

The Rootball News

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDWEST CHAPTER — THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

40th

Volume XIII, Number 1

Winter 2002



The Midwest Chapter of the ARS will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2002.

Forty years ago, Dale McCurdy, a public school teacher from Aurora, Illinois developed a strong fascination for rhododendrons which were not widely grown in our area at that time.

He did extensive research to find cultural information for these plants in our climate and found very little available. He met others from the Chicago area with similar interests leading to the formation of the Midwest Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.

On February 14, 1962 the first meeting of the Midwest Chapter was called to order at 8:30 PM in the library at the Morton Arboretum. Twenty-two people attended and with this meeting our chapter was born. Mr. McCurdy became our chapter's first president.

The accompanying story (see page 2), reprinted from The ARS Quarterly Bulletin, April 16, 1962, includes an excerpt from a letter to

the ARS from Dale McCurdy. His letter describes his goal to acquire more cultural information for these plants in the midwest and to disseminate this information to others. Also included are the chapter minutes from the first meeting.

We owe a lot to the founders of our chapter who indirectly introduced many of us to these wonderful plants. Their avid interest resulted in research advances to improve hardiness and encourage breeders to develop cold tolerant varieties for our growing area.

Now one can drive through virtually any midwest neighborhood on a spring day and see rhododendrons ablaze with color. This is the legacy our charter members left us beginning forty years ago. 🍀

If any members have recollections of the early days of our chapter and would like to share them in a future issue of The Rootball News, please send them to me for insertion. Also a special thanks to Roger Dunlap and Gerry Firak for providing information for this article.

- Tony Greco



Winter Meeting To Include Guest Speaker and Plant Distribution

The Midwest Chapter winter meeting will take place at 10:00 AM, Saturday, March 2nd in the Chicago Botanic Garden Linnaeus room. A full slate of topics is scheduled.

Chris Trautman owner and founder of Mowbray Nursery in Amelia, Ohio will present slides of his nursery and hybridizing techniques. In addition to his own hybridizing efforts, Chris works together with hybridizers in the Great Lakes Chapter. Mowbray Nursery was founded in 1977 and specializes in rhododendrons, conifers, magnolias and holly.

Also on the agenda will be finalization of plans for our spring plant sale and truss show as well as celebration plans for our chapter's 40th anniversary.

And to top things off, John Migas, chapter member and grower in Saugatuck, Michigan will bring plants for distribution to those attending.

Mark March 2nd in your calendar as this meeting promises to be of great interest to all. It's also a good time to come out of winter hibernation, see old friends and swap some rhodie stories. 🍀



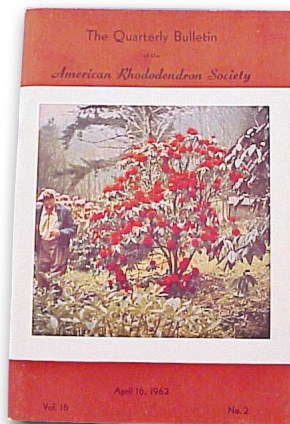
UPS DELIVERS

The Midwest Chapter received a generous contribution of \$500.00 last spring from United Parcel. The gift was used to purchase plants for the Morton Arboretum project.

John Honkseiz, an employee of UPS was instrumental in securing this contribution for our chapter. John also volunteered much of his time with the Morton Arboretum planting.

Thanks John...this contribution was very helpful in making the Morton project a success. 🍀





The ARS Welcomes Midwest Chapter

[excerpt from a letter to the ARS from Dale McCurdy, April 16, 1962]

The Midwest Chapter was organized on February 14 by a group of enthusiastic rhododendron members at Aurora, IL. A need for this chapter is expertly given in the following excerpt from a letter received from Mr. Dale McCurdy who is now president of the Midwest Chapter.

"Many of us who have devoted a great deal of time and energy in trying successfully to grow rhododendrons and azaleas in this most trying of climates, have often discussed the advantages that would accrue, if somehow we could pool all the knowledge that has been gained in this area in growing these plants. Much of the contemporary knowledge and especially that concerning hardiness, is not applicable in our area, (the westward or windward side of The Great Lakes). In fact, a very large climatical differential exists between our area and those areas in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, where so much progress has been made, of recent years in growing these magnificent plants. The information gained from these areas has been extremely helpful in our efforts, but so much of it has been gained in a climate tempered by the ameliorating effects of the Great Lakes. The products of our efforts are exposed to winds which have an unhindered continental sweep and are exposed consistently to very low winter temperatures. Consequently, there is a need to gather all the endemic "growing" information and to disseminate new information, peculiar to our area, as it develops. It is my firm belief that we are one of the real frontiers in rhododendron hybridization."

On March 15, 1962, the National Board of Directors unanimously voted approval to the Midwest Chapter and gave their heartiest welcome. 🍀



The Quarterly Bulletin of the
American Rhododendron Society
Vol. 16, No. 2
April 16, 1962

Minutes of Meeting
Midwest Chapter, The American Rhododendron Society
February 14, 1962

The first meeting of the Midwest Chapter of the ARS was called to order at 8:30 p.m. in the library of the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois, by the temporary chairman, Mr. Dale McCurdy.

Dale McCurdy introduced the members of the organization committee. He explained how and why the group started, emphasizing the importance of forming a chapter in the area of Chicago and Lake Michigan. The rest of the 22 people present introduced themselves.

The slate of officers was approved. President, Mr. Dale McCurdy, Vice-president, Mr. Allan Galloway, Secretary-Treasurer, Mrs. Audrey Halpern, Directors: Webster Crowley, Sol Halpern, Ray Michel and Carl Moser.

The By-laws were then approved.

There was a brief discussion of some of the possible activities of the chapter. Eldred Green felt that a bulletin would be an excellent means of communication. Al Galloway thought that the particular problems of our area should be of primary importance.

Sol Halpern showed slides sent to him by Orlando Pride of Butler, PA. Al Galloway, Ray Michel and Al Rouffa showed slides of some of the plantings around their homes. Web Crowley showed slides of a few of the species that the Arboretum is experimenting with.

After refreshments were served, a tour of the Arboretum's greenhouse and propagating facilities was enjoyed by the members.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Audrey Halpern, Secretary-Treasurer

FEB 14 1962



A Message from the President • January, 2002

Once again, we are fortunate that el niño promises to protect us in the midwest from the ravages of a harsh midwinter. With some luck, we can expect a good bloom this coming spring. We have had an active year offering advice and encouragement through the internet to dozens of individuals who sought assistance through the ARS website. Email is becoming a popular and useful medium for us to disseminate information about rhododendrons and fulfill the society's mission of promoting and educating in the art of growing rhododendrons. The Midwest Chapter is in district 11 of the American Rhododendron Society. We currently have need for a district director. This position is a liaison between the national ARS organization and the individual chapters, conveying the information and needs

between the component societies and the national organization. Anyone interested in filling this vacancy is encouraged to contact one of the officers for more information. We will be holding our winter meeting in early March, where we will have a plant distribution and enjoy a lecture by Chris Trautman, a hybridizer and nurseryman in Ohio. At the winter meeting, we will also be finalizing our plans for Truss show and plant sale in May, where we are planning special events to mark the 40th anniversary of the Midwest Chapter. I hope to see as many of you as possible at the winter meeting in the Linnaeus Room of the Chicago Botanic Garden on March 2nd at 10AM.

Sincerely,
Harvey Woehlck, Midwest Chapter President

A Member's

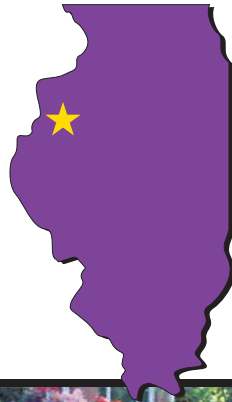
Garden

MONMOUTH, IL



Fred Stanton

As a gardner, my interest commenced with Rhododendrons in the early 1970s. There are several Rhododendrons in Monmouth that are over 50 years old and I was always impressed with their colorful blooms in the spring and the fact that they have ever-green leaves for the winter landscape. My first planting was a grouping of 4 - Roseum Elegans, Ignatius Sargent, Catawbiense Album and Novo Zembla and these were put into the ground in 1974. Only Roseum and Ignatius took hold and have continued to prosper ever since. The Roseum is around 8 feet tall and 12 feet across. Ignatius is 8 feet tall and about 7 feet across - a more open bush than Roseum. Many more Rhododendrons were planted through the years with perhaps a 50 percent success ratio. Parsons Gloriosum and President Lincoln were planted in the late 1970s and mid 1980s. Parsons is 9 feet across and 5 feet high and is planted in full sun most of the day! It has only experienced summer leaf burn in 1988 when we experienced 57 days over 90 degrees and 10 days over 100! All the other years it has never shown summer leaf burn and only minor winter leaf burn when it goes below minus 20 degrees. President Lincoln is a fast grower and has reached 7 feet high in a little over 10 years and is at least 12 feet across. Other successful Rhodies include Holden, a newer Catawbiense Album and Nova Zembla, Scintillation, Hawaii, Tapestry, Russell Harmom (purchased from Roslyn Nurseries in New York) which blooms seem much smaller than the description indicates, and several Lepidotes - Olga Mezitt and Stacatto. I had a PIM for at least 15 years but the blooming duration was so short (3 days if the weather was cooperative) I removed it from my collection. I do have a number of deciduous Azaleas, several which have grown to over 12 feet tall. They are very beautiful when they bloom and some are perhaps the showiest, most colorful blooms one can experience in our colder climate. Since most all of the deciduous varieties are hardy in our climate, I would not encourage anyone to plant the "Light" series in our area, as their blooms are inferior to the dozens of hybrids that we can easily grow in our climate. 🌱



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of deciduous
Azaleas, several
which have grown
to over 12 feet tall.



In Memoriam

DON FLEIG

The Midwest Chapter lost a dedicated worker, a dear friend, a truly sweet man on November 16, 2001. Don had been an inactive member in recent years due to failing health. Those of us who served with Don during the early/mid 1990's remember him as a dependable volunteer who could always be counted upon to serve as Midwest Chapter representative at countless Chicago Botanic Garden plant fairs.



Don and his companion, Dorothy were "fixtures" at those affairs. Later on, Don served very ably as chapter treasurer and vice president. When the chapter began to venture into plant sales, it was Don who allowed us to use his garden patio as a staging area for rhodies to be sold later at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Don's patio would be awash in rhodies to the extent that it was inaccessible until the last day of the plant sale. In those days, the plant sale would extend over several weekends. Don would put up with the inconvenience with nary a complaint.

Last May, I presented the Midwest Chapter's first Distinguished Service Award to Don at his home in Winnetka, Illinois. With Dorothy standing proudly by, Don accepted his just reward with a grin and a misty look of recognition that just seemed to say: "Thanks!".

We took a stroll outside in his garden, overgrown to be sure but blooming its heart out nonetheless. Thinking about Don's failing memory, I wondered if he still recognized the individual beauties that engulfed us. I pointed to a rhody and asked Don its identity not really expecting anything but stone silence. "Henry's Red", he promptly replied. I watched in startled amazement as he correctly named one plant name after another. I began to choke up at the realization that his confused mind still clung tenaciously to one of the things he loved most - rhodies. Even at this stage of his life, all was not lost. We should all draw some relief and comfort from this - I know I did.

- Roger Dunlap, January 24, 2002

Calendar of Events

Winter Meeting

Place: Chicago Botanic Garden, Linnaeus Room
Date: Saturday March 2
Time: 10:00 AM

Annual Plant Sale & Truss Show

Place: Chicago Botanic Garden Education Building
Date: May 18 & 19
Time: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Spring Meeting

Place: Chicago Botanic Garden Education Building
Date: May 18
Time: TBD



The Midwest Chapter welcomes the following new members to our chapter and we look forward to your active participation in chapter events.

MARTY ANDERSON, Northbrook, IL **JACK SCHULTZ**, Crystal Falls, MI

RUTH BYRNE, Arlington Heights, IL **ERIC SCHWARZ**, Mahopac, NY

JANE HIGH, Gurnee, IL

KEVIN & JOHANNA SPELLMAN, St. Charles, IL

ROSS IVERSON, Rushford, MN

GARY TRUMAN, Stoughton, WI

DARRELL KROMM, Reeseville, WI

JOSEPH LAMANTIA, Carol Stream, IL **...and a special Welcome Back**

CATHY MCCARTHY, Orland Park, IL **CAROL DOCTOR**, Wilmette, IL

RANDY POTTER, Neoga, IL

JULIA LAMKEN, Oak Park, IL

MIDWEST CHAPTER — THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

Purpose

A non-profit organization whose aim is to promote in the midwest region the objectives of The American Rhododendron Society, which are to encourage interest in and to disseminate knowledge about rhododendrons and azaleas. To provide a medium through which all persons interested in rhododendrons and azaleas may communicate and cooperate with others through education, meetings, publications, scientific studies, research and other similar activities.



Meetings

Meetings are held 4 times a year, generally in March, May, August and October. Members are encouraged to attend and participate in the transaction of business at these meetings and to profit by the knowledge gained from our knowledgeable members and Guest Speakers. *Visitors are always welcome!*

Membership

Membership is open to all persons interested in the growth and culture of rhododendrons and azaleas as provided by the Chapter By-Laws. Membership includes one year (4 quarterly issues) of the *ARS Journal* and affiliation with the chapter of your choice. Annual membership dues for an individual is \$28.00. Anyone interested in becoming a member should contact the Membership Chairperson whose name and address appears below.

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