



# American Rhododendron Society

## Valley Forge Chapter

P.O. Box 715, Southeastern, PA 19399-0715  
[www.ValleyForgeARS.org](http://www.ValleyForgeARS.org)

## NEWSLETTER

*October/November 2004*

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### *President's Message*

I hope that you all had a good and relaxing summer. Now that the cooler weather is coming, it brings good planting days which will allow you to put in all those rhododendrons, azaleas and other shrubs that you have been buying at plant sales in the last few months.

Two recent plant sales, one at Jim Gears' Nursery and one at The Steele's Nursery had some really good plants, and many of you went to them to avail yourselves.

Our last event, the District 8 Cutting Exchange and Auction was fairly well attended, and the rain held off for us and we had an enjoyable afternoon ending in a barbecue hosted by Frank and Margaret - Thank you both. The proceeds from that were over \$500 which will go to the ARS Endowment and Research Funds.

Our next big event will be our Annual Dinner on November 14th, when we will hear Kathy Van Veen from Oregon talking about the Van Veen Rhododendron Nursery. She is a very amiable speaker and will bring lots of humor to her presentation.

As you may have read in the ARS Journal, the national organization has a new Executive Director, Laura Grant from Toronto, Canada. Her address is ARS Executive Director, PO Box 525, Niagara Falls, NY 14304-0524, phone (416) 424-1942 and e-mail [lauragrants@arsoffice.org](mailto:lauragrants@arsoffice.org). I am sure that she would love to hear from folks.

Don't forget to visit our web site at: [www.valleyforgears.org](http://www.valleyforgears.org) to see what information and links we have put on it. Other web sites of interest are [rhododendron.org](http://rhododendron.org), the national site which has lots of information and a database of over 1200 rhododendrons on it, and [azaleas.org](http://azaleas.org), the azalea society web site. There are of course many gardening web sites and you can find them by typing in the subject or plant in Google or a similar search engine.

We want to start advertising our 2005 plant sale early, as we are holding it on a different weekend next year. It will be on April 22 to 24, 2005, so mark that date on your calendar.

We will be in England by the time this newsletter reaches you, then on to Eire, but we'll be back for the October meeting, so see you all then.

Thank you,  
Joan Warren, President  
Email: [srwjmw@att.net](mailto:srwjmw@att.net)

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*Valley Forge ARS Calendar of Events*  
2004/2005 MEETINGS SCHEDULE:

**October 5, 2004 (Tuesday): 7:30 pm, Board Meeting**

**October 21, 2004 (Thursday), 7:30 pm: Frank Brouse will speak on soil and soil management and planting.** Details follow in this newsletter. People with last names beginning with letters A through H are kindly requested to bring a dessert.

**November 2, 2004 (Tuesday): 7:30 pm, Board Meeting**

**November 14, 2004 (Sunday): Annual Dinner Meeting. 1:30 pm cash bar and hors d'oeuvres, 2:30 pm dinner. At the Sheraton Great Valley Hotel in Fraser, PA. Speaker will be Kathy Van Veen from Van Veen Nurseries, Oregon.** Details follow in this newsletter.

**April 22-25, 2005: Our chapter's Annual plant sale.** Take note...this will be held a week earlier than usual.

*Note: Unless otherwise specified, meetings are held at Jenkins Arboretum*  
As always, if you have program suggestions, with suggestions of presenters, please contact Reid Warren at 610-913-0005.

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***Soil: What You Need to Know about it to be Successful in Your Garden***

**October 21, 2004, meeting at Jenkins Arboretum, 7:30 pm.** Speaker is **Frank Brouse**, Nurseryman. Frank has been a member of VFARS since its inception. He has over 40 yrs of experience in the Nursery business from the propagation to the digging. He knows what is necessary to produce a healthy, beautiful plant. He says, "Dirt is what you get on your hands. Soil is where the action is".

Bring your questions and be prepared to get down and dirty.

***Valley Forge Chapter ARS Annual Dinner Meeting***

The annual banquet and program of the VFARS Chapter will be held 14 November at the Sheraton Great Valley Hotel in Fraser, PA. Cash bar and hors d'oeuvres will be available from 1:30 and dinner will be at 2:30. Mary Alice Snyder has arranged for the hotel as she has for the past several years, and we thank her.

This year's speaker will be Kathy Van Veen from Van Veen Nursery in Portland, Oregon. She will speak about the history of the nursery, how the nursery operates, talk about some of the "characters" who carry on the work of the nursery and talk about some of the services offered by the nursery. For example, for those who may not know, Van Veen's will take mailed in cuttings and grow them on in ideal conditions and ship back well rooted plants.

Kathy oversees the main tasks involved in propagating seeds and cuttings and in making sure plants are sent off in a timely fashion.

## ***Planting Time***

Many of us, stifled in our gardening efforts by the cold of Winter, sally forth in the first warm days of Spring - buy plants, and then dig the cold ground with a vengeance to get them planted. We can't help ourselves. There is nothing wrong with Spring planting, as long as we give plants protection from the strong sun and coming heat, and water regularly.

However, at the national convention this year, one of the speakers talked about the subject of planting rhodies - specifically recommending that they be planted in the Autumn. It was his contention that the Autumn is the best time because the sun is not so intense, the ground is still warm and the coming cooler weather is kinder to the plants once they are in the ground.

With this in mind, Joan and I took the plants from the VFARS and convention plant sales, repotted them into larger containers, put them in a good deal of sun, watered with a 50% solution of liquid fertilizer for two months and watched them take off. We're in the process of testing the Autumn solution to planting and are planting our rhodies out in September and October. The root systems are quite large and healthy after the repotting and now we'll keep our fingers crossed 'til Spring.

Many people who grow rhodies and azaleas complain that there is little to no color in the garden in the late summer and early Autumn. I've solved this problem by tying strips of orange surveyor's tape to each planted rhodie to let me know which ones need regular watering 'til Winter sets in. Voila - instant color! There has also been a peculiar phenomenon this year - some rhodies are breaking into color in September. Most of these seem to be yaks and yak hybrids, but a few are not. What caused this?

As I write, Joan and I have helped Jim and Kay Gears and Bill and Mich Steele with the first day of their respective plant sales. The Gears had buyers from Maryland and Virginia and the Steeles had visitors from New Jersey, Ohio and Virginia - and both had Pennsylvania gardeners stopping by. Both sales are a great opportunity to meet old friends and to teach newcomers the pleasure derived from gardening.

-Reid Warren

## ***The Best Time to Plant?***

After months of cold weather, ice and snow, and hard frozen earth, the first warm days of the promise of Spring send us to plant sales and nurseries to buy that special plant and put it in the garden. We can't help ourselves - it's Spring after all.

But, at the ARS National Convention in May, one speaker presented a talk on the rationale for planting in the Autumn. He said that cool nights and soon, cool days were settling in, the sun was less hot and severe, the ground had warmed up all summer long, and the weather is more conducive to spending some days in the garden as compared to the heat and mugginess of the summer months. Ideal planting weather for plant and planter.

So, this year, (although we did plant some in the Spring) we've saved most of our planting chores for September and October. Plants bought at the VFARS and Convention plant sales were repotted shortly after purchase into larger pots, watered regularly with a 50% solution of liquid fertilizer for two months, given two months prior to planting with no fertilizer, and are now ready for planting. The plants put on a good burst of top growth and the root systems are great.

**Cont...**

Some rhodaholics complain that there is no flower color in the late Summer and early Fall. This year, for some reason, quite a number of rhodies, mostly of the yak/yak hybrid variety, did bloom some, but I have found a new way to introduce color into the Fall garden. After I plant I tie a piece of orange surveyor's tape on each plant so that I know which ones to give more water to as they settle in for the approaching Winter. Next year I'll use different colored tapes to give the garden more color variety.

Something else I discovered this year. After using a Mantis tiller for 20 years to till the vegetable garden, I have found it indispensable in making holes for planting rhodies and azaleas. The spring steel tines cut through and pulverize the soil and any roots, easily pull out rocks as large as a football, and on larger rocks merely bounce off. In an hour and a half I can dig 25 holes.

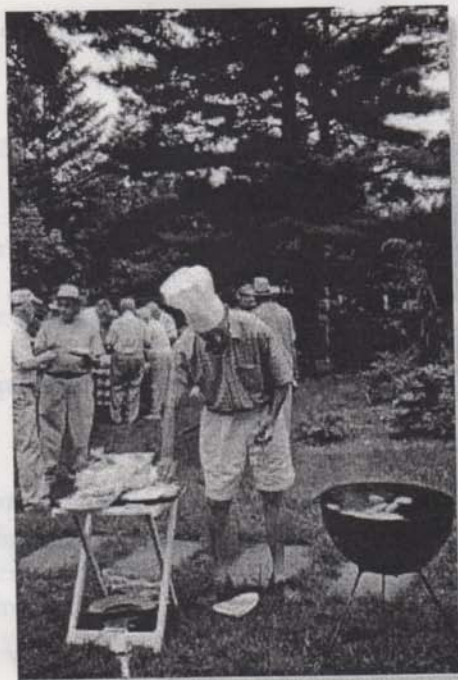
On the 2nd Friday in September, Joan and I helped Jim and Kay Gears with their nursery Fall plant sale. In addition to Pennsylvania folks, there were quite a number from Maryland and Virginia. The following day at Bill and Mich Steele's "Going Out of Business Sale" people arrived from New Jersey, Virginia and even Ohio. The weather was perfect for each sale and it was a good opportunity to see old friends and make some new ones.

-Reid Warren

***Thanks, Reid!***

Thanks again to Reid Warren for his newsletter contributions!

### *Another Photo from the Cutting Exchange / Auction*



This promises to be a very interesting and informative program this year.

-Reid Warren

Note from the Newsletter Editor – invitations to the Banquet should be sent out closer to the time of the banquet.

### ***Membership Dues for 2004-2005***

Dues renewal envelopes have been mailed. If you are a Life Member, have joined since April 2004 or have paid for more than one year you will not receive a notice. Please return your payment to **VALLEY FORGE ARS** in the provided envelope or give it to Margaret Fawcett or Chris Smetana at the October meeting. Payment must be received by December 1 if you are to receive the winter issue of the Journal without an additional \$3 charge.

For verification, please list your e-mail address on the dues envelope. This will greatly help our Newsletter Editor send out future issues of the newsletter via e-mail and help keep our membership list up to date.

Thank you for your prompt attention and continued support!

Margaret Fawcett, Membership Chair

610-964-8441

marbear1@earthlink.net

### ***Photo from our Cutting Exchange / Auction in August.***

Thanks to Margaret Fawcett for the photos in this newsletter!



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NEWSLETTER

October/November 2004

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For next Newsletter, please send news, photos, etc. by **November 20** to the Newsletter Editor:  
**Kelly Reene, 709 Dixon Lane, Gladwyne, PA 19035,**  
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ARS Web Site <http://members.aol.com/RandANews/news.html>  
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