

# GREATER PHILADELPHIA RHODO GRAVURE

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

## *An editorial*

### Convention success depends on local members

Talk to the leaders of any gardening organization, whether at the local or national level, and a universal theme will be declining and aging membership. It is a phenomenon that has all sorts of implications for the future of societies devoted to one genus or another.

The topic of this commentary is not the future, however, but the present. In just a few months, District 8 of the American Rhododendron Society – that is, the Greater Philadelphia, Valley Forge, Lehigh Valley and Susquehanna Valley Chapters – will host the society’s national/international convention.

Here’s something we can all agree on: being a good host means throwing a great party with all the bases covered and all the kinks eliminated in advance. And the only way to avoid the opposite of a great convention is for the members of these four chapters to step forward and volunteer for one or three or more shifts doing the various tasks, so that the visiting ARS leaders and members will always remember this gathering because it was, hey, really great.

No question, the last time this district hosted the convention, in 2004, there were more chapters and notably more members, and arithmetic proves that a lot of them were 15 years younger than now. But we’re putting on this convention now, with the human resources we have now, and it ought to be as

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Steve Henning photo

**Longwood Gardens** is on one of five convention bus tours in May. All activities will depend on volunteers to run smoothly.

## *Climate change and rhododendrons*

The new year began on a particularly warm note – people were seen at the Mummers Parade clad in shorts and T-shirts. Is it climate change?

Denis Lucey has some particular thoughts and field observations about climate change and plants, and he will begin the chapter’s new year of programs with a presentation at the monthly meeting, Sunday afternoon, January 13, 1:30 p.m., at Morris Arboretum. His topic: “Climate Change: Good and Bad for Ericaceae and Related Woodies.”

For instance, Dr. Lucey notes, southern deciduous azaleas from hot, humid lowland habitats such as southern Georgia and Alabama are more “growable” in the new Philadelphia climate, as are daphnephyllum and edgeworthia. On the other hand, increased precipitation has implications for drainage.

Denis Lucey grew up in a gardening family in central Pennsylvania and then at the edge of the Jersey Pine Barrens. His

first career was in public health as a doctor based in the Pacific Northwest. But various influences brought him back to Pennsylvania and led him into a career, now 35 years and counting, as a designer and installer of gardens. For several years he was landscape manager for Awbury Arboretum. Dr. Lucey lives in the heart of Chestnut Hill, and often creates stunning foliage-and-flower displays for the Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, using nary a hothouse blossom.

We gather at 1:30 p.m. at Morris Arboretum on January 13 for coffee, cookies and conversation. The program will begin at 2:00. For free admittance to the arboretum, simply say “rhododendron meeting” to the attendant at the kiosk at the arboretum entrance (100 E. Northwestern Avenue, Philadelphia 19118).

Note to gridiron fans: If the Eagles are still in the running, there will be plenty of time to get to the tube, as the game will not commence until 4:40.

Greater Philadelphia Chapter  
American Rhododendron Society  
www.GPChapterARS.org

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Truss Show: Michael Martin Mills; Philadelphia Flower Show: Linda Hartnett

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 more mobile, with a banquet, plant sale and picnic at various sites. The latest meeting information may be found at [www.GPChapterARS.org](http://www.GPChapterARS.org).

Not already a member? Dues are \$40 per year, which includes chapter and national membership and a subscription to the *Journal*. Contact the president or treasurer (see above) for a member form or go to [www.GPChapterARS.org](http://www.GPChapterARS.org); click on “Join us.”

## An editorial

It will take all of us

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excellent a convention as last time, yea even better. The convention committee is confident of good attendance – our location puts us in the middle of the ARS eastern membership centers, and West Coast folks are agog over not one, not two, but *eight* fabulous public gardens on the tours. That means the event is unlikely to lose money. But it's a lot of visitors to host and make feel special and excited all the way to Sunday afternoon.

There's only one way for that to happen: local ARS members must do the right thing.

A variety of delightful activities needs volunteers, and almost none of them require heavy lifting – either literally or metaphorically. For instance: staffing the registration desk to greet our far-flung conventioners when they arrive; cutting trusses and making table arrangements for the two dinners; staffing the plant sale, with several tasks involved; setting up the truss show and the photo show; leading bus tours. (Point of clarity: volunteering *does not* get one into the convention for free. It is long-standing ARS practice that participating in any convention activity requires being registered. You don't have to stay at the hotel or buy a seat at dinner, but registration is required.)

Steve Wright, a Valley Forge member who is director of horticulture at Jenkins Arboretum, is serving as the coordinator of convention volunteers. Email him at [steve@jenkinsarboretum.org](mailto:steve@jenkinsarboretum.org) to let him know your availability. The convention is Wednesday, May 15, through Sunday, May 19. A few tasks will need volunteers in the days before.

Accompanying this issue of the *RhodoGravure* is a flyer also soliciting your participation; the electronic version has a click-on link for submitting an email to volunteer. Want more info on a given volunteer task? Email or make a phone call to the convention co-chairs, Steve Henning ([rhodyman@earthlink.net](mailto:rhodyman@earthlink.net), 610-987-6184) or Karel Bernady ([bernadk@verizon.net](mailto:bernadk@verizon.net), 610-827-0113).

A stunning convention is within your reach, dear hearts and gentle ARS members.

## Power to the people of the Flower Show

For the 57th consecutive year, our chapter will have an exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show, March 2-10. The overall show theme this year is “Flower Power.” Many wry or snarky comments have been made about this evocation of Baby Boomers' youth, this year being the 50th anniversary of the Woodstock festival. The *RhodoGravure* is inclined to believe that the theme is actually a coded endorsement of the primacy of rhododendrons, given that “Flower” is the alternate name by which our exhibit honcho is professionally known, as in Flower Hartnett, who was indeed an attendee at Woodstock.

ARS members are needed for two aspects of this groovy endeavor. First is set-up, which will take place Tuesday, February 26, starting around 10:00 a.m. at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Ms. Hartnett will again be the wizard of this process. It's typically not a long day, and it's always fun to see the rest of

the show in its creation phase. Plus, Chinatown and Reading Terminal Market offer great lunch options.

To join the set-up crew, contact Linda/Flower at 215-287-0731 or [lindahartnett@gmail.com](mailto:lindahartnett@gmail.com). Likewise for breakdown, which will take on Monday, March 11 (not Sunday, as in years past).

Docents are key to the exhibit – these ARS members interact with the attendees of the Flower Show, answering questions about rhododendron culture, and talking up membership in our club. And what a deal it is – in return for a four-hour docent shift, there's free admission to the Flower Show (instead of \$30 a person).

Michael Mills coordinates the docent schedule; reach him at [mmm19119@gmail.com](mailto:mmm19119@gmail.com) or 215-527-7145. Bellbottoms not required.

# Dealing with stiltgrass

A dastardly invasive

Do you have stiltgrass? Tell the truth.

This Japanese invasive, *Microstegium vimineum*, is taking over. It doesn't look like most grasses we're accustomed to, but has individual leaves along a very thin stem; it suggests a micro-bamboo to some. Fifteen years ago, it was an occasional oddity in the lawn. Now it is just about everywhere – lawns, parks, naturalistic flower beds, rural woodlands.

The one positive thing that can be said about Japanese stiltgrass is that it is an annual, just like crabgrass. It dies every year. Alas, it clearly expands every year. While stiltgrass in a regularly mowed lawn may seem manageable, the stiltgrass that's left alone can become a totally dominant species. When left uncut, it can become a dense stand, 36 inches tall, shading out shorter desirables.

Here's some of what's going on – with a relatively successful anti-stiltgrass strategy described after that.

Stiltgrass sets seeds in late summer. When they mature in a few weeks, they drop. They will germinate in the spring. This is basically the same as crabgrass, but with some differences. The fallen seed has not been planted – and all sorts of human and natural activity can spread it. Such as raking and blowing in the course of the fall cleanup. Pulling stiltgrass with seed heads and putting it in the compost will, unless your compost is ridiculously hot, mean putting stiltgrass seeds in your flower beds when you use the compost.

Here's the really bad part: stiltgrass seeds can remain viable in the garden for three years, and they are prone to germinate over a period of several months.

If your neighbor has stiltgrass and lets it go to seed, the seeds can easily be blown into your garden. That's possibly how it arrived in your garden. A physical barrier, such as a silt fence, may be called for. (Perhaps a chat with the neighbor, too.)

So, you think, let's just mow the creeps often enough that they never get tall enough to set seed. The maintenance manager at RhodoGravure Headquarters (RGHQ) discovered five years ago that stiltgrass sets seed even when it's oh-so short. A small clump of it amid the fescue can turn into a large swath in two or three years, what with raking, blowing, and touch football.

The current theory at RGHQ is that the rampant spread of stiltgrass in the last few years has been abetted by shared lawn crews. The team you hire to mow your lawn in early September is very possibly arriving directly from a lawn that is teeming with stiltgrass going to seed. Some of those seeds end up on the wheels and undercarriages of equipment and workers' shoes.

Can anything be done? With diligence, yes, unceasing vigilance. Here is the regimen that is showing great promise at RhodoGravure Headquarters.

Use pre-emergent early and often. Pre-emergent formulations for crabgrass will work – but do not follow the crabgrass instructions. Stiltgrass begins to germinate a month earlier than crabgrass. In the Philadelphia area, apply the pre-emergent the first week of March. Two more applications should be done, spaced four to five weeks. This will prevent a high proportion of the potential stiltgrass from ever taking root – but not all.

For remnant bits of stiltgrass, the gardener must be ever

# 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.

**January 13, Sunday, 1:30 p.m.** Chapter meeting. Morris Arboretum. Denis Lucey, "Effects of Climate Change on Ericaceae and Other Woodies." See article on Page 1.

**January 20, Sunday, 2 p.m.** Valley Forge Chapter meeting. Speaker: Peter Zale, "A Century of Rhododendrons at Longwood Gardens." Jenkins Arboretum, Devon, Pa.

**February 12, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.** Board of Directors meeting. Home of Craig Conover.

**February 17, Sunday, 2 p.m.** Joint Greater Philadelphia-Valley Forge meeting. Speaker: Virginia azalea hybridizer Joseph Klimavicz. Uwchlan Meeting House, Lionville, Pa.

**February 26, Tuesday** Flower Show exhibit set-up day.

**March 2-10** Philadelphia Flower Show

**March 21, Thursday, 7:30 p.m.** Valley Forge Chapter meeting. Speaker: Andrew Schenck, "Nursery Production Techniques." Jenkins Arboretum, Devon, Pa.

**April 9, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.** Board of Directors meeting. Home of Craig Conover.

**April 13, Saturday** Annual Banquet, Sunnysbrook Golf Club. Presentation by photographer Karl Garcens III

**April 20, Saturday, 9 a.m.** Propagation workday (potting up rooted cuttings and grafts). Kristoph Nursery, central New Jersey. Contact Karel Bemady (610-827-0113; bemadk@verizon.net) to get directions and to let him know you're going to participate.

**May 16-19, 2019** ARS Annual Convention, Desmond Hotel, Malvern, Pa.

watchful and quick to weed flowerbeds and lawns. Fence lines are another worrisome locale. Really amp up the search-and-destroy activity in August. Your stiltgrass infestation started with just a few seeds not that many years ago; don't allow a few seeds to mature now by failing to search out isolated plants, whether in the lawn or under the deciduous azalea.

Here's some good news: stiltgrass is very easy to weed by hand. Its shallow, fragile roots offer negligible resistance when tugged. Even a swath in the middle of a mowed lawn can be pulled without using a tool – the desirable lawn grasses have strong roots that will easily withstand the amount of pull it takes to remove stiltgrass.

And repeat all of the above, pre-emergent included, for at least three years.

If you have a crew come in to mow your lawn, in August and September insist that the equipment be cleaned just before your grass is cut. A stern rinsing with a nozzle-tipped hose should help. Be sure it's done in the street, not the lawn or driveway!

# A get-together that can't be matched

The honor of your presence is requested, the third weekend of May, at the international convention of the American Rhododendron Society.

Yes, you, who live right in the neighborhood, so to speak.

Never been to an ARS convention? Well, you're in for a treat, and there's no air fare involved. You don't even have to stay at the convention hotel in Malvern, Chester County, though it will probably be more fun if you do.

An ARS convention is all about *flowers!* Live and in person, in stunning bloom, with tours every day, Wednesday, May 15, through Saturday, May 18. We all know that Philadelphia is riotously floriferous in May, and there is nothing to top the displays on our agenda.

A hallmark of this region is its sumptuous, grand estates that have become amazing public gardens. You've probably heard of them: Longwood Gardens, Jenkins Arboretum, Tyler Arboretum, Winterthur, Morris Arboretum, Chanticleer, Mount Cuba. *All* of them are on one tour or another. Added to these venerables is Stoneleigh, the "newest old garden" hereabouts; this former home of the Haas family (as in Rohm & Haas) opened to the public less than a year ago.

You may be thinking, "But I can go to those gardens any time I want to, why sign up for the convention?" Take this simple test: When was the last time you saw even half of these gardens in bloom *in rhododendron season?* Do not delay bliss, see them in 2019 with us.

Three private gardens await your strolling as well: Wayne Guymon's jaw-dropper, plus the charming creations of Perc Moser and Alice Farley.

And when you take the ARS convention tours, you will have no driving-and-getting-lost concerns (anecdotal evidence strongly indicates that a substantial majority of visitors to Mount Cuba in Hockessin, Delaware, get lost). Top-shelf buses have been booked, and every tour includes food.

Speaking of food, there will be a superb party at Jenkins Thursday evening, with wine and food stations scattered among the azaleas and rhododendrons. This event is back by popular demand, a reprise of the 2004 Jenkins party that had ARS members talking for years.

Ooh, take a look at that Friday dinner: it will be at the American Helicopter Museum, a short hop from the convention hotel. This is a really cool venue for an event. You'll be able to check out the choppers, have dinner and hear a great presentation by Richard Murcott. Do not forget to take selfies with the helicopters to show your non-ARS friends and family, who are going to be jealous.

Wait, there's more: one of the greatest rhodo-centric plant sales ever mounted on the East Coast. For the first two days of the sale, only registered conventioners can shop (non-attendees will be admitted Saturday and Sunday – after the best plants have been snapped up).

What's particularly enjoyable is being part of a jolly, convivial group of people *just like you*, people who love rhododendrons. Make sure the batteries in your phones and cameras are charged, because you won't be able to resist snapping images of the gardens you'll see and the people you'll meet.

There is much more information at [ars2019.org](http://ars2019.org), including the registration form.

See you in Malvern, right?



# *The Philadelphia Story 2019* Rhododendrons In America's Garden Capital

## The 2019 ARS Convention Needs You!



The 4 ARS chapters in District 8, Greater Philadelphia, Lehigh Valley, Susquehanna Valley & Valley Forge, will host the ARS 2019 Convention from Wednesday May 15 to Sunday, May 19, 2019, at the Desmond Hotel in Malvern. Details are at

[ARS2019.org](http://ARS2019.org).

We need volunteers from all 4 chapters to help welcome ARS members coming from all over the world. To volunteer contact one of the co-chairs, Karel Bernady at [bernadk@verizon.net](mailto:bernadk@verizon.net) or Steve Henning at [rhodyman@earthlink.net](mailto:rhodyman@earthlink.net). It would help if you can tell us your preferences and which days you can help.

Here are some areas where we need volunteers.

**Please check to see where you can help!**

**Registration:** Linda Hartnett needs help handling registration, welcoming registrants, and providing hospitality during the convention.

**Bus Tours:** Steve Henning needs help loading the buses and bus captains on each bus.

**Tour Lunches:** Debby Schmidt needs help setting up box lunches for the Longwood Gardens tour and helping with catered lunches.

**Banquets:** Debby Schmidt needs helpers preparing for the banquets.

**Sale Plants:** Karel Bernady can use helpers in prepping the plants and getting them to the sale.

**Plant Sale:** Joan Warren and Ron Rabideau need help setting up and running the plant sale.

**Plant Inspection:** We could use a person who has worked with the plant inspectors for Phytosanitary inspections and certificates.

**Flower Show:** Bob Smetana needs helpers to take-in, arrange & care for flowers in the show.

**Photo Show:** Bob Smetana needs helpers to take-in, arrange & care for photos in the show.

**Auction(s):** We need people to care for the auction items and help with the auction(s).

**Sponsorships:** Maris Ogg needs help working with our sponsors and stuffing goody bags.

**AV Equipment:** Jerry O'Dell needs help to work with our speakers and the AV Systems.

**Other Help:** If you know of some other way you can help, please let us know.

Visit the Convention Website at [ARS2019.org](http://ARS2019.org)

And the Convention Committee Website at [ARSStore.org/ARS2019/](http://ARSStore.org/ARS2019/)

**Help District 8 Welcome the 2019 ARS Convention to America's Garden Capital!**

**[Volunteer For The ARS 2019 Convention!](#)**

# *The Philadelphia Story* Rhododendrons in America's Garden Capital

Annual ARS Convention – Philadelphia, May 16-19

Registration Deadlines: Tours and standard rate, April 10, 2019; final deadline, May 7, 2019

Go to [ars2019.org](http://ars2019.org) to download this form.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

		#1 Name on Badge	Primary ARS Chapter:				
		Dietary Restrictions					
		#2 Name on Badge	Primary ARS Chapter:				
		Dietary Restrictions					
#1	#2	DAY	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER	EACH	
			Register	Standard registration (deadline April 10, 2019)		x \$50 =	\$
			Register	Late Registration (April 11- May 7, 2019)		x \$60 =	\$
		Wed., May 15	Board Meeting	ARS Board of Directors Meeting Supper		x \$25 =	\$
		Wed., May 15	Pre-Conv. tour	Chanticleer and Winterthur Gardens. Lunch		x \$65 =	\$
		Thur., May 16	Midday tour	Tyler Arboretum Tour. Lunch included. (Use this line ONLY if you are not going on the Jenkins tour.)		x \$45 =	\$
		Thur., May 16	Evening tour & garden	Jenkins Arboretum, Wine and Dine. (Use this line ONLY if you are not going on the Tyler tour.)		x \$55 =	\$
		Thur., May 16	Thursday combo	Both Tyler and Jenkins tours. Lunch and evening Wine and Dine included. (\$10 discount for both)		x \$90 =	\$
		Fri., May 17	Southern tour	Mt. Cuba Center, Longwood Gardens, Guymon's WynEden. Lunch included.		x \$65 =	\$
		Fri., May 17	Buffet dinner	American Helicopter Museum Buffet dinner, Dick Murcott presentation.		x \$50 =	\$
		Sat., May 18	Northern tour	Morris Arboretum, Stoneleigh, Farley and Moser gardens. Lunch included.		x \$60 =	\$
		Sat., May 18	Banquet with open bar	Desmond Hotel. Jenny Rose Carey presentation. Choose: Salmon Beef Vegetarian		x \$70 =	\$
To ensure a space on tours, your registration must be received by April 10, 2019. After April 10, Waiting List applies.						TOTAL	\$

Check enclosed (U.S. funds only), payable to "Greater Philadelphia ARS".

Visa, MC # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Security code \_\_\_\_\_

Name as appears on credit card: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please make hotel reservations directly with  
**The Desmond: Double Tree by Hilton**  
 1 Liberty Blvd., Malvern, PA 19355  
<http://www.desmondgv.com/>  
 610-296-9800 or 800-575-1776  
 Convention rate is \$149 per night, plus tax.  
 Use group code: **RHO**

Mail this form to:  
 Linda Hartnett, ARS 2019 Registrar  
 1070 Beech Hollow Rd.  
 Ambler, PA 19002  
 610-940-4978  
[registrar@ars2019.org](mailto:registrar@ars2019.org)