

GREATER PHILADELPHIA RHODO GRAVURE

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

Triple the fun

A boffo banquet . . . a super sale . . . a conspicuously fab convention

This, your favorite garden club, is pulling out all the stops for you this spring, with a trio of excellent events. In sequence, they are:

Annual Chapter Banquet

We return this year to the Sunnybrook Golf Club in Plymouth Meeting for this festive event, which also serves as the April meeting of the Valley Forge Chapter.

It's only a few days away – Saturday, April 13 – but there is still time to place your reservation. The reservation form accompanies this issue of the newsletter, but please also give Maris Ogg, the manager of reservations, a heads-up at mogg@towerbridgeadvisors.com or 215-704-6218.

The program will be something close to visual overload. The presenter will be Karl Gercens III, conservatory manager at Longwood Gardens, where he has been on staff for 21 years. Perhaps the most enviable part of his job description can be summed up as: travel to great gardens and take pictures, all over the world. One result of this “duty” is fabulous additions and upgrades at Longwood. Another upshot is his program for our banquet: “In Search of Inspiration – Glimpses from Gardens Around the Globe.” Want a preview? Go to <http://karlgercens.com/gallery>. A native of Mississippi, he previously was with Disney's Epcot Center in Florida and the Filoli estate garden in California, part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

We gather at Sunnybrook at 6 p.m. for hors d'oeuvres and cocktails (cash bar). After the presentation we will conclude the evening with the justly popular Rhododendron Roulette. Each attendee is asked to bring a rhododendron, azalea or companion plant to share. Then, using the chapter's special sauce, a random distribution is conducted. Combine that with the rooted rhody cutting that each person will receive as a table favor, and you'll have the first elements of your spring planting endeavors in hand.

Sunnybrook Golf Club is at 398 Stenton Avenue, corner of Joshua Road, Plymouth Meeting, Pa. 19462 (the closest Pennsylvania Turnpike exit is Exit 333). If lost en route, call the club at 610-828-9617 for directions.



Karl Gercens III will be the banquet speaker on April 13.



'Rio Salsa' (above) and 'Absolute Citron' are featured plants at the May 10-11 plant sale at Morris Arboretum.



their registration forms, another copy accompanies this issue of the RhodoGravure.)

Three of the evenings warrant special mention. On Thursday, May 16, Jenkins Arboretum will be the site for a spiffy garden soiree, with food stations and wine bars scattered about – chardonnay, crostini and native azaleas all in one leisurely stroll in the soft light of early evening, with complimentary bus transportation from and back to the Desmond Hotel.

Annual Plant Sale

One of the utter constants of a Philadelphia spring is the Greater Philadelphia Chapter's rhododendron and azalea sale at Morris Arboretum, the Friday and Saturday before Mothers Day (this year, May 10-11), in conjunction with the grand all-sorts-of-plants sale that the arboretum mounts.

Two elepidotes with local pedigrees are highlights of the sale: 'Absolute Citron', hybridized by chapter vice president Ron Rabideau, and 'Rio Salsa', a creation of Tom Ahern of Bethlehem, Pa. These are gems and like true gems they are rare. Don't let purchase opportunity pass you by.

An important tip for eager buyers: on Friday, the sale is for members only – Morris members and ARS members – opening at 10 a.m. and closing at 7 p.m., with a 10 percent discount on all purchases. Saturday hours (open to the public) are 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Such an event requires volunteers to staff the sales booth and give customers excellent rhododendron advice. Please contact Linda Hartnett if you'd like to help: lindahartnett@gmail.com or 215-287-0731.

ARS National Convention

It's been 15 years since the American Rhododendron Society came to Philadelphia for its annual spring convention, and there are mere weeks remaining to register. The deadline to guarantee space on one or more of the tours (four days' worth!) is April 10. The final deadline to register is May 7. And the whole shebang begins Wednesday, May 15. The Desmond Hotel in Malvern is convention headquarters. (For the convenience of those who may have mislaid

Flower Show exhibit gets a gold medal

'Superior educational message,' judges say

It was a petite plot on which to construct an exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show, but it was large enough for the Greater Philadelphia Chapter to come up with a winning presentation. Judges at this year's Flower Show essentially declared a tie between the rhodos and the ferns, as both the Fern Society exhibit and ours received a Gold Medal in the Plant Society Division.

The exhibit was titled "Planting Rhododendrons From the Ground Up," and it sought to educate visitors on the best way to get a plant into the ground and achieve long-term success. The tableau depicted what might be called an interrupted planting scene, with planting holes ready and a root ball teased apart and lying exposed to show how to deal with container-grown plants.

Several signs gave key tips on planting. Visitors seemed quite attentive about reading or even photographing the signs, and some commented on the clarity of the prose. The judges' remarks deemed it a "superior educational message."

One rhododendron in particular drew much attention, a fine yellow named 'Patricia Walton.' The plant, a cross of 'Top Banana' and 'Janet Blair', was obtained from Whitney Gardens on the West Coast, which has been selling it for several years, listing it as hardy to -5F. It is said to "bud young, heavily and consistently year after year."

The crack team that conceived and installed the exhibit was led by Linda Hartnett and Barbara Olejnik, with key assists from Kim Kopple and Karel Bernady.

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The staff at RhodoGravure headquarters went through some old files recently and came upon the docent schedule for the 1996 Flower Show, then coordinated by Betts Layman. Comparing the 1996 and 2019 rosters, there are three individuals still answering the public's quirky questions 23 years later: Cathy Keim, Joan Roberts and Michael Martin Mills.

This year's docent brigade welcomed first-timers Renee Thomson-Hohl and Erin and Cliff Van Yahres. Several people went above the call of duty and took more than one shift: Nils Knutzen and Mary Clifford, Barbara Olejnik, and Karel Bernady.



Installation team: From left, Barbara Olejnik, Karel Bernady, Mary Clifford, Perc Moser, Linda Hartnett, Toby Roberts, Joan Roberts, Alan Kirkby, Michael Martin Mills.

The citation for long-distance participation goes to John and Julie Bartlett of Gettysburg, roughly 145 miles from the convention center, with Cynthia and Rupert Rossetti of Port Deposit, Maryland, clocking about 65 miles one way. Tom Schuetz of Mechanicsburg, stalwart docent of many years' standing, made this year his farewell engagement.

Others on the docent schedule this year: Steve and Darlene Henning, Jerry and Kate O'Dell, Ron Rabideau, Joan and Reid Warren, Myo and Thien-Thien Myint, Michael Martin Mills, Perc Moser, Maysie Starr, Toby Roberts, Eva Jackson, Frank Brouse, Victoria Buckley, Kim Kopple and Craig Conover, Bill Halberstadt, Gary and Mary Ammon, Susan and Marc Thomson, and Maris Ogg.

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Plants and Propagation: Karel Bernady & 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, 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.

Dues are \$40 per year, for chapter and national membership and a subscription to the Journal. Contact the president or treasurer (see list at left) for a form or go to www.GPChapterARS.org; click on "Join us."

www.GPChapterARS.org

Insects and climate change

Some like it hot

Here's a factoid, from Smithsonian magazine, that may make your eyes bug out: "At any time, it is estimated that there are some 10 quintillion (10,000,000,000,000,000,000) individual insects alive."

Some of them bite people. Some of them chew rhododendron leaves. Some of them make honey and pollinate peaches, alfalfa and butternut squash.

And all of them are experiencing major ecosystem changes along with us bipedal vertebrate beings. Indeed, the New York Times Sunday magazine last fall wrote extensively about the "insect apocalypse" – significant declines in certain insect populations – and what that might mean for other forms of life.

In October, Morris Arboretum presented Professor Michael J. Raupp of the University of Maryland, an entomologist with an engaging way of talking about spineless creepy-crawlies. It's the sort of demeanor you'd expect from someone who maintains a website named www.bugoftheweek.com (one installment features the blue death-feigning beetle, a native American).

Here are some highlights from Raupp's presentation.

Unsurprisingly, many of the professor's examples involved increased warmth. For instance, when temperatures rise earlier in the year than in the past – what a lay person might call an "early spring" – insects commence their activities earlier as well, and may be on a faster track to boot. Weevils, Raupp pointed out, start feeding on plants two to three weeks earlier than before. Scale insects lay more eggs in warmer conditions, resulting in more hatchlings than predators can deal with.

Unexpected consequences abound. If early warmth induces earlier maturation of caterpillars, sending them into cocoon or chrysalis stage earlier, that can deprive songbird chicks of food brought to them by the parent bird(s). (Unless the birds are also on an earlier schedule, which is to say the same earlier schedule as the insects, but Raupp is not an ornithologist, so he had no observations along those lines.)

On the other hand, if trees leaf out earlier, their leaves will mature earlier – which means they get thick and tough – and thus may escape defoliation from insects that feed on tenderer foliage but are no longer in sync.

Other tidbits:

- Drought, which in some areas appears to be increasing as a part of climate change, increases borer damage, and it kills the fungus that kills gypsy moths.
- Azalea lacebug nymphs are maturing faster; lacebug nymphs are much more susceptible to predators; faster maturation means more survive to adulthood than before. It's the adults that do the damage.
- Give up on any delusions that a really cold winter will kill off emerald ash borer. It can survive -28 Fahrenheit (but not -29F).
- If plants that are light sensitive are pollinated by insects that are temperature sensitive, all sorts of synchrony may be off, since day length is constant and unaffected by climate change.

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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.

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

April 13, Saturday, 6 p.m. Annual Banquet, Sunnybrook Golf Club. Presentation by photographer Karl Gercens III. See article on Page 1.

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

May 10-11, Friday-Saturday Annual plant sale, Morris Arboretum. See article on Page 1.

May 16-19 ARS Annual Convention, Desmond Hotel, Malvern, Pa. See article on Page 1.

June 30, Sunday, 2 p.m. Joint Picnic and Annual Meetings, Greater Philadelphia and Valley Forge Chapters, home of Perc Moser, Bryn Mawr, Pa.

August 18, Sunday District 8 Cutting Exchange and Auction

September 8, Sunday Chapter meeting, Plants for Members sale, Morris Arboretum

September 27-29 ARS Fall Conference, Parksville, British Columbia

Spring activities

Continued from Page 1

Friday night the convention decamps to the American Helicopter Museum for a buffet dinner and presentation by Richard Murcott. If all the flowers are beginning to give you sensory overload, getting up close to a collection of flying machines may be just the thing to restore balance. The next night, back at the Desmond, will be the closing night banquet (with open bar). Jenny Rose Carey, noted gardener/writer, will be the speaker.

Do rapturously beautiful gardens entice you? Please, register for a tour or three and leave the driving to us, as conventioners head out for Chanticleer, Mount Cuba Center, Winterthur, Longwood Gardens, *and more*. Here's a rundown of the tours: <http://ars2019.org/tours/index.php#Gardens>.

And of course, plants! The convention plant sale opens Thursday evening after the Jenkins Arboretum party. Karel Bernady began propagating elepidote and lepidotes two and a half years ago, and azalea expert Caroline Beck of Virginia has worked her magic as well. The choices are delectable, as this catalogue will attest: <http://ars2019.org/index.php#Sale>.

In addition, there will be choice companion plants from Jim Gears, Harold Sweetman and others. Only registered convention attendees may shop on Thursday and Friday, with the public invited to shop on Saturday and Sunday.

Yes, volunteers are needed. Please contact Steve Wright: steve@jenkinsarboretum.org.

From Maris Ogg's cookie file

At the January meeting, many members asked Maris Ogg for her cookie recipe. Here it is, from a Better Homes & Gardens publication:

Brandied Cranberry-Apricot Bars

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour, divided (1 + $\frac{1}{2}$)

1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups packed brown sugar, divided ($\frac{1}{3}$ + 1)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter (1 stick)

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup dark raisins

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup golden raisins

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup dried cranberries

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup snipped dried apricots

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup brandy (or water)

2 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup chopped pecans

powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 350F.

Stir 1 cup flour and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup brown sugar together. With a pastry blender, cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Press into an ungreased 8x8-inch baking pan. Bake about 20

minutes, until golden.

Meanwhile, put dried fruits into a small saucepan with brandy; bring to boiling. Remove from heat, let stand 20 minutes, then drain.

In a medium bowl, beat eggs at low for 4 minutes. Add 1 cup brown sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour and vanilla and mix. Mix in fruit and pecans. Evenly spread mixture on baked crust.

Bake about 40 minutes, until toothpick tests clean, covering with foil at 30-minute point to prevent overbrowning. Cool in pan on rack. Sprinkle with powdered sugar and cut into bars.

Store in refrigerator or freezer.

Insects and climate change

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Since cities have long been heat sinks (warmer than nearby countryside, regardless of the season), they can become winter refuges for insects that formerly were killed off by cold. And come spring they start commuting to the suburbs.

What's a gardener to do?

One useful piece of advice: be increasingly careful about southern exposures. Simply put, they are hotter now. Maybe too hot for your favorite rhododendron.