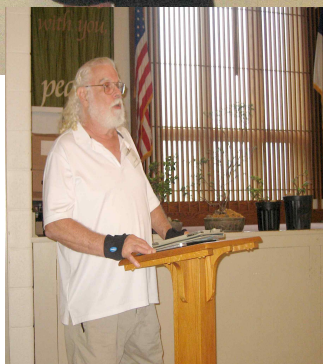
Joanne Neckel, vaneckel@verizon.net, 703-690-6031, is the contact for volunteers who will be needed on Friday, September 22 as well as Saturday, Sept. 23. Please contact her to see how you can help. A copy of our flyer is included with this clipper. Please share it with friends and family. The sale and auction is open to members and the general public. See you there - **Barb**



Award winning writer **Carolyn Beck** has a great new article on **Theodore S. Stecki** beginning on p.4 !



'Theodore S. Stecki', photo by C. Beck; also p. 4; other captions p. 8



President's Message

Another summer almost over. I know we have all been busy weeding, planting, and propagating as the days slowly become shorter and the temperature a bit cooler. Now, of course, is the ideal time to add a few of those unusual azaleas you have been thinking about. Lucky for all of us, our annual sale and auction is on Saturday, September 23. We are in need of volunteers on Friday and Saturday to help with moving and organizing all the plants. Joanne and Dan Neckel will be the contacts for those wishing to help. No volunteers will be turned away...ever! During the auction, we will have some snacks for our members. Last year we had some wonderful, competitive bidding on a few of our plants which really added to the money we are able to donate. Come and have a grand time with our members.

The Legacy project is becoming a reality for our Northern VA area. Rick Bauer has been working with a number of folks at Meadowlark Gardens over the last several months. We are still in the planning stages but there is a very real possibility we will be able to create a Legacy garden in the near future.

Speaking of Rick, John and I had a couple of days to explore Yorktown. Rick and Susan graciously offered to host us at their home. What a wonderful relaxing experience watching the birds and the water. Rick gave me a tour of all his projects in the yard and his bed of propagated Azaleas. There's nothing like seeing someone else's garden to make you want to come home and do a bit more to make yours the best it can be.

A few of our members have been housing our chapter Azaleas as they grow to selling size. It really is a great way to be involved and it just requires a shady area of your yard that you wouldn't mind setting up as a nursery and occasionally watering if we have a long, dry spell. Carolyn and Paul will be willing to help with a deer fence if that is the only thing holding you back. If you have such a spot,

please let me or Carolyn know. We are in dire need of some help with housing these plants. And you get to preview all the blooms throughout the spring.

I hope many of the plants in my yard will make the journey to our sale this September. Those that do not, are going to need to be up potted. I need volunteers willing to come over on a reasonably nice day after the sale and help pot the remaining plants. The chapter will be providing the supplies and I will have something to nibble on. Please let me know if you could come help on October 6, or 7. My grandkids will be out the door by 9:15 so I can start any time after that. I am sure I will still be at it into the wee hours if you are a person who starts later in the day.

Rick has created two auction flyers, one for posting and one that can be cut in three that can be used more as a handout. Please help us by printing up a few of these and getting them out to members of other plant groups you belong to, community bulletin boards, churches, or to those people interested in having something special in their yards. Remember, our plants do not compete with garden stores in our area because most of our plants are not available commercially.

We have several new members who have recently joined. I hope they will come soon to one of our events. Be sure to look around for new faces and welcome them. We have the upcoming September sale, and Joe Klimavicz will be speaking about his hybridizing at the October 15 meeting. He has created some of my favorite varieties with unique coloring and dainty frills. And on December 3, we will be gathering at the home of Lars Larson for our holiday celebration.

We have officer elections coming up in December. We can always use new fresh ideas. If you would be interested in a board position or helping with hospitality or promotions, please let me know ASAP.

I look forward to seeing you at the Sale and Auction.

Barb

The Linwood Hardy Azalea, 'Theodore S. Stecki', Finds Its Way Home

by Carolyn Beck

'Theodore S. Stecki' is a gorgeous evergreen azalea with many fine characteristics. The medium to large double hose-in-hose flowers, with wavy edges and a wide funnel shape, are a vivid purplish-pink. There are 3-6 per bud, making it very full flowered. It blooms abundantly during early midseason and continues over an extended period. In bud it looks like a large bouquet of tea roses. The foliage is a rich, dark, glossy green, retained well in winter. It has a compact, densely-branched plant habit and is hardy to Zone 6 (0 degrees F).



As I understand it from many sources, the man this azalea was named for was even more amazing than the plant. Ted Stecki was a longtime member of both the Azalea Society of America (ASA) and the American Rhododendron Society (ARS). In the latter, he filled a wide variety of roles, at several levels, over a span of many years. Ted was a member of The Greater Philadelphia Chapter, and later, of The Pine Barrens Chapter. In the former he served as Director, Treasurer, and Corresponding Secretary. In the latter he served as President. During his affiliation with both chapters, he presented workshops at meetings, and propagated azaleas and rhododendrons for members and for chapter plant sales, helping to introduce many new cultivars. Ted also wrote articles for both *The Azalea* and *The Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*. In recognition of his many contributions, The Greater Philadelphia Chapter awarded Ted the ARS Bronze Medal.

At the national level, Ted served as Chairman of the ARS Budget and Finance Committee for almost two decades. He became Eastern Vice President, and, subsequently, President.

Ted is perhaps best known for his involvement with the Philadelphia Flower Show (PFS). Norman and Jean Beaudry, of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the ARS, recall Ted as being the driving force behind the ARS exhibit at this event. Over a 25-year period, as Co-chair, and then Chair, of the District 8 Flower Show Committee, Ted acted as liaison with PFS show staff, assisted with the exhibit design and implementation, helped in the acquisition of plants, and managed the forcing process that brought them into bloom much earlier than was their norm. Ted viewed this exhibit as a way of promoting azaleas and rhododendron and educating the public about their horticultural needs.

Karel Bernady, a member of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, also saw the PFS as Ted's crowning glory. He saw how dedicated Ted was to this project: the time involved in creating the azalea and rhododendron displays, the interactions with The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society,

(continued)

sponsor of the PFS, and the after-action care that the plants required. Karel also notes that Ted was a strong advocate for plant society exhibitors.

Ted obtained engineering degrees from both Clemson and Rutgers Universities. He spent his career working in various managerial positions for Lockheed Martin, but his passion for plants expressed itself in his wonderful garden, located in Voorhees, New Jersey. There the soil was just the right acidity to allow ericaceous plants to thrive. This hobby eventually blossomed into a part time family business called Hill House Nursery, where azaleas and rhododendrons were featured. Somewhere along the way, Ted met Albert (Al) Reid, also of New Jersey, the primary developer of the Linwood Hardy Azaleas. Their mutual interest drew them together and grew into a lasting friendship. Ted often worked with Al, helping to evaluate new crosses and compile his data. All of Al's selected cultivars were brought to Hill House Nursery for propagation and distribution. It was Ted's stated goal to see that these impressive forms be given the acclaim that they deserved. So it was only natural that Al would name one of his best hybrids for Ted.



During a long illness in his later years, Ted's garden and nursery went into decline and many of the plants did not survive. Among those were 'Theodore S. Stecki'. So, how did the lost 'Theodore S. Stecki' make its way back to its place of origin? Here is the story:

It is not often that the planets align in such a way that an optimum outcome is attained. But life is full of surprises, and a marvelous sequence of events led 'Theodore S. Stecki' full circle, back to its roots.

First we have the paths of two kindred spirits intersecting in New Jersey; one was an avid hybridizer of azaleas and the other a horticulture enthusiast with a nursery.

Then the late Donald (Don) Hager of Hager Nursery in Fredericksburg, VA (and this is an educated guess) acquired the Linwoods from Hill House Nursery.

The Cosbys purchased a great many azaleas from the Hager Nursery. Roy and Elizabeth Cosby live in Rockville, Virginia, and have been avid collectors of azaleas for decades. The Cosby Garden (now called the Lewis-Ginter Nature Reserve) covers over 11 acres and is predominantly planted with azaleas. The number of different cultivars in their collection registers in the thousands and represents many dozens of hybrid groups, as well as species. Through the years, the Cosbys have welcomed visitors and have graciously offered propagation material. (continued)

In the fall of 2013, I had an opportunity to obtain a large number of cuttings from the Cosby Garden. My main focus was to expand our collection of Satsuki, but as I wandered through the beds, azaleas from other hybrid groups would catch my eye because of their attractive foliage. ‘Theodore S. Stecki’ was one of these that were planned for use in our Northern Virginia Chapter of the ASA.

After her father’s death in November of 2016, Suzanne (Sue) felt a need to find the azalea that was named for him. She reached out to Ann Mangels, President of the ARS, to see if a source could be found; I happened to be one of the recipients of Ann’s request for information.

As luck would have it, our chapter inventory showed we had 5 copies of this azalea. I corresponded with both Ann and Sue to let them know that I was cautiously optimistic that we had several plants of ‘Theodore S. Stecki’, but, since I had not seen the plants in bloom, I wanted to wait until spring to confirm that they were true.

When our plants bloomed, I compared them to the description in Galle’s book, *Azaleas*. Most everything corresponded, but to my disappointment, the color seemed to be in question. Galle stated it was a vivid purplish-red and our azaleas were definitely pink. But then I thought to look up the Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart number that was noted (61D), and voila` – a perfect match. Hooray!

I sent photos of these azaleas to Sue in April for final verification, and was excited and touched to receive her reply: ‘Yes that is it! Oh my goodness; happy tears on Easter morning.’

In May, Sue and her husband made the trip from New Jersey to our place in Virginia to pick up copies of her dad’s namesake. During their very pleasant visit, Sue shared some stories about her dad. One of particular interest related to the preparation needed in the forcing of azaleas and rhododendrons for the Philadelphia Flower Show. Since the show usually took place in March, those azaleas and rhodos had to spend the winter in their greenhouse. Snowfall was often an issue as it blocked the essential light from the plants. So Ted and all the children would get up on the roof and sweep the snow off with brooms. Who would have guessed the level of detail required to make these plants ready for early public viewing?

Sue also told us where they planned to locate their new azaleas – one would go in her Mom’s garden, and the other would be placed under their Redbud tree; one that Ted and his granddaughter had planted many years ago. Now the Linwood ‘Theodore S. Stecki’ is home to stay.

I am delighted to have acquired the azalea ‘Theodore S. Stecki’, and very much wish that I had known the man it was named for somewhere along his remarkable journey through life.

(continued)



Author's note: cuttings have been shared with ASA member nurserymen so that this azalea will, in the future, again be available to those who knew, loved, and respected Theodore (Ted) S. Stecki, as well as all those who enjoy beautiful azaleas. Plants should be available in 2019 from:

Ronnie Palmer of Azalea Hill Gardens and Nursery in White Hall, Arkansas

Mike White of White's Nursery in Germantown, Maryland

References

American Rhododendron Society Plant Registry. 1984. *The Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*. 38:2, 94.

Galle, Fred C. 1987. *Azaleas*. Timber Press, p 202-203.

In Memorium, Theodore S. Stecki. 2017. *The Journal of the American Rhododendron Society*. 71:2, 82.

Stecki, Theodore. 2002. "The Linwood Hardy Azalea Story". *The Azalean*, 24:1, 8.

Stecki, Theodore. 2002. "Exhibit in the Philadelphia Flower Show". *The Journal of the American Rhododendron Society* 56:4, 239.

A Note From Satsuki Expert Ajit K. Thakur, Ph.D., Springfield, Virginia

In search of not-so-common companion plants for azaleas and rhododendrons, I came across three nurseries/garden centers that may be worth visiting. Two of them are in Alexandria, Virginia and the third one is in Hamden, Connecticut, just north of New Haven.

1. **Nature By Design**

Their Slogan: An Environmentally Responsible Full-Service Nursery and Garden Center
Specializing in Native Plants

Off Rt. 1, 300 Calvert Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22301; Phone: (703) 683-GROW (4769)

e-mail: plantfolks@nature-by-design.com; Web Site: www.nature-by-design.com

The garden center houses many trees, shrubs, perennials (both herbaceous and deciduous), and a few annuals- starting with A, as in *Acer rubrum* to Z, as in *Zizia aurea* ("Golden Alexander"), and everything in-between. All of their plants are native to North America. They stock the entire spectrum of North American species deciduous azaleas, except for *R. canadense* and *R. occidentale*. They do not stock any evergreen/semi-evergreen rhododendrons (including azaleas). They are open late Wednesday and Thursday or by appointment. They are expensive; for example, a one-gallon *R. vaseyi* is about \$28.00 and a three-gallon one is about \$59.00.

2. **Holly, Woods, and Vines**

8453 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309; Phone: (703) 799-1607

e-mail: info@hollywoodsandvines.com

The nursery maintains both indoor garden materials and outdoor plants (trees, shrubs, both herbaceous and deciduous perennials, annuals, bulbs, corms, etc.). There is a good selection of evergreen azaleas- Gable, Girard, Kurume, a handful of Satsuki, and Robin Hill hybrids. The only deciduous azaleas I noticed were several large Northern Lights hybrids erroneously labeled as Exbury hybrid by the supplier. They stock many companion plants for the shade garden. For those who may be interested in re-blooming azaleas, they carry large selections of the Encore, Bloom-A-Thon, and Bloom'N Again azaleas of large sizes. It is worth spending an afternoon there. They are open: Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

(continued)

3. **Broken Arrow Nursery**

13 Broken Arrow Road, Hamden, Ct. 06518; Phone: (203) 288-1026

e-mail: sales@brokenarrownursery.com; Web Site: www.brokenarrownursery.com

Their Slogan: Growers of Rare and Unusual Plants

The Broken Arrow Nursery sells many hardy (up to Zone 5) North American, Japanese, and Korean shrubs, trees, vines, and evergreen, deciduous, and herbaceous perennials. The range of plants goes from A, as in *Abelia mosanensis* ("Fragrant Abelia") to Z, as in *Zenobia perverulenta* ("Dusty Zenobia"). They have a collection of Zone 5 hardy deciduous North American species azaleas and one Korean species, *R. schlippenbachii*. They do not carry the common New England varieties *R. prinophyllum* and *R. canadense*; I suppose because they grow wild by the hilly roadside there. One can order most of their plants online (except for the large ones). Their prices vary depending upon the size and type of plants. They close after October, opening again in April. Their working hours are: Monday-Saturday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. I will have several hard copy pictorial catalogs from them at the next ASA meeting.

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

Captions P. 2: Top right Lego Bonsai at VA Living Museum, by R. Bauer; Beck potting demo, by Jack Rubenstein; all others by R. Bauer: Sperling potting demo; Barbara Bullock receiving Stewart hybrid named for her, from C. Beck; bottom row: Barb Kirkwood; Joe Klimavicz (October speaker); Chuck Croft // Page 6 photo by Paul Beck

Find your editor's essay blog at

<http://thegardenedge.blogspot.com>

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

Schedule

September 23: Public plant sale and auction at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 1 – 4 pm

October 14: Executive Committee meeting, 10 am – 1:30, at Joanne Neckel's

October 15: Meeting with speaker at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 1 – 4 pm

December 3: Holiday Social, 1 – 4 pm, Lars and Jean Larson's

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