

The Rootball News

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDWEST CHAPTER — THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY



www.midwestars.org

On July 11, 2005, The Midwest Chapter's new web site was launched!

Having a chapter web site has been on our 'to do' list for a few years now and we're hoping this site will allow us to achieve several goals.

First, the web site will be an excellent way to communicate within the chapter, posting news, having a calendar of events and so forth. As more people are using e-mail and the Internet, chapter information can be disseminated and accessed quickly for faster and better communications.

Our web site will provide a forum for members and non-members alike to ask questions, provide comments and communicate with chapter officers. We have already received several inquiries in the short time the web site has been operating.

The photo section illustrates the plants we are growing in the Midwest. Not only is this section interesting to browse through, it also shows the diversity of rhododendrons and azaleas we grow successfully in our region.

The majority of Midwest Chapter members garden in Zone 5 where to date, our plant list was compiled. But, our chapter has a wide hardiness zone variance from Zone 3 in northern Minnesota through Zone 6 in southern Illinois and Indiana. For this reason, we

decided to include the location where each plant was photographed for more precise hardiness reference.

We're also hoping the web site will

be a way of recruiting future members.

The look of the web site

as well as the manner in which it is kept current will be a reflection of our chapter so we're encouraging suggestions for improvement from all members.

Getting this web site up and running would not be possible without the efforts of Jack Strom,

Mary Schaaf and Tony Greco.

Jack Strom of Data Voyager <stromjack@yahoo.com> is a member of our chapter and will now be known officially as our Midwest Chapter guru! Among other things, Jack does web site development and was a major catalyst to get our web site going.

Mary Schaaf of Mary Schaaf Design <marysdesign@netamumail.com> generously contributed her time and developed all of the design and graphics for the web site as she does for *The Rootball News*. Of course, it

► (see "WEB SITE", page 3)

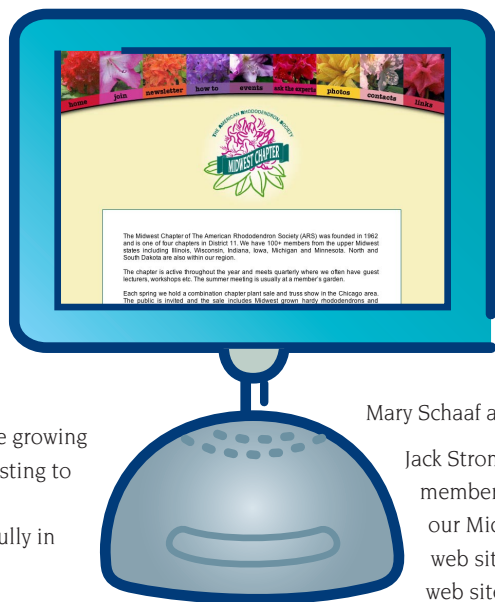
• November 12-13, 2005 •

Missouri Botanical Garden Tour

Fred Stanton has been instrumental in organizing a fall trip to the Missouri Botanical Garden (MBG) in St. Louis, MO on Saturday and Sunday, November 12th and 13th. One of the highlights of the tour will be the Japanese Garden where the Japanese Maples should be at their peak color.

Founded in 1859, the MBG is one of the oldest botanical institutions in the country and a national historic landmark. Sited on 79 acres in the heart of St. Louis, the gardens include a 14 acre Japanese strolling garden, a climate controlled conservatory and a Butterfly House with a thousand live tropical butterflies...and of course a rhododendron garden.

► (see "MISSOURI", page 3)



Letter

from the president



john migas



fall • 2005



Greetings, once again from the shores of SW Michigan.

The fall season has finally crept up on us leaving behind a summer that I couldn't wait to see end. Too hot, too dry, too sunny, too long, too many weeds, not enough water, plants wilting, plants dying, no rain, 90° sunny, windy.

I don't know about all of you but this summer was brutal!

We had rain on May 22, June 30, July 4 (postponed the fireworks show), July 20, August 20, and finally on September 21st. There was enough rainfall on these days so it could be measured. Once again, this was a brutal, hot, dry summer. Hello, fall!

By now all of my rhodie and azalea beds have received a slight dose of winter fertilizer (Hollytone), around 150 pounds throughout the garden. Bud set has been tremendous. Can't wait for spring.

The Farmers Almanac predicts heavy snow and very extreme cold weather for our area. I just hope we get the snow before the cold weather sets in.

I have received word from friends that live in Mississippi and Louisiana that trees are down from Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Mobile Alabama; 100-year-old forests looking like shredded toothpicks.

We still have not heard from some folks as of today. Most live in Covington and Folsom, Louisiana, northeast of New Orleans. One of the nurseries near Mobile, Alabama had 80% of their fields (over 1000 acres) under four feet of water for over a week.

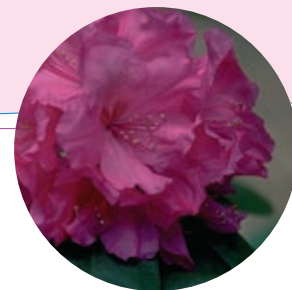
Fall plans for me will include a trip down to Tennessee, North Carolina and Georgia. Seed collecting is first on my list. Joe Schild from Chattanooga, Tennessee has spots from the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee to Signal Mountain north to Asheville, North Carolina, to Copper Bald, Gregory Bald, then south to Pine Mountain, Georgia.

The Midwest Chapter is in need of volunteers. Members, we need your help. Candidates for officers are always welcome. Please step up to the plate. We are still in need of a chapter treasurer since last spring. To date no one has volunteered.

John Golab along with his wife Eileen have steered the plant sale and truss show successfully for years. John has decided to step aside for now and hopefully someone will volunteer to fill John's shoes. Thank you John and Eileen.

Finally, the Midwest Chapter officers and board members are working diligently to keep this chapter operating and active. Future trips, plant sales, membership and meetings are always on our agenda. Please support our chapter by participating and volunteering.

John Migas



► WEB SITE (continued from page 1)

wasn't too hard to twist Mary's arm to help out since she is the talented daughter of *The Rootball News* editor.

A lot of work still lies ahead but at least we are up and running. We are planning to continuously improve and upgrade our site. Comments or suggestions are most welcome and appreciated. Simply send them through our web site at www.midwestars.org.

Web Site Plant Photos Wanted

If anyone has photos of plants they are growing that are not included in our web site photo section, please email them to us for consideration. We are looking for clear digital photos that are shot similar to the photos we already have posted for a uniform look (close-up detail of the flower).

Each photo submission must include the following information:

- Plant name
- Plant classification (lepidote, elepidote etc.)
- Flower color
- Hardiness rating (F°)
- Mature plant height
- Garden city and state where photo was taken
- Photographer's name

Since the plant photos are intended to show our web site visitors what we are successfully growing in the Midwest, we are only interested in including plants that grow in our region without special protective measures. This means no winter wrapping or winter garage storage!!

We truly want to make this web site representative of all our members and look forward to receiving photo submissions from all areas of the Midwest Chapter. You can send them through our web site address or directly to the editor at apgreco@sbcglobal.net.



► MISSOURI (continued from page 1)

The MBG has a reciprocal arrangement with The Chicago Botanic Garden so if you are a member, bring your membership card for admission and discounts.

Prior to our MBG tour, lunch has been scheduled on Saturday nearby at The Boathouse Restaurant in Forest Park, one of the country's largest urban parks. The park was dedicated in 1876 and includes many attractions such as The St. Louis Art Museum, World's Fair Pavilion and St. Louis Zoo. We plan to return on Sunday morning to further enjoy the park.

We have blocked out several rooms at the Drury Plaza Hotel in downtown St. Louis next to The Gateway Arch. Room rates start at \$90.00 and include breakfast. Parking is extra. We have reserved a block of rooms and each attendee is responsible for making their own hotel reservations, transportation and meals.

This promises to be a quick, fun weekend to meet with friends and take that last garden tour of 2005.

Please confirm with Fred Stanton your plans to attend at [<fhstan4@dtmspeed.net>](mailto:fhstan4@dtmspeed.net) or 309-255-3577 no later than October 28 so he can finalize meal arrangements. Also let Fred know how many guests you will bring so he will have an accurate head count for meal reservations. We will send or email driving directions and a final itinerary after you confirm.

Refer to the itinerary for details and we look forward to an enjoyable weekend.



Saturday, November 12

11:30 AM - Depart hotel for lunch

Noon - Lunch, The Boathouse Restaurant in Forest Park

1:30 PM - Depart for The Missouri Botanic Gardens

5 PM - Return to hotel

7:30 PM - Dinner at a local restaurant

Sunday, November 13

7:30 AM - Breakfast/Hotel checkout

9:00 AM - Forest Park/Depart for home

Hotel - Drury Plaza Hotel

Address - 4th and Market St.

St. Louis, MO 63102

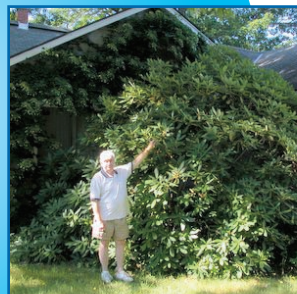
Phone - 314-231-3003

By Gerald R. Firak

Where in the World

Grab your pencils rhododendron buffs. We're going to have a quiz. Study the picture with the person in front of that immense rhododendron. Where could he possibly be?

- A. Toms River, New Jersey
- B. Portland, Oregon
- C. Bainbridge Island, Washington State
- D. Houghton Michigan (not to be confused with Houghton Lake) in the Upper peninsula of Michigan, gateway to the Keeweenaw Peninsula and otherwise known as the copper country, virtually on the shore of Lake Superior.



And the answer is...(turn to page 5!)

► (see "WORLD", page 5)

Photo courtesy of
Gerald Firak

Northwest Lower Michigan Garden Tour

By Roger Dunlap

On June 10 and 11, 2005, Roger Dunlap, Ed Cole and Jim Roach hosted a Midwest Chapter-ARS garden tour of 3 rhododendron gardens in the Traverse City area, 300 miles northeast of Chicago within the northwest, lower peninsula of Michigan.

Ed & Jim are former members of the Midwest Chapter and have been affiliated with the Ann Arbor (Michigan) Chapter in recent years. They now enjoy the fruits of retirement amid their respective slices of "rhododendron paradise". Ed resides near Empire, Jim resides near Maple City, and Roger has a summer cottage near Old Mission, Michigan.

We "tourists" who signed up for the tour agreed to make our own transportation and lodging arrangements. Ed, Jim and I organized the 2-day tour. The Midwest Chapter sponsored the restaurant meal on Friday evening.

The weekend started off with a morning tour of CEDAR HEDGE GARDENS located in Interlochen, MI. Donna Courtney & husband Gary showed off their 4 acres of hosta display gardens, exhibiting themes such as 'Angel Garden', 'Fairy Garden', 'Japanese Garden', etc. Each theme garden exhibited superb hosta specimens with unique garden ornaments woven together – truly a wonderful husband and wife collaboration!



Visitors were given a listing of all 500+ hosta varieties on display and for sale. Donna then conducted a personally guided tour of her gardens. It did not take long for us to realize that Donna really knew her hostas. Each and every hosta in the display gardens was labeled.

There was a well-stocked hosta nursery on the premises featuring potted "liner" plants. The hosta varieties ranged between standard

"stock in trade" right up to "collector" grade plants. There was no obligation to buy but it was nearly impossible to resist "the urge". Thank you Tony (Greco) for suggesting this stop – it was appreciated by all and definitely merits a return visit.

Our lunch stop on that hot Friday wound up at the BAD DOG DELI, located 20 minutes north of Traverse City on the Old Mission peninsula. This establishment features HUGE deli sandwiches made to order. There was a wait...but with a nice, cold brew in hand – no one really cared much.

An hour later, refreshed and recharged, the "rhody safari" forged on to the CHANTAL CHATEAU WINERY perched atop a glacial moraine. The view of west and east arms of Grand Traverse Bay from there was spectacular!

Admittedly we indulged in a "little" wine tasting. This "indiscretion" combined with the "grind" of the tour began to take its toll. So, with the "last ounce of strength", we "slowly" motored the final 8 miles to Roger & Angie's cottage located right on West Grand Traverse Bay. It was a relief for many to get out of the hot June sun and re-hydrate. A chapter-sponsored dinner at the OLD MISSION TAVERN concluded the first day activities.

The tour group had grown to 16 people strong by Saturday morning. We assembled at the Holiday Inn parking lot in Traverse City. There the "caravan" set off for the first rhody garden stop: Ed Cole's spectacular rhododendron garden located a few miles north of

Empire, MI which overlooks Lake Michigan.

For 2 hours, the tour group "feasted on" Ed's seemingly endless collection of mature rhododendrons artfully terraced on north facing slopes. At the conclusion of this stop, Ed was presented with a well-deserved Midwest Chapter Certificate of Appreciation. What made this occasion all the more remarkable was the fact that Ed had undergone heart valve surgery only 3 weeks prior to our visit. To Ed go our heartfelt thanks for putting up with "the invading horde" under what must have been trying circumstances!



The caravan rolled on to an unscheduled stop at the Empire home and rhododendron garden of Gerry Gorte (also an Ann Arbor Chapter member). Gerry has amassed a large collection of "West Coast" hybrids each labeled with LARGE, homemade wood signs - no eyeglasses required here! Gerry's garden is "peppered" with

wood crafted "creatures" which "stare" back at you at every turn. Only a person like Gerry could have dreamed up these "things" – wacky entertainment yes - but you wouldn't want to be caught in a dark alley with 'em!

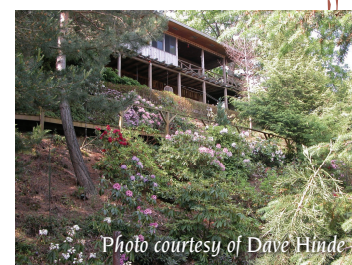
Following lunch at Empire's FRIENDLY TAVERN, the caravan meandered over the beautiful, peaceful countryside that typifies northern Leelanau County for about a half hour before arriving at Jim & Carole Roach's retirement home and gardens.

Jim is fully retired now having run a rhododendron nursery as a retirement venture for some 8 years or so. In fact, it was Jim's THE GREENERY that was the initial nursery source for the Midwest Chapter's annual plant sale during the early-mid 1990's.

Try to imagine what we saw - Jim & Carole's colorful ribbon of blooming rhododendrons landscaped along the woods that borders a beautiful meadow. This stop was capped off with cold drinks & "munchies" accompanied by Jim's cheerful banter and political dry humor.

The tour concluded with a buffet dinner hosted by Roger & Angie, once again at the Dunlap cottage. Participants had a field day evaluating, selecting and eventually purchasing Rhodies from a collection of field grown rhododendron hybrids trucked up by John Migas from Saugatuck, MI.

Most took the opportunity to take it easy, cool off with refreshments and ultimately indulge themselves in a tasty meal. There was ample time to tour Roger's rhody garden or just take in the peace & grandeur of West Grand Traverse Bay. The beautiful sunset that ensued later that evening seemed to be a fitting conclusion for what turned out to be another memorable Midwest Chapter field trip.



Our grateful thanks to all our hosts and our participants who made this field trip a pleasant experience for all. Most of all, thanks Angie, for your help in the planning. Your lavish buffet accented with authentic Greek cooking was a "hit" with everyone.



...Houghton, Michigan

of course. I knew you would choose the right answer. Rhododendron people are a cut above the rest.

How did I ever discover that rhodos are very happy that far north in a territory where people hunt black bears?

Well, it all started over 30 years ago at a Midwest Chapter meeting. Don Zaun overheard me saying that I frequented the area for many years. Don, an excellent plantsman and the first recipient of the chapters bronze medal, said the next time I go back up to the upper peninsula I must visit a rhododendron nursery just as you enter town right off US 41 and see what they have to offer.

The nursery was called the Waldheim Nursery and Hedy, the lady who ran it was the wife of a Michigan Tech professor. She ran it as a hobby/supplementary income venture.

Rhododendrons that far north, I couldn't believe it! Several years later I did get around to stopping in and talking to Hedy, the proprietor. She showed me what she had left (too large to move) and mentioned that she had closed down the nursery.

A couple of years after that conversation I stopped in just to see how those remaining plants fared and found student rental apartments built over the area, a better source of supplemental income I think.

I did remember Hedy told me if I wished to see more rhodos I should go along Seventh Street and keep my eyes open. I took a pleasant drive and was pleasantly surprised. I had a talk with the gentleman at 1010 Seventh Street and asked him if his plant bloomed every year and he said almost unbelievably, yes, a rosy red color. He also said the next-door neighbor had more rhododendrons but I had enough poking around for that day.

Now what about the large plant that was mentioned in the quiz that you aced? It was first noticed by my brother in his local travels to his in-laws in Hancock across portage waterway. This plant is located at the intersection of Mill Road (not Miller Road as a local map designates) and Peepsock Road, behind the home of a now departed Michigan Tech professor.

The garden shows that at one time a great deal of quality activity occurred, but for the most part the garden is now in shambles. Please note the magnificent climbing hydrangea behind the rhododendron, as one knows they are very slow to mature to that size.

But lets get to the big question which is, why do rhodos do so well there while many of us, mostly me, work hard to find the right site, soil and what not?

Is it the soil? Partly it is since it's acid clay mixed with a great deal of sand. For those of you who turn up your noses at the mention of clay, be aware if it's acid and mixed with glacial rubble and sand, that's not a bad situation.

But that's not the real key. It's something my brother's father-in-law mentioned to me years ago. The ground never freezes up there. With 240 average inches of snow each year the ground is insulated from very cold temperatures. In fact old timers would bank snow around the base of their homes to conserve heat. The fact that the ground never freezes was also mentioned by the gentleman on Seventh Street just this summer.

So, if the temperature drops and your plant can still access water, the chances of leaf burn and bud burn are greatly reduced. And by the way, if you've been to Saugatuck, Michigan and marveled at seven foot tall azaleas in full bloom and even the rhododendron Bow Bells in flower, all of which I've witnessed, it has got to be the snow. It snows a lot there and the sandy soil doesn't hurt either. This area should not be called the banana belt but the snow-insulating belt.

This winter if it snows a lot don't cuss; just gently bank your snow around your favorite tender plant. A word of caution, as banked snow melts it can pull down branches and breakage can occur. It's worth the risk.



membership

A warm welcome to the following new members that have recently joined our chapter:

Denise Archambeault
Urbana, IL

Bill Arendt
Wayzata, MN

Nina Buzyna
Deerfield, IL

Marilee & Matthew Cole
Wilmette, IL

Mark Dauksza
Troy, IL

Mike Heim
Hayward, WI (Welcome Back!)

William Jaggard
Deerfield, IL

Cynthia Larson
Lake Bluff, IL

Jill Nichols
Highland Park, IL

Carol Patterson
Evanston, IL

Sophie Radlowski
Chicago, IL

Ashok & Anjana Sanghvi
Buffalo Grove, IL

Robert & Betty Williamson
Madison, WI

ARS Updates

2005 / 2006 Plant Sale

The Midwest Chapter sold approximately 160 plants at our plant sale on May 7th and 8th. Net proceeds to the chapter after all expenses was \$1252.00, about a third of what we normally raise.

The margin on each plant sold this year was much smaller due to increased expenses, particularly shipping costs.

The plant sale combined with our truss show is our one yearly event to raise money but it does take a tremendous amount of planning and work as well as many man-hours. We are in dire need of volunteers for our plant sale in 2006, which will take place for the first time at The Morton Arboretum on May 20th and 21st. (Yes, that's right, at The Morton Arboretum, due to construction at The Chicago Botanic Garden next spring.)

The Arboretum has asked us to provide some educational assistance that will most likely be a planting demonstration on Saturday morning and afternoon.

To help spread out the work, we are looking for members to chair the three main activities; plant sale, truss show and plant demonstration. If interested, please contact John Migas for additional information.

By Tad Dauksza

Membership Renewals

Membership renewal forms were sent out in September and we have not received responses from everyone. A prompt response is greatly appreciated as it reduces mailing costs for second notices as well as time and effort to follow up personally with phone calls and e-mails.

Another way to help reduce the renewal effort is to renew for more than one year. We have several members who do this and it is greatly appreciated by your membership chairman.

Our chapter has several Lifetime and Corporate members whom I would like to acknowledge:

LIFETIME

Susan Boatman Garland, Lloyd Hahn,
Tom Horner, Patrick Tatum

CORPORATE

Phillip Diggs, Debra McCowan, Patrick Tatum

Congratulations!

- **Lloyd Hahn** - Happy Birthday...
86 years young!

- **Brent McCown** and his team at the University of Wisconsin at Madison – for obtaining an American Rhododendron Society grant in 2005 for “PLOIDY Manipulation and DNA Quantification for the genetic improvement of Rhododendron”

THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY MIDWEST CHAPTER

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 \$35.00. Anyone interested in becoming a member should contact the Membership Chairperson whose name and address appears below.



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submitting articles for this issue of *The Rootball News*.



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