



14 Northwoods Road, Radnor, PA 19087

Chapter's Website: www.ValleyForgeARS.org

NEWSLETTER *May / June 2020*

Unless specified otherwise, meetings are at Jenkins Arboretum in Devon

Calendar at a Glance

- April 29 – May 3** **ARS Convention in Vancouver, WA - CANCELED**
- May 1-3** **Valley Forge Chapter's Plant Sale - CANCELED**
- May 9 (Sat.)** **Joint GV-VF ARS Truss Show - CANCELED**
- June 28 (Sun.)** **VF ARS Chapter Meeting and Picnic - CANCELED**
- August 16 (Sun.)** **District 8 Cuttings Exchange and Auction STILL SCHEUDLED**
- Sept. 25-27** **ARS 2020 Fall Conference in Gettysburg, PA CANCELED**

President's Message

First off, I hope everyone is safe and doing as well as can be expected through this challenging period. I usually begin my message with a review of our recent past meetings and wonderful speakers and a look forward to exciting Rhododendron activities the Chapter always plans for the upcoming season. This year is much different as you will soon discover when you browse through this year's May/June Newsletter and view one cancellation after another. Nevertheless, we are all Rhododendron enthusiasts and love the beautiful blooms our favorite plants display at this time of the year. And this year especially is a year where we might want to take a moment to reflect on why we are members of the American Rhododendron Society. I'm certain our beloved Rhododendrons will never let us down and the many vigorous flower buds I observed this late winter and early spring should provide us with another spectacular show and a very special bloom season that should definitely be a plus when we need it most.

Since we won't have any meetings or events coming up in the near future, here's an idea and please think it over. In this time of social

distancing we probably won't be able to get around to visit the many private gardens, public gardens and arboretums in America's Garden Capital and see their beautiful Rhododendrons in full display. However, many of us are quite fortunate that we have our own gardens to help to lift our spirits and keep us forging ahead. What if we took photos of some of our favorite Rhododendrons and/or other plants that we have in our own gardens and back yards and passed them along to share with other Chapter members. Just a thought but it might help to keep everyone connected during these trying times and it might even help in a small way to "encourage interest in and disseminate knowledge about Rhododendrons and Azaleas." Again, just a thought.

I'm truly looking forward to when we once again meet together in one location as the Valley Forge Chapter ARS.

Until then, please stay safe.

Sincerely,
 Jerry O'Dell, (610) 608-2018,
westdell@verizon.net

VF ARS website: www.ValleyForgeARS.org

The Plant Sale at Jenkins arboretum is CANCELED;
The ARS Convention in Portland, Oregon is CANCELED;
The joint GP & VF ARS Truss Show is CANCELED;
The VF ARS annual meeting & picnic is CANCELED;
The ARS Fall Meeting in Gettysburg is CANCELED;

Editor's Note:

Greetings fellow rhododendron people. I hope you and your loved ones are staying safe and managing during these difficult times.

This newsletter is going to be a lot different. All of the events I normally feature in the May-June edition are CANCELED. The Plant Sale, the Convention, the Truss Show, the annual meeting and picnic, the ARS Fall Meeting in Gettysburg are all CANCELED. The District 8 Cutting Exchange and Auction is still scheduled.

The ARS is encouraging chapters to keep in touch with their members. Well, our chapter is its members, so we are encouraging you to reach out and check on each other. I will gladly send out interim email newsletters if people send me beautiful pictures, human interest stories, Rhodo stories and highlights, pest notes, weed stories, photos from their gardens or other pertinent stories and articles. Email them to me at rhodyman@earthlink.net.

In light of these cancellations of our normal ARS activities, I am including a contact list for members with phone numbers and encouraging you to stay in touch with each other. We have some neighborhood libraries on our normal distribution list, but since they are closed and I am including some contact information that should not be made public, I will not send this issue to libraries.

I am on the ARS Executive Committee and we have been having electronic meetings using

Zoom, the program that many schools and universities are using to stay in touch. The big question we have is when will we be able to have our conventions again? The District 8 Chapters were so lucky to be able to host the Philadelphia ARS Convention last year with no complications. Imagine doing all of that work and having to postpone it for 2 years. That is what they are doing. The Oregon Chapters have rescheduled their 75th Anniversary Convention planned for this year in Portland until 2022. This includes all of the talks and garden tours that were planned. They have refunded all monies sent in for the convention. I was lucky enough to get my money back from the hotels and airlines. The travel agent I use waited until the flight was Canceled, then the airline had to give a full refund. The convention for the spring of 2021 is scheduled for Nova Scotia. That might be in question. Let's hope it happens.

Since this newsletter is not like any other chapter newsletter, it will feature some new articles, tips, and trivia.

Keep in touch with your loved ones, friends and neighbors. We are in this together.

Here is the CDC's info on do-it-yourself facemasks:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Shelter, garden, and walk in safety,

Steve Henning, -

Membership Telephone List

**List removed from online newsletter
version for member privacy.**



ARSSStore.org

Where every purchase benefits the
American Rhododendron Society

We hope you are and your loved ones are staying safe during this Pandemic. If you are doing online shopping during these challenging times, please remember to use the ARS affiliate stores, AmazonSmile, Walmart or Target.

Stay Safe!

COVID-19 precautions and community impact have changed our lives. The first priority is to stay safe and to protect the most vulnerable in our communities. We owe our first responders and medical staffs a HUGE THANK YOU. They are our heroes in these troubled times. We also must be grateful to those that are manning other essential activities so that we can keep our lives as normal as possible.

It is important to stay in touch with our friends and neighbors.

Do you want to avoid going out?

Many of us, especially those in the more vulnerable population, are avoiding going out during this pandemic. We try to get groceries delivered. We order more things on line. If we dare venture to go out, many if not all of our "non-essential" stores are closed. Stores that can stay open have social-distancing rules in place and may have some empty shelves. This is a time when many of us are turning to online shopping so we don't need to go out.

Quick Links:



Walmart.ARSSStore.org



Target.ARSSStore.org



Amazon.ARSSStore.org

Use these links for the ARS affiliate store of your choice.

The good news is that ARS online affiliate stores such as Walmart, Amazon, and Target have many of the items we need. Since these stores are affiliated with the ARS, if you go to them through the ARSSStore, they give the ARS a donation at no cost to you, their customer. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at manager@arsstore.org

AmazonSmile is our Amazon now.

If you use Amazon.ARSSStore.org you will be automatically taken to the ARS AmazonSmile store. I am sure some of you might have been surprised to see this, but AmazonSmile is our only Amazon option. If you are an Amazon customer, you can enter through Amazon.ARSSStore.org and still receive all your normal perks.

Target and Walmart Have Store Pickup.

The ARS also has Target.ARSSStore.org, and Walmart.ARSSStore.org online ARS affiliate stores to use. These stores donate up to 4% to the ARS. A growing number of ARS members are using these stores, especially in these troubled times. **Target**, and **Walmart** have most anything **Amazon** has, especially **Walmart**, and some things **Amazon** doesn't have such as store brands. **Target** and **Walmart** have home delivery as well as free store pickup. They have similar low prices. In some cases, home delivery is free.

Rhododendron Trivia Quiz: true or false

Rhododendrons are the beautiful plants we all grow and love. But, how much do we really know about these plants?

True or False: All azaleas are rhododendrons.

True. The genus *Rhododendron* is a large group and includes all azaleas. However, keep in mind, all rhododendrons are not azaleas! That said, any discussion of rhododendrons includes azaleas unless otherwise noted.

True or False: Rhododendrons are native plants.

Well, true, there are 4 lepidote rhododendrons, 4 elepidote rhododendrons, and 18 deciduous azaleas native to the US. But there about 1000 species of rhododendron in the world, mostly in Southeast Asia. The plants you encounter at a local nursery will more than likely not be of a native variety. The Pacific Northwest is fortunate to have a climate prime for growing a wide range of rhododendrons. That is the reason the Species Foundation can grow about 850 different species.

True or False: Rhododendrons are essentially pest-free.

False. Just like any other plant, a healthy rhododendron will repel pests and disease. Choosing a rhododendron suited to your site is the first defense. Because stressed plants are more susceptible to problems, good cultural practices is the next step. In the East a major stress can be hot summers and cold winters. Rhododendron and Azalea lace bug is a difficult pest best thwarted by robust health and not stressing a plant with more direct sun than it can easily tolerate. One of the hardest pests to manage is root weevil. Washington State Extension has an [online booklet](#) on the weevil. It lists PJM as the most weevil resistant rhododendron.

True or False: Rhododendrons are difficult to grow.

False, if you do your homework and plant them properly. It helps if your climate is moderate. Rhododendrons need a few specific conditions: humus-rich acidic soil, consistent moisture and, most important, excellent drainage. It's better to plant a rhododendron a little high and provide good quality mulch than to risk root rot. More rhododendrons die quickly from drowning because of poor drainage than from drought. Rhododendron roots need air and moisture.

True or False: All rhododendrons need shade.

False. With the tens of thousands of species, sub species, hybrids and varieties available, the myth that they all require the same light conditions is fanciful. There are beautiful plants of all shapes, sizes and colors for a myriad of locations. Some tolerate full sun.

True or False: Rhododendrons do not need to be pruned.

True, only if you want wild overgrown plants. Probably the first and most often asked question at any rhododendron talk is: "I have a huge rhododendron that is consuming my house, what to do?" Rhododendrons may need less attention but they do benefit from some pruning. Every year after bloom you should evaluate your plants and remove damaged or diseased branches: Cut them out any time of year. Next prune to direct the plants growth. If your plant has decided to grow over a path or in front of a window, selectively remove branches to direct its growth where you want it. And realize that plant tags that say "grows to 8 feet" means that it grows to 8 feet in 10 years. It is a better idea to pick plants that will naturally fit in a specific place.

Common Gardening Questions People Ask

Q. What annuals can I put out now.

A. As our thoughts turn to our gardens, some cool-season bloomers such as snapdragons, alyssum, pansies and lobelia can be put out now after hardening up for a few days on a covered porch or patio and will withstand a light frost.

Q. When should I prune my rhododendrons?

A. Pruning after blooming is the general rule of green thumb, so if you must prune a spring flowering shrub like a rhododendron, get snippy with it once all the flowers fade.

Keep in mind that some types of rhododendrons are naturally large plants. Keeping rhododendrons with large leaves shorter than 5 feet tall may be challenging for you and the plant.

Q. Are there any rhododendrons that will stay compact or dwarf?

A. Yes, the species *Rhododendron yakushimum* are dwarf shrubs that are suitable for small spaces. Just ask for the furry “Yak” at your local nursery. The felt-like hairs on the back side of the leaves on Yak rhododendrons help them to resist root weevils, the night-feeding insects that like to

make notches along the margins of rhododendron leaves.

Q. Do I have to cut off all the faded blooms once my rhododendron is done blooming

A. Nope. Removing the faded flowers will tidy up the shrub, but your rhododendron will still bloom and grow if you let the faded blooms dry on their own and fall from the shrub.

Q. Are there some shrubs that will flower even in the shade? I thought rhododendrons and azaleas were shade lovers, but mine get very little blooms. The leaves look good and the plants are growing, but they do not flower as well as those that grow in the sun.

A. If you want flowers, then give azaleas and rhododendrons some sun lite. At least half a day of sun promotes the most buds.

Consider shrubs with colorful foliage for dependable color in your darkest corners. Hydrangeas and camellias bloom in the shade but like rhododendrons they flower most abundantly with at least 4 hours of morning sun.

Here are some varieties that are more likely to bloom in shadier areas. The links go to photos and descriptions:

Rhododendrons and Azaleas More Likely To Bloom In Shadier Areas

Hybrid Rhod. for Shade

- [Black Satin \(PJM\)](#)
- [Boule de Neige](#)
- [Bow Bells](#)
- [Desmit \(PJM\)](#)
- [Elite \(PJM\)](#)
- [Elviira](#)
- [Henry's Red \(PJM\)](#)
- [King George](#)
- [Low Red Frilled \(PJM\)](#)
- [Molly Fordham \(PJM\)](#)
- [Nova Zembla](#)

• [Olga Mezzitt \(PJM\)](#)

- [Ramapo](#)
- [Red River](#)
- [Regal \(PJM\)](#)
- [Snowlady](#)
- [Victor \(PJM\)](#)
- [Weston's Pink Diamond](#)

Rhod. Species for Shade

- [R. catawbiense](#)
- [R. minus](#)

Azalea Species for Shade

- [R. calendulaceum](#)
- [R. canescens](#)
- [R. kiusianum](#)
- [R. schlippenbachii](#)

Hybrid Azaleas for Shade

- [Camilla's Blush](#)
- [Lavender Girl](#)
- [Lisa's Gold](#)
- [My Mary](#)
- [Rosy Cheeks](#)

Native Rhododendrons of North America

According to the USDA native stands of species of rhododendrons are found in all US states and provinces of Canada except: Arizona, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

There are at least 27 species of Rhododendron that are native to North America.

In the East we have 16 native deciduous azaleas:

- R. [alabamense](#) “Alabama Azalea” from Alabama to Georgia to South Carolina.
- R. [arborescens](#) “Sweet Azalea” from Pennsylvania to Georgia and Alabama.
- R. [atlanticum](#) “Coastal Azalea” from Pennsylvania and Delaware to Georgia.
- R. [austrinum](#) “Florida Azalea” from northwest Florida to Georgia, and southeast Mississippi.
- R. [calendulaceum](#) “Flame Azalea” from Pennsylvania to West Virginia to Georgia.
- R. [canadense](#) “Rhodora Azalea” from Eastern Quebec to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.
- R. [canescens](#) “Piedmont Azalea” in the Carolinas.
- R. [colemanii](#) “Red Hills Azalea” in Alabama and Georgia.
- R. [cumberlandense](#) “Cumberland Azalea” from Virginia to Kentucky to Mississippi to Georgia.
- R. [eastmanii](#) “May White Azalea” in South Carolina.
- R. [flammeum](#) “Oconee Azalea” in South Carolina and Georgia.
- R. [periclymenoides](#) “Pinxterbloom Azalea” from Vermont to Georgia west to Tennessee and Ohio.
- R. [prinophyllum](#) “Rhododendron Roseum” from Quebec to Oklahoma and Arkansas.
- R. [prunifolium](#) “Plum Leaf Azalea” on the Georgia-Alabama border.
- R. [vaseyi](#) “Pink Shell Azalea” in North and South Carolina.
- R. [viscosum](#) “Swamp Honeysuckle” from Maine to Georgia and west to Texas.

In the East there are 2 native lepidote rhododendrons:

- R. [chapmanii](#) “Chapman rhododendron” in Northern Florida.
- R. [minus var. minus](#) “Carolina rhododendron”; Florida & Alabama to Tennessee & N. Carolina.

In the East there are 2 native elepidote rhododendrons:

- R. [catawbiense](#) “Mountain Rosebay” from Virginia to Georgia to Alabama to West Virginia.
- R. [maximum](#) “Great Laurel” from Nova Scotia to Georgia and west to Alabama and Ohio.

In the West there are 2 native deciduous azaleas:

- R. [albiflorum](#) “Cascade Azalea” from British Columbia and Alberta to Oregon and Colorado.
- R. [occidentale](#) “Pacific Western Azalea” in Oregon and California.

In the West there are 2 native elepidote rhododendrons:

- R. [camtschaticum](#) “Therorhodon Camtschaticum” deciduous rhododendron in Alaska.
- R. [macrophyllum](#) “Pacific Rhododendron” from Northern California to British Columbia.

In the West there are 2 native lepidote rhododendrons:

- R. [lapponicum](#) “Lapland Rosebay” in Maine to Wisconsin to Canada to Alaska
- R. [neoglandulosum](#) “Trapper's Tea”; California to British Columbia to Montana to Wyoming.

In the subarctic regions are 2 native lepidotes that were classified as Ledums:

- R. [diversipilosum ssp. subarticum](#) “Wild Rosemary” in Alaska and Northern Canada.
- R. [groenlandicum](#) “Labrador Tea” in Alaska and Northern Canada.

Report from the Rhododendron Species Foundation

The Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden & Foundation plans to remain rooted in Federal Way. After being there for 55 years, its future was in doubt for a while after Weyerhaeuser sold their campus and left the area. That threatened the largest rhododendron collection in the world.

The Species Foundation is hopeful about their future as new landowners Industrial Realty Group (IRG) redevelop the former Weyerhaeuser property where the garden is located as Woodbridge Corporate Park.

Rhododendron Species Foundation President Sean Rafferty reports, “We at the garden have been in extensive consultation with Woodbridge, who has confirmed that they are not only committed to preserving the [garden] but have responded favorably to our wishes for our garden’s future.” He noted any concerns that the garden will “cease to exist” due to redevelopment are unfounded.

Steve Hootman, the executive director and curator for the garden, said the Rhododendron Species Foundation has been active in Federal Way for 55 years, with the Rhododendron Garden being installed by Weyerhaeuser in 1974, followed shortly by the Bonsai Garden in the late 80s.

The garden is currently home to 850 different rhododendron species of the 1,100 that exist in the world today.

“This is the best collection of rhododendron species on the planet,” Hootman noted.

Hootman said the garden would like to expand in the future, however there is nothing concrete being discussed right now due to things still being up in the air as Save Weyerhaeuser Campus has appealed IRG’s construction of their Greenline Warehouse A on the renamed Woodbridge Corporate Park campus.

“Everything’s hanging,” he said. “But we’re negotiating a new lease.”

Hootman said the garden does not currently have a lease, but the organization is speaking with IRG and has no plans to leave the area.

“They are the landowners and we have to work with them,” he said.

IRG’s Dana Ostenson released a statement regarding the future of the Rhododendron Garden:

“As the owners of Woodbridge Corporate Park, we have an excellent working relationship with the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden and fully appreciate all this cherished community asset means to Federal Way and its residents. To that end, we are making every effort to maintain the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden as an integral part of Woodbridge Corporate Park for many decades to come.”

Rafferty said the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden is aware of the construction IRG plans to do on the Corporate Park campus, and “offer our full support for their plans



Pruning Back Large Plants

Many of us have a favorite rhododendron, but it has grown so big that it blocks our front window completely. We would like to prune it way back, but are worried that it won't bloom for years if we do. Some people advocate pulling it out and planting an azalea there. We don't need to be that extreme. We can keep the rhododendron but in a much smaller version.

Fortunately, rhododendrons are actually not too difficult to prune back. Now is the perfect time to prune, immediately after this year's blooms. Take your time and prune over a couple of

years. It's best to remove branches with only 25-30 percent of the leaves in a single year, as hard pruning will stimulate the plant to put out vigorous, messy growth. This year prune out several selected taller branches by following them to a growth point – a main stem – then removing them. This will shorten the plant and enable you to see out your window. In subsequent years you can continue that process and shape other parts of the plant to a more appropriate form for your landscape. Go slowly, one carefully considered cut at a time.

ARS 2020 Fall Meeting in Gettysburg, PA

Mason-Dixon Chapter to Host ARS Fall Meeting in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

September 25 – 27, 2020
Wyndham Gettysburg



The Mason - Dixon Chapter will host the 2020 ARS Fall Meeting in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The convention will be held at the Wyndham Gettysburg Hotel just off route 30, east of its intersection with route U.S. 15.

The dates to be put aside are September 25, 26, and 27, 2020. The ARS board of directors will meet on the 25th followed by the evening festivities and the start of the plant sale. The convention will run through Sunday noon on September 27, 2020.

Sunny Coble and Kay Smith are co-chairs, and have a host committee to insure a successful meeting.



Phytophthora ramorum Scare

Harrisburg, PA – This spring, Pennsylvania was among 28 states where retailers received rhododendrons which may have been exposed to a plant pathogen called *Phytophthora ramorum*. The pathogen causes infectious disease in popular Pennsylvania plants and shrubs including rhododendron, mountain laurel, lilac, viburnum and pieris.

Anyone who has recently purchased a rhododendron should monitor the plant for [signs](#)

[of disease, including leaf spots and shoot dieback. Other rhododendron problems may mimic the disease, but a lab test can confirm.](#)

If you suspect your plant may have the disease, contact your [county's Penn State Extension office, PA Department of Agriculture regional office for instructions on how to send in a sample for testing.](#)

For more information about protecting Pennsylvania's plants and landscapes, visit agriculture.pa.gov.

Steve Henning, editor
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