

April 2003



The Azalea Clipper

Northern Virginia Chapter, Azalea Society of America

Volume 24, Issue 2



Chapter Meeting on Sunday April 6th

Phil Normandy, from the Brookside Gardens Chapter, will describe "**Plant Introductions from Brookside Gardens**". He will relate the history of the program, which was comprised of nearly 2,000 individual accessions collected for the chapter by Barry Yinger, first in the wild and later from nurseries. He will show and discuss individual introductions.

More than 500 of that number were satsuki clones (some were duplicates). Phil will go into this at some length but he doesn't have slides of the individual cultivars.

Please note, this meeting is being held at the **Sherwood Regional Library south of Alexandria**. Why the Sherwood Library for this meeting? Blame it on the winter weather—the roof of the Green Spring Gardens facility, our usual meeting location, suffered snow damage and is not usable.

Directions from several starting locations begin on page 2.

April 2003

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

The meeting will be in the Sherwood Regional Library. Directions appear on page two.

April 6th at
Sherwood
Regional
Library
at
1:30 PM
EDT

Meeting Agenda

Social Gathering

Chapter Business Meeting

**

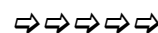
Plant Introductions from

Brookside Gardens,

Phil Normandy

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Refreshments Available



Refreshment Duty

For this meeting includes those persons whose last names begin with the letters:

A through J

For the next meeting in 2003, persons whose last names beginning with **K** through **P** will be responsible.



From the Pres

Barry Sperling

Hi All!

One of the first things that I wanted to know when I became interested in azaleas was what I already had lying around the yard. I brought some flowers to a meeting, asked for help and got some identified. Books, such as Galle, helped as did visits to nurseries to find things that were like what I had. As of now there are still some that are unidentified and others that are list as "like _____", which is not a terrible name, though a little repetitive.

I hope that DNA testing will advance to the point where we can take a snip off a plant and send it to some university (or the ASA) along with \$10 and get a positive ID! Well, maybe not tomorrow, but someday... Meanwhile, technology is improving to the point where we can make a few little steps ourselves. Copying technology is cheap enough that we have had the last Pete Vines catalog reproduced, with excellent, well-organized descriptions of over 1200 varieties, including Pete's own. Through the kindness of Pete himself and the efforts of his friend Larry Martin, this catalog will be available to every body at the next meeting!

Identifying flowers is even easier if you have pictures of them. How about all of the Robin Hills? Or the Glenn Dales? Instantly available on your computer? It just takes some work. Are you interested? Stay tuned...

Barry

Previous Chapter Meeting

The first 2003 meeting of the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Azalea Society was held at the George Mason Library on March 2, 2003. President Barry Sperling began with a short business meeting during which Treasurer Dave Nanney discussed management of treasury funds. The Treasurer recommended that a partial amount be invested in a short-term investment. A motion to that effect was made, seconded and approved by a voice vote.

There was a brief discussion of future Chapter events, including announcements of plans for a local garden tour on May 10 and a less formal "tour" of Charlottesville gardens in April if arrangements can be made. The President asked members to suggest programs that would be of interest.

New members, Eve and Bob Harrison and Suzie and Rick Bauer, were welcomed to the chapter and invited to select complimentary azalea plants, which Larry Martin had contributed to the Chapter.

The program was highlighted by a presentation by Don Voss primarily emphasizing the attraction and interest in azaleas by people over the years. Don's expertise and personal acquaintance with many of those who have worked with azaleas in past years blended into our current enjoyment of the azaleas that they produced. A well-documented presentation of slides of many beautiful azaleas—with information about size, color and other characteristics of particular azaleas—added to the information and appreciation of the contributions of many propagators.

There is no way that this writer could do justice to the wealth of information provided in this presentation in a few paragraphs. This is one of those meetings that you had to be there to get the benefit of the knowledge Don shared with us.

This was a well-attended meeting. After weeks of snow and bad weather, everyone enjoyed getting out on a nice day to think of spring, to visit casually about azaleas with friends, and to enjoy a cup of coffee or tea and other treats graciously presented by our unfailing friend, Alice. THANKS, - Alice.

Lee McElvain, Secretary

CHAPTER MEETING DIRECTIONS

FROM NORTHERN FAIRFAX COUNTY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY AND DC:

Take the **GW Parkway** south, through Alexandria (in which the name changes to **Washington St.**). After crossing over the Beltway, go about 1 1/4 mi to a right turn onto **Belle View Blvd** (just after passing the Belle Haven Marina on the left). Proceed to the first light at **Fort Hunt Rd** and go left (the Mt. Vernon Rec. Center will be on the far left corner, before making the turn). Go a little over a mile to the next light at **Sherwood Hall Lane** and turn right. The Sherwood Hall Regional Library is on the left after about a mile, just BEFORE the next light. The parking lot is on the left following the building. The entrance is in front and the meeting room is on the second floor.

FROM WESTERN FAIRFAX COUNTY AND PRINCE GEORGES COUNTY:

Take the **Beltway** to the exit for **US Rt. 1** South. Go several miles, passing over a large hill and down into the valley on the other side. Turn left at the light at **Boswell**, just past a McDonald's on the right and at a Dunkin Donuts on the left. Take the first right onto **Schelhorn Rd** (Barry lives halfway down this) and the road dead ends at **Sherwood Hall Lane** (no light, gas station on right). You will be facing the library parking lot. Turn left and then immediately right into it. The entrance is in front and the meeting room is on the second floor.

(Continued on page 4)

The following article was written by Jesse Terres for Chrysanthemum. Mr. Terres is a friend of Barry Sperling It is reproduced here by permission.

HORTICULTURAL NOTES

By The Purple Thumb

Years ago when I was living and working in the Pacific Northwest several of my fellow scientists and engineers were building their own homes. I thought if they could do it so could I. So, I built a 672 square foot one story cabin with a full daylight basement and deck. It took me only two years working on the weekends. After completion, I concluded I could have built it in one year if I could hit the nail every time instead of my thumb. Hence, the nick name.

This June will mark 17 years we have lived in Bowie. During that time I've added about 45 yards or more of organic material to my garden areas (I want to be like the English, constantly improving my soil). This includes several yards of Compro, Leafgro, Mulch, Wood chips, ProMix, a few yards of topsoil, and about 500 bags of leaves. As I walk around my yard, I wonder where it all went. Several years ago tree trimmers dumped about 12 yards of wood chips in my front yard and every night after work I would spread 5 to 10 wheelbarrow loads around my garden areas. One day my wife asked me when I was going to get rid of the wood chips! I told her I had been shoveling for a month. I thought I'd never get them moved. For a while it seemed they would never lose their white color and I was going to be knee deep in wood chips forever. Then one day a couple of years later I realized they had disappeared.

Well, it's easy to figure. Using a leaf bag full of leaves as an example if you were to shred them you could probably pack another 5 to 10 bags into the one bag. If you let the leaves rot until they're good compost, the consistency of Leafgro, you could probably squeeze about 25 bags into one bag. If you let the original bag decompose down to its final product, Humus, you'd probably only have a couple of tablespoons left and in

the past 16 years that's where my 45 yards went - into Humus.

The growing season following the year I gathered all those leaves and spread them on my garden area I didn't have the successes expected. That's because the leaves were not completely broken down into what we think of as usable compost. Since the leaves were not completely decomposed they were extracting nitrogen from the soil as they continued their journey through the decaying process into the final product--Humus. Humus is the black goeey stuff that turns water dark brown when you make compost tea. Humus is soluble and in a form that the hair roots of plants can absorb when dissolved in water. The above is one of the reasons compost rich soil may need to be supplemented with fertilizer to provide sufficient nutrients for growing plants.

Maple leaves and many others decay rapidly and are probably usable within a year. Oak leaves take about two years to decompose into a usable state. In both cases they can be used as mulch at most any state. Leaves lying on top of the ground do not extract as much nitrogen from the soil as when they are incorporated into the soil.

There are many reasons why adding compost to the soil is beneficial to plants and in our case chrysanthemums. The resulting Humus reduces the plant's reliance on specific pH levels. Plants are usually in need of certain nutrients that become unavailable when the pH falls out of a desired range. Compost tends to make those nutrients more available regardless of the pH. My friend, Frank Reger, has been particularly sensitive to plants needs for a certain pH level. His observations have been that whenever a certain pH range is recommended the plants will respond better when the pH is maintained at the higher end of the plant's range. Load the Mum bed with compost and the problem will go away.

Another reason compost is so good for your gardening needs is that it has an abundance of trace elements. It is extremely difficult to load up the garden with so much compost as to make the soil toxic in any area. If you have a tendency to favor composting and want to be certain you have all the trace elements cov-

ered, the next time you visit the shore take an empty gallon jug with you and bring it back filled with seawater. Sprinkle the compost pile with the seawater and you'll have all bases covered. Don't worry about the salt. We spread tons of salt every winter and it doesn't bother the weeds growing in the gutters or our gardens next to the sidewalk and besides the summer rains will leach it out.

There isn't enough time to go into this subject in detail, but soil rich in compost and humus tends to eliminate a lot of the fungus diseases chrysanthemums suffer from as well as eliminate a lot of insect problems. If I had my way, I'd grow in virgin soil loaded with compost every year. Some growers essentially do that. They buy fresh topsoil from the nurseries every year and grow their plants in pots. They tell me they have virtually no insect damage or disease. Those growers seldom spray and one fellow told me he never sprays (Well, maybe sometimes).

I can remember years ago when I grew commercially having no insect or disease problems the first year. We had a large garden area about 75' by 75' and my grandfather who worked for the Borough would dump truck load after truck load of leaves on the garden every year. The second year I began to have some insect problems. That was the year I learned about the two-potted spider mite. The third year I had no choice but to spray on a regular basis and the pesticides I used were deadly and no longer available without a permit. It was a constant battle and on a few occasions the mites won. I learned a lot that year.

I'm sorry to say that my compost pile is on its way out. I used to dump bags of leaves under a large White Pine in my yard, but the tree died exposing my shenanigans and I was forced to clean up the mess. Composting on a large scale like I used to do has gotten to be a bit of a challenge recently. I'm now looking forward to purchasing Leafgro by the bag and letting someone else do the buggy lugging for me.



(Continued from page 2) Directions

FROM THE SOUTH,

Take **I-95** north to the **Rt. 1 North** exit just over the Occoquan. **Sherwood Hall Lane** is a right exit just past a Multiplex movie theater (on the left) and toward a hospital. Just after the second light turn right into the library parking lot. The entrance is in front and the meeting room is on the second floor.



Annual Chapter Garden Tours

Watch for an announcement next month for the annual Northern Virginia Garden Tours. President Barry Sperling will make the arrangements, probably for the early May. A flyer will be in the mail in plenty of time.

The Azalea Clipper is published BI-monthly by the **Northern Virginia Chapter** of the **Azalea Society of America**. The officers of this Chapter are:

President:	Barry Sperling	(703)765-7062
Vice President:	Dan Krabill	(703)534-7441
Secretary:	Lee McElvain	(703)536-9730
Treasurer:	David Nanney	(703)644-5651
Corresponding Secretary:	Frances Louer	(703)754-2824

News items may be provided to **Frances Louer**,
15800 Palmer Lane, Haymarket, VA 20169-1808.
E-mail: plouer@msn.com

The Azalea Clipper

Northern Virginia Chapter,
Azalea Society of America



Frances Louer, Corresponding Secretary
15800 Palmer Lane
Haymarket, VA 20169-1808

NEXT MEETING,
SUNDAY APRIL 6TH
1:30 PM
