

# GREATER PHILADELPHIA RHODOGRAVURE

Newsletter of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, American Rhododendron Society :::::::::: Autumn 2019

## *Morris Arboretum puts the kibosh on its plant sale*

Board is now considering alternatives for chapter sale and truss show

There will be no Morris Arboretum plant sale next spring, or in the following years. Thus the Greater Philadelphia Chapter, after many years of partnering with Morris' sale, must figure out what to do. Presuming the chapter continues its spring sale, a significant generator of revenue for the chapter's endeavors, it will have to find a new venue. The biennial cut-flower competition – truss show – will have to find a new site as well.

Tony Aiello, Morris director of horticulture and curator, told the RhodoGravure, "Essentially, when we looked at our numbers, it didn't make a lot of economic sense" to continue

### *It's brunch season again*

October meeting at Morris Arboretum

What is becoming a favorite of ARS members – the chapter's annual brunch meeting – takes place Sunday, October 20, starting at 1 p.m. at Morris Arboretum. The chapter provides beverages, including wine, and all are asked to bring an appropriate brunch dish to share. Did someone say quiche? Great idea, along with fruit salad, sausage casserole, Danish, lobster sliders and more.

This is not just a noshing event. The speaker, once we've filled our plates and settled in, will be Nicole Juday Rhoads, a garden historian who now is at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society as director of engagement. Many members will remember her highly informative and well illustrated talk to the chapter on the history of Philadelphia gardening. She maintains a remarkable garden surrounding her Germantown Victorian home.

Ms. Juday Rhoads' topic will be "Designing and Cultivating a Gold Medal Garden." No, not how to win the garden Olympics, but using plants that have been made the list in PHS's



**Nicole Juday Rhoads,**  
October meeting speaker

mounting the plant sale. Revenue had plateaued in recent years, he said.

Although the decision comes soon after the arrival of the arboretum's new executive director, William Cullina, it was a "group decision," according to Aiello. He pointed out that the ARS component of the plant sale had the best numbers.

As for why the plant sale was not generating the sort of revenue that would argue for its continuation, Aiello said that the plant-buying public has changed, partly due to the aging of avid gardeners. As well, "It's easier to get a lot of these plants online. ... The niche that botanical gardens were filling [by offering uncommon varieties] is largely gone."

The revenue numbers had to be weighed against the considerable amount of effort to carry out the sale – significant hours devoted to procuring plants for sale, preparing bar-coded tags for sale and programming computers, cleaning out equipment bays, mowing parking areas, renting tables and outhouses, and even paying for a traffic cop. All that staff effort meant less time for the arboretum's horticultural maintenance and development activities.

Revenue logic aside, it remains to be seen what effects there may be on member enthusiasm and support. For decades, the Morris plant sale was an event eagerly awaited. In addition to great plants, it was an opportunity for member gardeners to interact with the pros, to get their recommendation on which plants to buy and how to grow them – and to catch up on whatever. The membership has not yet flipped totally to parents seeking entertainment for young children; the gardeners, even if they didn't buy as much as before, may be a tad sullen.

The long-standing Morris bonus plant program, through which arboretum members have received choice plants for free, will be continued, probably as part of a "farm day" at the Bloomfield section of the arboretum, perhaps the weekend of May 17, 2020.

With the demise of the Morris sale, the chapter Board of Directors is contemplating a variety of possibilities, and it welcomes any ideas members may have for both the plant sale and the truss show.

For decades, the plant sale and truss show have been

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The American Rhododendron Society is a horticultural organization devoted to the genus *Rhododendron* – which includes azaleas. At the national level, the society holds annual conferences, publishes the quarterly *Journal of the ARS*, and fosters plant research and conservation. Its website, [www.rhododendron.org](http://www.rhododendron.org), is a trove.

The Greater Philadelphia Chapter gathers eight times a year. Sunday afternoon meetings are held September, October, and January at Morris Arboretum. February through August we are mobile, with a banquet, plant sale and picnic at various sites. Latest meeting information may be found at [www.GPChapterARS.org](http://www.GPChapterARS.org).

Dues are \$40 per year, for chapter and national membership and a subscription to the *Journal*. Contact the president or treasurer (see above) for a form or go to [www.GPChapterARS.org](http://www.GPChapterARS.org); click on “Join us.”

## October brunch

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Gold Medal Plant program. This recognition of outstanding plants for Zones 5 through 7 began in 1979. PHS seeks to honor species and cultivars for “beauty, ease of cultivation, multi-season interest, and ready availability.” More than 150 have made the grade.

There is one question that ARS members will surely want to ask the speaker, and the *RhodoGravure* is going to preempt them: Not one rhododendron out of 150-plus plants? What gives? Jeez, there are three clethras on the list. (Clethra? *Three?*)

This is a great meeting to bring a non-ARS friend to. The speaker has a not-just-rhodo talk, and there will be a delicious spread of food and wine to make them happy even if they don't care about gardening (or clethras) at all.

Note that the start time is 1 p.m., Sunday, October 20. If you need a few minutes to finish garnishing your brunch contribution, come a bit earlier. (Key info: The Eagles don't play until after dark.) As ever, simply say “rhododendron meeting” at the entry kiosk at Morris Arboretum, and you'll be admitted at no charge.

## Our fascinating members

*Another installment of intriguing, little known attributes of ARS folks in our midst.*

In addition to being a keen collector and grower of rhododendrons, Tom Lloyd is a keen fisherman, accumulating quite a collection of passport stamps for fishing expeditions. You may have dropped a hooked worm and bobber into a local pond, but Spain? Tom has fished there, and also in Argentina, Belize, France, Mexico and Canada (Labrador, Gaspar Peninsula, British Columbia). Even Russia, in 1990, salmon fishing and bunking in a converted 5,000-gallon oil tank. Domestically, he's hit the streams of Montana, Wyoming, Florida, and, natch, Pennsylvania. The Wissahickon? Of course! – from Walnut Lane in Philadelphia all the way upstream to Skippack, though his most frequently visited stretch is between Bells Mill Avenue and Andorra Road. He has even combined fishing and rhododendrons – casting his line in Pocono creeks while *R. maximum* and native deciduous azaleas were in bloom along the banks.

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If you are or have been married, how long was it from meeting that one-and-only person to the big I-do event? The former Cathy Kammerer challenges you to match her 10-month whirlwind romance. She graduated from Millersville State College (now University) in Lancaster County on Aug. 27, 1965. Went off to the big city to get a master's in library science at Drexel. By and by met this law student, Brian, and boom, exactly a year to the day after graduation, was the new Cathy Keim.

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Charles Cresson, the eminent Swarthmore gardener, lecturer and author – and intermittent ARS member – is a cousin of the late Randy Dalton, a longtime chapter member who had rhododendrons in his blood (his great aunt, Mary Dalton, married Joe Gable). Charles and Randy both descend from Jacques Cresson (1640-1684), who immigrated to America from Holland. Published and private genealogical records show them to be seventh-cousins twice removed.

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If you don't vacation in Maine but are aware of a certain burg by the name of Kennebunkport, it's probably for the wrong reason. That is where Harold Sweetman honed his craft as an entrepreneurial jewelry craftsman. He managed to put himself through college (including graduate degrees) by making earrings and hawking them to tourists, students, and, well, anyone whose ears were lacking adornment. “Yes, I had lobster nearly every weekend” in grad school, he reports. He got a sales rep who secured accounts up and down the East Coast. Harold credits this experience with much of his success running Jenkins Arboretum.

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There is a recording artist in our quixotic club – you can actually buy (perhaps only after a diligent search) several discs on which Michael Martin Mills is warbling in the tenor section. They include Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, the Mahler Symphony No. 2, *Ein Deutsches Requiem* of Brahms, and Verdi's *Four Sacred Pieces*. He was a member of the Chicago Symphony Chorus and the Philadelphia Singers Chorale for many years. Two of the recordings won the Grammy Award for Best Choral Recording (Beethoven and Brahms), but Michael rarely wears his “Grammy Award Winner” pin.

# A jubilee out West

## ARS convention to mark 75 years

If a 50th anniversary is the Golden Anniversary, and the 60th is Diamond, what is a 75th? Uranium?

Who knows, but the American Rhododendron Society is hitting that round number next year, and the folks in the six Oregon chapters are pulling out all the stops with the anniversary convention, titled "2020 Vision: Looking Forward, Reflecting Back." The dates are April 29 through May 3, 2020. (Anglers' alert: that's during the spring run of Chinook salmon.)

Site of the confab will be the Heathman Lodge, in a suburb of Portland across the Columbia River, Vancouver, Wash. This has been the spot for previous ARS events, and it gets rave reviews. The inn describes itself as "a beautifully hand-crafted Northwest mountain lodge setting" (<https://www.heathmanlodge.com>).

As befits the conference title, this convention will have a diversity of noted speakers, among them Lionel de Rothschild from Exbury in England, Steve Krebs and Juliana Medeiros from the Holden Arboretum in Ohio, Steve Hootman from the Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden in Washington state, and Kenneth Cox from Glendoick in Scotland.



**Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden.** It is among the tours at the spring 2020 convention.

The tours will show off the salubrious climate of the Pacific Northwest as it fosters utter voluptuousness in the genus Rhododendron. The average low temperature for the entire winter in Vancouver, Wash., is a mere 36 degrees Fahrenheit (though frost is not out of the question – but still, 36?). East Coast rhodo folk who have not seen the Portland area in bloom will go slightly gaga.

Some of the tour stops are Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden, Portland Japanese Garden, and the Lan Su Chinese Garden. There will also be a pre-convention tour into Washington, with stops at the Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden, Heronswood, and Far Reaches Farm (the latter a choice nursery, with mail order).

The fall ARS Journal has more detailed information on tours, and registration is to open December 2 at <http://ARS75>

# Calendar

**Important:** If you do not receive this newsletter electronically, you will not receive email reminders a week before events. Please use this calendar to mark your own.

**October 17, Thursday, 7:30 p.m.** Valley Forge Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum. Speaker: Ken LeRoy, "Thomas Meehan: Father of Philadelphia Parks."

**October 20, Sunday, 1:00 p.m.** Chapter meeting with potluck brunch. Morris Arboretum. Speaker: Nicole Juday Rhoads, "Designing and Cultivating a Gold Medal Garden." See article on Page 1.

**October 29-November 1** New Zealand Rhododendron Association 75th Jubilee Annual Conference, Rotorua, North Island, New Zealand. Information: [https://rhododendron.org.nz/conference\\_info2019.php](https://rhododendron.org.nz/conference_info2019.php).

**November 10, Sunday, 11:30 a.m.** Valley Forge Chapter Luncheon Banquet and Greater Philadelphia monthly meeting. St. David's Golf Club. Speaker: Jenny Rose Carey, "Glorious Shade: The Art of Shade Gardening."

**December 10, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.** Board of Directors meeting. Home of Craig Conover.

**January 12, 2020, Sunday, 1:30 p.m.** Chapter meeting, Morris Arboretum. Speaker: Tom Smarr, new director of Jenkins Arboretum.

**January 19, Sunday, 2:00 p.m.** Valley Forge Chapter meeting, Jenkins Arboretum. Speaker, Linda Eirhart, "Azaleas and Rhododendrons at Winterthur."

**February 11, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.** Board of Directors meeting. Home of Craig Conover.

**February 16, Sunday, 2:00 p.m.** Joint Greater Philadelphia-Valley Forge meeting, Uwchlan Meeting House, Lionville, Pa. Steve Kristoph channels Alex Trebek with "Rhododendron Jeopardy"

**February 29-March 8** Philadelphia Flower Show.

**April 18, Saturday** Chapter Banquet. Speaker: Nancy Bell, frequent class leader at Mt. Cuba Center.

**April 29-May 3** ARS national convention, Portland, Oregon. More information at <http://ARS75.org>  
See article on this page.

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.org. Mail-in registration forms will be in the Winter Journal.

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Did someone say 75? If your passport is in order and you are unsure what to do at the end of the month, the New Zealand Rhododendron Association is having its 75th Jubilee Conference starting Oct. 29. Go to [https://rhododendron.org.nz/conference\\_info2019.php](https://rhododendron.org.nz/conference_info2019.php). Zounds, a chance to experience spring in November and an antipodal Halloween.

For those who dislike such last-minute jaunts, the fall 2020 Eastern Regional Conference of the ARS will be hosted by our nearby colleagues of the Mason-Dixon Chapter. It will be in Gettysburg, September 25-27, 2020.

# No more Morris Arboretum plant sale

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simultaneous events. The weekend of Mothers Day was always the time of the Morris sale, and that typically is optimal for a truss show – there usually are more rhododendrons in bloom in our area around May 10 than a week before or later. The chapter long ago concluded that staging the sale and show together was the most logical approach, given the advantage of assembling the necessary numbers of members for both endeavors, with ease of shifting from show to sale or vice versa when each event was at peak demand for workers. Plus, the sale drew an audience of non-ARS folk to see the show. But it has been only practicality that paired the events, and many chapters around the country do not put on their sale and truss show together.

Records are vague, but the master inventory at Rhodo-Gravure headquarters suggests the first year the Greater Philadelphia Chapter combined with Morris' sale was 1990. In those days, the arboretum's sale was conducted in the area adjacent to the Widener Visitor Center at the top of the driveway. The chapter sale across the driveway was simultaneous, but not integrated into the Morris purchasing operation. The conifers that now fill that area were but small trees in the early 1990s and there was



Randy Dalton photo

**An early 1990s edition** of the plant sale at Morris Arboretum, across the driveway from the Widener Visitor Center.

ample room for rhododendrons (and rain), with Bob Wilkinson and Judi Meade coordinating the sale. The truss show was in Widener then.