

The Rootball e-News

Newsletter of the Midwest Chapter ARS—VOL 10, NO. 1, May 8, 2020



In this issue:	Page
President's Message	1
A Word From the Editor	1
Reports By State	2-4
Photos of Rhody BLOOMS	5-6
Tribute to Iza Goroff, New members welcome, Calendar of Events, & Chapter Officers	7

Midwest Chapter and ARS National

"Carry On" in spite of the

Covid-19 Virus.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT . . .

2020, THE FIRST YEAR OF A NEW DECADE, AND, OH BOY, DID YOUR MIDWEST CHAPTER HAVE PLANS!

We were to fly in a guest speaker, none other than a well-known hybridizer of *HARDY* rhododendrons in April, followed by a meeting with garden tours in June, a meeting coordinated with the Mومence Gladiola Festival in August, and our annual meeting and harvest party in October. We all know what happened in April, and taking a lead from National which cancelled our 75th annual meeting and garden tours, we cancelled ours as well. Then just this week, we learned that the Mومence Gladiola Festival has been cancelled for August.

That leaves us with our October meeting— keep your fingers crossed and masks close by. We will keep you posted but for now save room for our meeting tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 3, 2020 at 11:00am. In between now and then, here's what we are going to do:

First, we are going to have a photo exhibition. Email me up to three of your favorite Rhodies in full bloom. The only restrictions are that you over-wintered the plant yourself, did not buy it this spring and are willing to donate the photo to the Midwest Chapter. We will have the photos on display at the October meeting. There will be a silent auction for the photos and the proceeds from your photo will be used to restock our coffers for 2021.

Second, we will compile a list of all the varieties entered. We will attempt to coordinate with one or more growers to be able to have a source or sources for these plants so that you can share their beauty with your fellow Midwest Chapter members. More on this later – after we receive your entries.

Third, send us your observations on how your rhododendrons handled last winter. Examples of such reports can be found later in this "newsletter". We will attempt to summarize these reports in time for the October meeting.

So, just because we cannot meet and mingle for the next few months, we can instead, take the time to get closer to our rhododendrons. I have found them to bring me peace and solace particularly in times of stress and hardship. I hope yours do the same for you.

Stay safe and be well until next time.

RICHARD BARA

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR:

The Covid-19 plague has brought life as we know it, to a screeching halt. Familiar activities to which we have become accustomed, have been replaced by "social distancing", the wearing of face masks & meticulous sanitation measures. We are indeed trapped in a living nightmare, stalked by a relentless virus which has affected us either directly or indirectly. Chapter member, Betty Ann Addison has an apt description for it: "the Elephant-in-the room"!

Unfortunately for us, the one effective "tool" to fight this scourge requires the temporary abandonment of social gatherings such as our Chapter meetings, garden visits, etc.. Until an effective "therapeutic" or a vaccine can become widely available, our usual activities will be limited. We are being forced "to go it alone" LITERALLY.

We can however, continue to communicate and exchange information. THE ROOTBALL NEWS remains the "medium" to accomplish that task. This issue features reports from members representing 5 States as well as photos of beautiful "rhodies" in bloom.

We remain hopeful that we can quickly eradicate this pernicious "Elephant" permitting us to safely resume meetings and events. Future events are optimistically reflected in our Calendar of Events on the last page. In the interim, I urge you to communicate with your fellow members and check out both our Chapter website (www.midwestars.org) and our National website. (www.rhododendron.org). As always, I look forward to your input.

ROGER DWILLAP

"Hope Springs Eternal": Spring Status Report (By State)

(Oskaloosa, Iowa – Bob Wersen) –

Bob resides in a rural community (population 11,000 – Zone 5) located 60 miles southeast of Des Moines. He owns & operates a 75 acre Winery featuring both red & white native grape hybrids(www.tesselridge.com). Bob grows a modest number of rhodies on the east side of his house. The high pH soil(6.5) necessitates the liberal addition of pine bark to acidify the soil. He reports a relatively mild winter with the coldest minimum temperature registering at - 10°. The longest sub-zero stretch was 2 consecutive nights. He thinks of the effect of winter minimum temperatures in terms of how long it takes for new spring growth to emerge. He expects his rhodies to perform well. That said, Bob is troubled by the existence of harmful fungus which afflicts rhodies and grapes alike.

(Minneapolis, Minnesota - Betty Ann Addison - www.GardensofRiceCreek.com)

We are very encouraged to expect good bloom this year because temperatures were milder than usual and snow cover was good. Many of my hybrids will bloom for the first time and the leaves on nearly all plants are deep green. Unlike last year, which was the "worst winter ever"! Temperatures (then) fell to -35F and even -40 at a friend's house 30 miles north. In addition, we had 2' of snow on April 15 which stuck around. Lots of conifers and rhododendrons succumbed. But this spring, though still cool and very dry, promises to be a nice one for flowering.

Last year I heavily fertilized the sandy, organic soil that the rhododendrons grow in. This year, the plants look so much bigger and healthier with more buds. We use a granular slow-release 15-15-15 with iron and micronutrients distributed in a circle around each plant. One light feeding goes on in April, then a heavy feeding in June, when roots and leaves are growing well and one final light feeding before the first of August to set buds for next year. I have a stable of hardy species and hybrids, tested over 30+ years. As John Migas said to me years ago: "Betty, just make crosses with your own hardy plants." Good advice. I am done chasing varieties that are supposedly hardy here in Zone 4. They are just will-o'-the-wisps that break your heart. Some time, if you wish, I can send a list of what has been hardy here, year in and year out.



R. 'Dancing Coral
(*R. smirnowii* x *R. catawbiense*)
Bud hardy to —35° F

R. brachycarpum 'Green As Grass'
(Grown from seed.)
Bud hardy -35° F



"Hope Springs Eternal": Spring Status Report (By State)

(Inverness, Illinois - John Golab)

The Golab garden is located in the Barrington, Illinois area, about 38 miles northwest of Chicago. It has been constructed over a 30 year period on 1 3/4 acres of land. It consists of 4 Rhododendron Gardens, 2 extensive perennial borders (1 front and 1 back), a conifer garden, 80 trees and 3 small ponds. The early blooms as of a week ago consisted of 2 Star Magnolias and approximately 1000 Daffodils. The first and only rhody in bloom at the start of the week was April Rose. Then in midweek we got hit with 2 nights of 26 and 24 degrees respectively, followed by a 6 inch snow storm. By Friday the Rhody, Magnolia and half the daffodil blooms were black. Today the following Lepidotes were in a

state of showing color, swelling/no color or in bloom:

R Wilsonii--in bloom	R Glenwood Sentinel--swelling/no color
R Biloxi Blues--no color/swelling	R Landmark--swelling/no color
R Red Quest--showing color	R Bubble Gum--swelling/no color
R Plainview Appleblossom--showing color	R Angel Powder--swelling/no color
R Nicki--showing color	R PJM Standard ---showing color
R Midnight Ruby--swelling/no color	R Molly Fordham--showing color
R PJM Amy Cotta--showing color	R Hank's Mellow Yellow--swelling/no color
R Staccato--swelling/no color	R Carnal--swelling/no color
R Pink Diamond--showing color	R Sonny's Love--showing color
R Aglo--showing color	R Hudson's Bay--swelling/no color
R PJM compactum--showing color	R Faisa--swelling/no color
R Olga--swelling/no color	R Blue Baron--in bloom (uncovered hoop house)

Another week of decent weather should yield quite a show. The perennial gardens are still quiet with only 30% of the plants showing at this time. As we get into May, things should pop nicely.

(Saugatuck, Michigan - John Migas)

Today (April 16th) as I begin to write this update I look outside my office window to a beautiful sunny day. I must mention that it is only 34 degrees with winds of a steady 10-20 mph. That is how it has been here for the past 4 days, including light snow falling unexpectedly thru-out the days. Our spring is very slow in coming with unusually cooler than normal temperatures. Normal highs are around 60 degrees and lows of 32 degrees. We've are experiencing highs of 37 degrees and lows of 30 degrees with steady winds of 10-20mph.

This past winter was very mild, snowfall was limited to about 60 inches versus the normal 90 plus inches. The coldest temperature was 4 degrees with only a dozen days dipping into single digits. Very unusual for western Michigan. The winds during this past winter were not that friendly. It seemed everyday winds kept howling, eating up the shorelines of Lake Michigan, causing beach erosion to every homeowner.

As far as rhododendron and azalea bud set last fall, it was tremendous. The plants wintered over in excellent shape, and the foliage came thru with no damage, and buds looked in great shape. Even my most tender, borderline rhododendrons came thru. Everything one hopes for as a rhododendron enthusiast was happening. Spring was and is late in coming, plants look great, rain was falling at the right time. We all know the famous saying, "April showers bring May flowers".

This past Saturday and Sunday were absolutely perfect spring days. Highs in the upper 50's, sunshine with very little wind. Magnolia trees were starting to show some color, early lepidote rhodies were starting to candle, some even in bloom. Madison Snow, Coral Glow, Mahogany Red, and species mucronulatum were all in bloom. A bit early but a real welcome. By Tuesday they were looking absolutely stunning.

Now the bad news. Yesterday it snowed on and off all day and thru-out the night. This morning I woke to 28 degrees. I could still see the blooms on most of the early bloomers. Now, just a few hours later, all is lost. The steady cold was a bit too much for them. In the blink of an eye, the blooms just faded away. As I look back, my memory comes back on why I don't grow small leaf rhododendrons, they always seem to get blasted by the spring frost.

Well, there will be plenty to see in the upcoming weeks. I hope all is well for all and wish everyone a happy spring.

“Hope Springs Eternal”: Spring Status Report (By State)

(Waterford, Wisconsin - Tom Horner)

In southeastern Wisconsin, the winter of weather of 2018-19 killed most rhododendron flower buds above the 10" snowline. All of the indiscretions of that disaster are now forgiven, however, as I observe the abundant crop of buds swelling for this season's bloom. I plan to celebrate! For the local garden club, we have decided to go ahead with the planned "Rhodie Stroll" on two dates...early and late season bloom. At the same time, we will be observing all the cautions of appropriate "social distancing". Our decision is formed by the idea of refusing to allow the current circumstances cheat us out of enjoying gardens.

The rhododendrons and azaleas have recovered well from the damage of two winters ago as well as the Polar Vortex of a few years ago. No plants were lost, but one variety, "Maximum Roseum" was totally defoliated. That plant is back in business for this year. The only rhododendron that bloomed perfectly last spring was *R. catawbiense*. No wonder that plant is a parent of a variety of "Iron Clads".

(Golden, Colorado—Richard Bara)

My rhododendrons grow at an altitude of 6,072 feet. We can get as cold as -15°F anytime from October through May. We average over 60 days annually of 90°F or above. But our biggest challenge are extremely rapid changes in temperature caused by the change in direction of high (40 mph+) winds. These can lower temperatures over 70°F in a matter of hours. These have caused bark split which doomed even such stalwarts as full grown Norway Maples.

You might ask, what would grow under such conditions? Not much, sagebrush, yucca cactus, and surprisingly—rhododendron. Yes, rhododendron. But not every one (variety). Over the years, I have tried literally hundreds of varieties.

“Thrivers” - Some of these “guys” actually perform better here than in the nursery from where they came. I have photos of *R. ‘Sapporo’* to prove it. My plant has leaves twice as large as a new specimen I just got from the West Coast. “Thrivers” in descending order: Sapporo, Lodestar, Janet Blair, Helsinki University, Capistrano, Minas Snow, Dexter's Purple, Dexter's Pink, Ben Moseley, War Dance, Ruth's Showstopper, Brown Eyes, Palomino, Peter Behring, Fashion Plate, Helliki, Barmstedt, Silver Sovereign and Gem Gardens Scintillation.



“Survivors” - These stick around from year to year but for one or more reasons let me know they would be happier elsewhere. America (some years it does well, others it languishes), Caroline (lacks vigor), Dexter's Champagne (lacks vigor but hangs on), Francesca (needs sheltered location), Lavender Princess (needs a sheltered location), Mikkeli (does not appreciate 60+ days over 90F but loves our winters), Rona Pink (small root ball, blows over easily), Sefton (loves the summer, windburns in the winter), Wyandanch Pink (lacks vigor). All three of the following survived last winter but have yet to be tested for summer: Campfire Coral, Marie Forester and Royal Star.

“RIP's” - I like these so much that I try, and try and try again, always with the same results—Failure.

Album Elegans, Blue Ensign, Blue Jay, Blutopia, Boursault, Catawbiense Grandiflorum, Kabarett, Kalamaiika, Lem's Stormcloud, Mrs. Furnival, Mrs. Tom Lowinsky, Nova Zembla, Very Berry, Vulcan, & P.J.M. (indeed all small leaf varieties—can't handle the heat, the wind, the changes in temperature, the cold, the “owner” . . . who knows, but the dried wood sure smells good!

RHODY BLOOMS

The images depicted here reflect BEAUTY WE ALL STRIVE FOR. The next two pages reflect Rhody blooms from my Traverse City, MI garden in 2019 (Zone 6B). They are tender for most "Midwestern" gardens—you will have to make your own determination of which hybrids are right for your location.



R. 'Blutopia'
-15° F



R. 'Francesca'
-10° F



R. 'Lilac Lagoon'
-15° F



R. 'Lumos'
-10° F

RHODY BLOOMS continued



R. 'Orange Juice'
-5° F



R. Saffron Silk
+ 10° F



R. 'Tina Heinje'
- 15° F



R. 'Yates Treena'
-5° F

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Midwest Chapter Fall Meeting
 Date: October 3, 2020(Tentative)

2020 ARS Spring Convention
 (Re-scheduled)
 Date: April 27—May 1, 2022
 Place: Portland, OR/Vancouver, CA

2020 ARS Fall Regional Conference
 Date: Sept. 25-27, 2020
 Place: Gettysburg, PA

2021 ARS Spring Intl. Convention
 Date: June 3-6, 2021
 Place: Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia

The Midwest Chapter—ARS

Website: www.midwestars.org

Be Sure To Check Out Our
Latest Videos!

Midwest Chapter Officers (CURRENT)

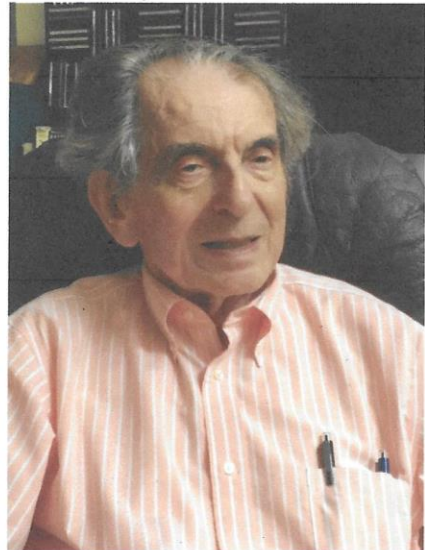
Richard Bara—President
<rjbara72@gmail.com>

Tom Horner, Treasurer
<psalmxl@aol.com>

Susan Garland, Membership
<s-boatman@sbcglobal.net>

Roger Dunlap, Secretary
<Koukla18833@yahoo.com>

Roger Dunlap, Newsletter Editor
<Koukla18833@yahoo.com>



The following new members have joined the Midwest Chapter(2018 to the present):

- Azalea Path Arboretum & Botanical Garden
Hazelton, IN
- Kyle Bertrand/Emlly Horvath
Dunlap, IL
- Donald Mitchell
Red Wing, MN
- Richard Ree
Chicago, IL
- Pamela Scott
Livonia, MI
- Jean Thompson
Indianapolis, IN

A Tribute to Iza Goroff

It is with a “heavy heart” that we announce the passing of long time Chapter member and former President, Iza Goroff on February 28th. Iza contributed much to the vibrancy of the Midwest Chapter during the 1970-80’s. Although Iza was not active in Chapter events in recent years, he is fondly remembered by many Chapter members including “veteran” Chapter member, Tom Horner. Among Iza’s strongest traits was his willingness to mentor others – a trait which left a deep impression on Tom:

“My first contact with Iza was by way of signing up for “lifetime membership” in both the WI/IL Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society and in the Midwest Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society. We all know the value of how a good mentor can help the novice avoid horticultural heartbreak. Iza was one of those mentors to me. A fortunate circumstance was that my personal “ask the expert” lived just 30 minutes away.

At the edges of Iza’s garden of exotic alpine plants, hardy orchids, ferns and cacti was an intriguing collection of rhododendrons and azaleas. Some of the rhododendrons were robustly thriving. A few others were struggling. Why have a garden that tolerates a few less than lovely plants? That is a sign of a courageous gardener, a gardener who is willing to experiment. We learn from success. Losses also provide important opportunities for learning.

As a novice gardener, I noticed something fascinating when attending those early plant society meetings where Iza was present. When Iza spoke, everyone listened.”

Tom Horner
Waterford, WI