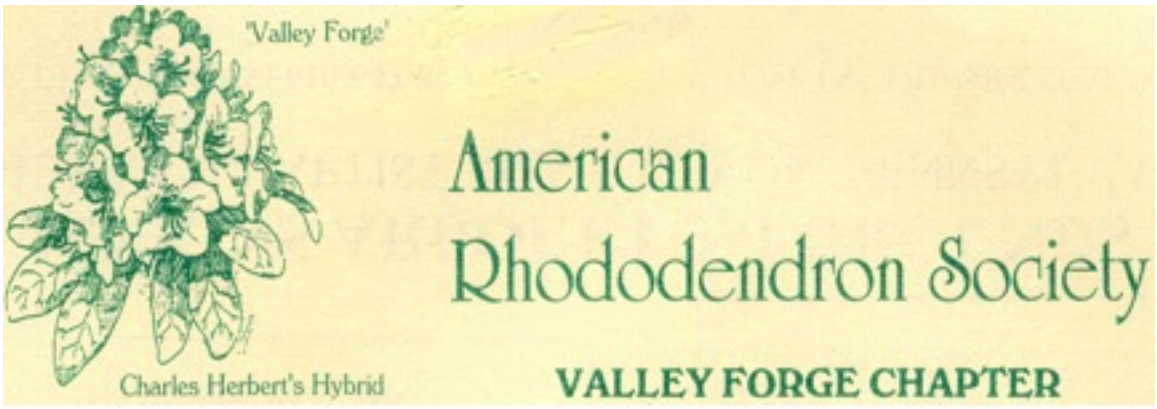


P.O. Box 715 Southeastern, PA 19399-0715

Web site: www.ValleyForgeARS.org

NEWSLETTER *October / November 2013*

Unless specified otherwise, meetings are at Jenkins Arboretum in Devon

Calendar at a Glance

October 17 (Thu.) 7:30 pm, Janet Novak, Native Orchid Conf., "America's Native Orchids"

November 10 (Sun.) 2:00 pm, Annual Banquet at St. Davids, Speaker is Jim Fry, NY Chapter (social hour starts at 1:00 pm) "4,000 Azaleas from Bill Steele, & Azaleas to Die For"

January 19 (Sun.) 2:00 pm, TBA

President's Message

The District 8 fundraiser on Aug 18 at the gardens of Michael Mills and Randy Dalton was a big success. The beautiful and spacious gardens inspired lots of bids that raised over $1400 for the Endowment Fund and Species Foundation. All the plants and cuttings were sold and 35-40 people had a great time.

Again I'll emphasize that we all need to recruit new members to join our chapters. Bring family members, friends, and neighbors to any of our meetings. Your board would welcome ideas from you that can help us connect to new and younger audiences.

We have begun preparations for next year's Plants for Members (P4M) sale. Cuttings from local collections will be featured and sold at cost at the September 2014 meeting. Even though we call it P4M, please bring anyone interested in growing rhodys.

See you at the September 19 chapter meeting and Wayne Guymon's presentation.

Regards,

Bob Smetana **(610) 688-5249, vfarssmetana@yahoo.com**

Chapter's web site: www.ValleyForgeARS.org

On Oct. 17 (Thursday) at 7:30 pm:

Janet Novak: "Exploring America's Native Orchids"

Janet Novak is a molecular biologist by training and a scientific editor by trade, but it's plants that are her passion. She has been a member of North American Rock Garden Society for 13 years. She gardens on a city lot of 1/6 acre, where she has found room for 660 plant varieties, including four hardy orchids. Her knowledge of native orchids comes from membership in the Native Orchid Conference and various botanical societies.

Although most people think of orchids as tropical plants, the temperate region of the US has almost 150 orchid species. This program explores the beauty and diversity of America's wild orchids, emphasizing the ones native to the northeast. The talk will cover some intriguing aspects of orchid biology, good places to see native orchids, and where to buy ethically propagated orchids for your garden.

Refreshments: Those whose names start with letters R to Z are asked to please bring finger-food treats.

On Nov. 10 (Sunday) at 1:00 pm:

Annual Banquet at St. Davids Golf Club

Social Hour and Cash Bar at 1:00 p.m., Dinner at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Jim Fry, New York Chapter, ARS

Program: *"4,000 Azaleas from Bill Steele / Azaleas to Die For"*

Jim Fry has been a member of the ARS since 1996. He served in many roles at the New York Chapter including as Chapter President for two 3-year terms, and was chairman of the 2001 NE conference, hosted by the New York chapter. He was honored by the ARS New York Chapter with a Bronze Medal in 2006.

Recently retired after 44 years from his own, he divides his spare time between growing azaleas and small leaf rhododendrons, constructing bizarre creatures from recycled fire extinguishers & propane tanks, and trying to stay on his wife's good side. His goal in that endeavor is to push the geographic limits of the Holly Spring evergreen azaleas.

His presentation for the day will be in two parts. Part one is about his efforts to expand his azalea collection by buying 4000 rooted cuttings from Steele's Nursery and trying to hide them from his wife. Part two is "Azaleas to die for". These are some of his favorite varieties.

Thanks to Kathy Woehl, we have 3 great entrees and low prices: Cob Salad with Chicken, $24; Grilled Black Angus Sirloin, $29; Stuffed Flounder w/Baby Spinach, $26. All include soup, vegetable and desert. Reservations must be received by November 1, 2013.

See enclosed flier with registration form. RSVP today!

The Valley Forge Chapter of the

AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

cordially invites Members and Friends to the

Annual Dinner

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2013

1:00 p.m.

ST. DAVIDS GOLF CLUB

845 RADNOR STREET ROAD • WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA

610-688-20 10 • www.stdavidsgc.com

Social Hour and Cash Bar at 1:00 p.m.

Dinner at 2:00 p.m.

Speaker

Jim Fry, New York Chapter

"4,000 Azaleas from Bill Steele / Azaleas to Die For"

RSVP: Please Return Reservation • Proper Attire

District 8 Cuttings Exchange & Auction

District 8 held its Annual Cutting Exchange and Plant Auction on August 18th in the beautiful gardens at the home of Michael Mills and Randy Dalton in the West Mount Airy section of Philadelphia, PA.

Karel Bernady auctioned donated plants to the attendees who represented all of the District's chapters. The weather was beautiful and the event raised $1,300. As event organizer, Valley Forge Chapter will donate the proceeds equally to the ARS Endowment Fund and the ARS Research Foundation. This continues to be an enjoyable, well-attended event.

We thank everyone who contributed in any way to the success of this annual event, especially those who brought any of the wide variety of plants there were to choose from.

Membership Dues for 2012-2013

Renewal notices will be mailed to members who have not prepaid, are not life members, or have not joined recently and thus become automatically a member for the coming membership year.

Your check, payable to Valley Forge ARS should be sent to

American Rhododendron Society
Valley Forge Chapter
P.O. Box 715
Southeastern, PA 19399-0715

by December 1, to save us reminder notices and you a late fee for receiving the Winter issue of the ARS Journal.

With Christmas approaching, why not include a gift membership to a friend or relative with your renewal forms?

USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map

The US Department of Agriculture released a new interactive version of its Plant Hardiness Zone Map. It was produced jointly with Oregon State University your editor's alma mater.

Plant hardiness zone designations represent the average annual extreme minimum temperatures at a given location during a particular time period. They do not reflect the coldest it has ever been or ever will be at a specific location, but simply the average lowest winter temperature for the location over a specified time. Low temperature during the winter is a crucial factor in the survival of plants at specific locations.

Compared to the 1990 version, zone boundaries in this edition of the map have shifted in many areas. The new map is generally one 5-degree Fahrenheit half-zone warmer than the previous map throughout much of the United States. This is mostly a result of using temperature data from a longer and more recent time period; the new map uses data measured at weather stations during the 30-year period 1976-2005. In contrast, the 1990 map was based on temperature data from only a 13-year period of 1974-1986.

Although a poster-sized version of this map will not be available for purchase from the government as in the past, anyone may download the map free of charge from the Internet onto their personal computer and print copies of the map as needed.

In the past, the map was of the entire United States and it was difficult to recognize differences that occurred in short distances. The new map is computer based and you may zoom in on a specific area. The above map has been zoomed in on the Valley Forge region.

Beware of Boxwood Blight and Sudden Oak Death

Boxwood Blight

Leaves of a blighted boxwood

This summer, the PA Department of Agriculture found two additional cases of boxwood blight in Pennsylvania, both traced back to distributors outside of Pennsylvania. Earlier, in May, PDA announced that it had found boxwood blight in Cumberland County in a residential setting.

Boxwood blight is a fungal disease caused by *Cylindrocladium pseudonaviculatum* (syn. *Calonectria pseudonaviculata*). Once infected, boxwood will quickly yellow and drop its leaves. **There is no treatment or cure** and the infected plants and surrounding leaf litter must be burned and the soil sterilized to prevent reinfection.

PDA's plant regulatory official, Dana Rhodes, is nurseries, retail garden centers, and landscape contractors to be sure that the source of their boxwoods is following phytosanitary protocols established by the industry.

"We are urging green industry companies that are purchasing boxwoods to ask a lot of questions of their vendors," said Rhodes. "Are they following established industry best practices to assure that their boxwoods are not being infected by boxwood blight? Where has their stock come from?"

For more information on Boxwood Blight, go to http://www.boxwoodblight.org.

Sudden Oak Death

Rhododendron with P. ramorum infection

Recently, PA Department of Agriculture has been busy tracking down over 100 potential cases of sudden oak death (SOD) in Pennsylvania. Some have involved commercial operations, some residential consumers.

Caused by the plant pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*, the disease affects oaks and a wide variety of other plant species including those in the Rhododendron and Viburnum genera. **If plants are found to be infected, they must be destroyed.** For an up-to-date list of susceptible species from USDA APHIS, click here.

SOD is not yet present in the wild in Pennsylvania (that we know of), but forests in the far west have been infected. Certain forested areas in California and Oregon have been devastated by the disease.

Some nurseries in the far west also have been infected.

PDA's Dana Rhodes is urging Pennsylvania green industry companies that are purchasing product that could carry the P. ramorum pathogen from nurseries in affected areas to be sure that their source is disease-free.

For more information on Sudden Oak Death, go to http://www.suddenoakdeath.org.

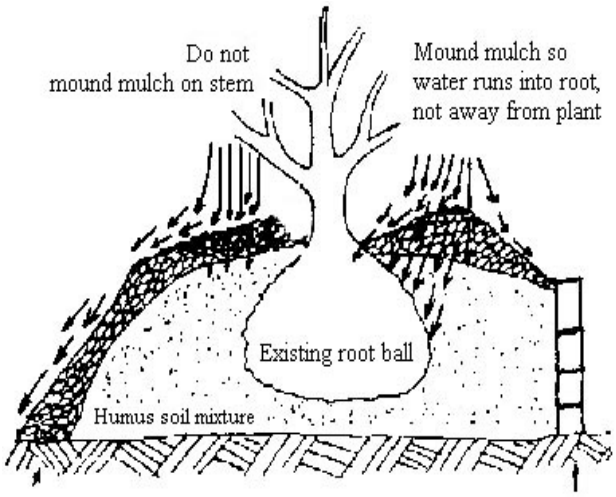
What do you say when your neighbor asks why their rhododendron is dying?

I am sure that most of us have been asked by someone why our plants look so good and theirs are dying. Of course one would have to be psychic and equipped with a microscope and other laboratory equipment to do a proper diagnosis, but, short of that, we can fall back on generalities about what rhododendrons and azaleas need and what they often don't get. So here goes a one size fits all explanation:

First, it helps to be able to tell when a branch is dead. If there is no green cambium layer under the bark, then that branch is dead and it is best to prune such branches off. Even if there are no green leaves but there is a green cambium layer under the bark, the branch is alive. Such branches have dormant buds that may open and produce leaves in the future. One can check for this with their fingernail, or while cutting off the dead branches.

Drainage and Mulching

The chief cause of rhododendron death is water, either too much or not enough. Too much causes root rot, which is terminal. Too little causes dieback, which kills the plant one branch at a time. Rhododendrons and most other plants like "moist well-drained soil". That makes it sound like no matter what you do you can't do it right. However, if the area has good **drainage** and you use **mulch**, it should be easy to achieve moist well-drained soil. To check for good drainage, dig a hole about 10 to 12 inches deep and fill it with water. Then after it drains, fill it again and see how long it takes to drain. If the hole drains within an hour you have good drainage. If the water has not drained out of the hole within one hour, the soil is poorly drained and you must correct the drainage problem before planting. Install a perforated pipe or drain tile in the garden, making sure that the outlet is lower than the bottom of the planting hole, or build raised beds. [The sketch by Harold Greer shows how to use a raised bed.] Rhododendrons are easy to transplant most any time. It is best to avoid transplanting when new leaves are coming out or the ground is frozen. If the drainage is OK, then



The sketch by Harold Greer of a raised bed.

you can keep the area moist with a good mulch layer. Mulches conserve water in the soil, insulate roots against summer heat and winter cold, and discourage weeds. Replenish mulches annually, as needed, to maintain a 3- to 5-inch layer on the soil surface. Fine-textured organic mulches such as pine straw or shredded bark are best. Fall leaves are excellent mulch, except don't use black walnut or butternut leaves. They have a chemical, juglone that kills rhododendrons and azaleas. During hot dry weather, it is common to see rhododendron leaves look wilted. It they look wilted in the heat of the day, that is normal. If they look wilted in the morning, that is a sign that the plant is either too dry or dying from being too wet. It should be easy to tell which, but don't assume, check the soil with your finger. During drought periods, it may be necessary to water once in a while. A deep watering once or twice a week is much better than frequent watering. Only water when the plants show signs of being dry.

Improper Planting

If the soil is moist and well drained, then the second most common problem is **improper planting**. Since the plants may have been planted a number of years earlier, this is a difficult area to consider. However, if a plant has not put out new green shoots in a year, it is dead and you can dig it up and look at the roots. If they are growing in a circle and strangling each

Why rhododendron dying? - continuted

other, the plant was not planted properly. You could dig up the other plants and try to open up the roots so they don't strangle each other. If necessary, cut some of the roots so they don't strangle others. If you do dig them up, never let the roots dry out. Dip them in muddy water occasionally while working on them. If they dry out, they will die. Also, never plant rhododendrons and azaleas near black walnut or butternut trees. Their leaves, nut hulls, and roots produce a toxin called juglone, which kills many kinds of plants including rhododendrons and azaleas. Rarefind Nursery has an excellent guide on proper planting of rhododendrons and azaleas.

Soil Nutrients and pH

The third most common cause of decline and death is improper nutrients and pH. Rhododendrons need acidic soil, a pH of between 4.5 and 6. Fortunately, rhododendrons are great pH detectors. If the leaf is green, don't worry. If the leaf is yellow with green veins, you may have a pH problem, however it could be a nutrient problem also. In any case it is **chlorotic**.

Photo of a chlorotic leaf by Harold Greer.

If the leaf is uniformly yellow, it is most likely a nitrogen deficiency and not chlorosis. There are many causes of chlorosis. Poor drainage, planting too deeply, heavy soil with poor aeration, insect or fungus damage in the root zone and lack of moisture all induce chlorosis. After these conditions are eliminated as possible causes, soil testing is in order. Chlorosis can be caused by malnutrition caused by alkalinity of the soil, potassium deficiency, calcium deficiency, iron deficiency, magnesium deficiency or too much phosphorus in the soil. Iron is most readily available in acidic soils between pH 4.5-6.0. When the soil pH is above 6.5, iron may be present in adequate amounts, but is in an unusable form, due to an excessive amount of calcium carbonate. This can occur when plants are placed too close to cement foundations or walkways. Soil amendments that acidify the soil, such as iron sulfate or sulfur, are the best long-term solution. For a quick but only temporary improvement in the appearance of the foliage, ferrous sulfate can be dissolved in water (1 ounce in 2 gallons of water) and sprinkled on the foliage. Some garden centers sell chelated iron that provides the same results. Follow the label recommendations for mixing and applying chelated iron. A combination of acidification with sulfur and iron supplements such as chelated iron or iron sulfate will usually treat this problem. Chlorosis caused by magnesium deficiency is initially the same as iron, but progresses to form reddish purple blotches and marginal leaf necrosis (browning of leaf edges). Epsom salts is a good source of supplemental magnesium. Chlorosis can also be caused by nitrogen toxicity (usually caused by nitrate fertilizers) or other conditions that damage the roots such as root rot, severe cutting of the roots, root weevils or root death caused by extreme amounts of fertilizer. In any case, never use aluminum sulfate. Although garden centers sell it and it is great for hydrangeas, it will kill rhododendrons and azaleas if used repeatedly. Also never use fertilizers with chemical nitrogen. Always use a good rhododendron and azalea fertilizer with organic nitrogen like HollyTone. Also, always fertilize in the spring and at half the rate on the package.

Insects and Fungi

The least common cause of decline and death is insects and fungi, things that you can spray for. The most common causes are cultural, things that arise because of where and how the plant was planted. Proper care at planting will usually prevent problems later on due to insects or fungi.

Why rhododendron dying? - continuted

One common insect problem that can be avoided is Lace Bugs.

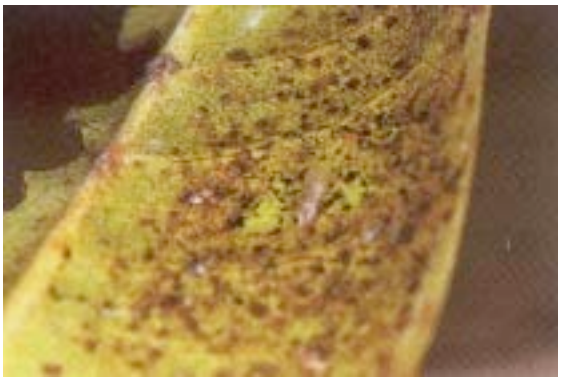


Photo of Lace Bug damage on underside of leaf.

Some rhododendrons and azaleas are susceptible to Lace Bug damage. However, this problem can be averted by planting such plants in areas with partial shade. Natural enemies of Lace Bug can keep them in check if the plant doesn't receive too much sun.

For other problems check out Steve Henning's online Guide to Common Problems & Their Solutions

Other Resources

Make sure your neighbor realizes that the local extension service can test soil samples and look at samples of diseased plant material to check for problems. Also, you can help your neighbor find varieties of plants that do well in your area. Unfortunately, some local garden centers stock plants based upon sales appeal rather than on whether they are suitable for the surrounding area. As a result these plants soon die.

Lists of plants that are known to do well in a particular area are available in the ARS website's Proven Performer Lists.

District 8 Report

by your District Director, Steve Henning

As your District Director, I must submit a report to the ARS twice each year. Here are some snippets from the Fall Report:

The dissolution of the Pine Barrens Chapter has been finalized.

Starting in 2013, Michael Martin Mills has been editor of the Greater Philadelphia ***RhodoGravure***. For an entertaining read, check it out at: http://www.gpchapterars.org/newsl

Michael Martin Mills and I have sought input on the possibility of making the name of the ARS more international. We received one feedback favorable to such a change and received several responses that were strongly opposed. I have discussed such a change with several members from Canada and Europe and they were against such a change. I think this is a solution without a problem. It can be compared to Americans joining the Royal Horticultural Society and expecting them to change their name. That would cause them to loose their identity and be quite laughable.

Camellia Expert, William Ackerman

William Ackerman, a plant hybridizer at the U.S. National Arboretum, oversaw a valuable collection of camellia species and varieties. Two successive harsh winters devastated these big, lovely, evergreen shrubs. Of 956 specimens — many collected by explorers in Southeast Asia — only 15 had survived.

Ackerman died July 6, 2013, at the age of 89, but he left the world with new camellias bred to endure temperatures down of -15F.

Most of his introductions bloom in the fall and early winter, including his Winter series. Winter's Beauty is a compact, upright shrub with soft pink blooms; Winter's Dream has a stronger pink, semi-double flower and is more vigorous and upright. Winter's Snowman is white with anemone-type flowers, suited for mass planting as a narrow hedge.

His later Ashton series included Ashton's Ballet, with rose-like flowers in two-tone pink; Ashton's Snow, with white semi-double blooms that last from early November to late January; and Ashton's Supreme, which is covered in deep lavender-pink blooms in the fall.

Wanted: Garden artists

2014 Flower Show is on the drawing board

We're all practitioners of the art of gardening, and an eye for gardening art is just what the committee that designs and mounts our annual exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show is looking for.

The overall theme of the Flower Show next March is "ARTiculture." The design process starts this summer, and committee chair Linda Hartnett wants more people to get in on the ground floor, generating ideas and helping come up with another award-winning exhibit design. Contact her at LindaHartnett@gmail.com or 215-287-0731.

Resources on our website:

http://ValleyForgeARS.org

The main sections of our website are:

- **Join Us:** Membership Application
- **Links:** Information, Gardens & Sources
- **Events:** Our Events Calendar
- **News:** Flower Show Results & Newsletters
- **Contact Us:** Our Mailing Address
- **Members Area:** Chapter History Pages
- **Gallery:** Photo Gallery for Members

From A Guide for the Hungry Gardener:

Potato Dumplings

2 lb. potatoes (boiled day before in skins)
3 Tbs. butter
2 Tbs. chopped onion
2 Tbs. chopped parsley
3 eggs
3 Tbs. flour
salt and nutmeg to taste
½ tsp. marjoram
flour to shape dumplings

Peel and rice the boiled potatoes. Sauté onion and parsley in butter. Combine well all ingredients. With floured hands, shape 6 to8 round dumplings until they are very smooth with no cracks. Dump in large pot of salted gently boiling water 15 to 20 minutes. Garnish with sautéed breadcrumbs.

White Spots on Stems

There are two common causes of white spots on stems of rhododendrons and azaleas:

Lichens: Lichens are green to gray-green mossy growths on the stems of old, neglected plants. The lichen itself does not actually damage the plant. The lichen is usually a sign that the plant needs to be fertilized, cultivated, mulched, or treated for nematodes.

Azalea Bark Scale: They create white egg sacks, which are easy to spot. The insect is hidden from view by the egg sac, a covering of felted or matted waxy threads. There are sprays for scale insects but the timing of spraying is critical. Adult females and eggs are protected by the egg sac from virtually any pesticide. The key to control is treatment in late spring and late fall when the nymphs are present. Imidacloprid (Bayer Advanced Garden Tree & Shrub Insect Control) applied to the soil as a systemic can provide season-long control. For specific controls, see the current state extension service recommendations.

American Rhododendron Society

Valley Forge Chapter
P.O. Box 715
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FIRST-CLASS MAIL

NEWSLETTER

August / September 2013

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Webmaster:	Jim Willhite	(484) 887-0232

Chapter’s web site: www.ValleyForgeARS.org

Please inform us of any email changes or if you receive this **newsletter** by letter carrier rather than email, even though you have email. Please inform Steve Henning of any changes (**rhodyman@earthlink.net**).