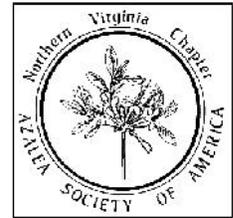


# The Azalea Clipper

Volume 32 Issue 4 October 2011

Published 1980-2010 by Frances and Phil Louer

Northern Virginia Chapter Azalea Society of America



This should be an exciting meeting! Please plan on arriving early, as we will be starting the formal program a little earlier than normal to accommodate our full agenda. The topic will be our **Glenn Dale Project** to help the **Norfolk Botanical Garden** decide which of the many cultivars to add to their collection. **Marcus Jones, Curator of Woody Plants at the NBG**, will share the garden's goals. **Barbara Bullock, Curator of Rhododendrons and Azaleas at the National Arboretum**, will give us a little of the history and significance of the Glenn Dale introductions.

**Dan Krabill** will lead the group discussion of the characteristics and relative merits of the various cultivars as **Don Hyatt** projects images. The attendees will be given the opportunity to identify those Glenn Dale varieties that they think should be recommended for inclusion in the NBG collection. Members will also be invited to share plants from the recommended list with the Norfolk Botanical Garden.

We are also planning a **plant exchange** at the end of the meeting. Please make sure the pots aren't dripping and bring your plants marked with:

Name of the plant, common and scientific (if available)  
Name of person contributing the plant (helpful if recipient has questions)  
Zones in which the plant normally thrives

These other items of information may be provided as appropriate/available:

Hybrid group  
Plant size (height and width) at about 10 years or at maturity  
Flower color, size, type, bloom time, when applicable  
pH preference  
Light and water requirements  
When to divide or prune  
Country of origin (e.g. native to Northern Virginia; discovered in Korea)  
Notes (e.g. deer resistant)  
Picture of plant

**Carolyn Beck**



*Spring in the Washington Area is defined by the Glenn Dales, such as this **Fawn**.*

NEXT  
CHAPTER MEETING:  
**OCT 30 1:30 - 5**  
**THE  
GLENN DALE  
PROJECT**  
ANNANDALE  
George Mason Library  
Directions on p. 4  
REFRESHMENT DUTY –  
Everyone: Please bring a dish to share



**Planting on Hooper Bald.** From left to right: Tom, Revanda Williams (decendent of Hooper, for whom the bald is named), Rosa McWhorter, Bob McWhorter (in the bushes), Carolyn Beck.



*R. calendulaceum* with gold flowers.



*R. calendulaceum* "Hooper Cooper" flanked by Jim Brant (left) and George McLellan

Photos courtesy Don Hyatt



**The Boy Scouts planting on Oak Knob** with Huckleberry Knob in the background. Note the spray marks on the ground which designates a place to plant. The stakes around the periphery are to help define the area so that the mowers know where the babies are located.

## Hooper Bald Planting Trip 2011

On October 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, a diverse and robust group converged on a section of the Nantahala Forest, about 100 miles west of Asheville, NC, and very close to the Tennessee border. Some of the workers lived locally. Others came from Georgia, Washington, DC, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Alabama, Maryland, Virginia, and other parts of North Carolina. Represented were members of the ARS, ASA, Boy Scouts, and even a descendent of the Hoopers for which Hooper Bald was named. All were there with a common goal: to plant 800 native azalea seedlings back into the wild.

Travelers arrived at the planting areas via the scenic Cherohala Skyway, an undulating course across the crest of the pristine Unicoi Mountains. With its many twists and turns, it is a route much favored by motorcyclists. As we approached the higher elevations, we were greeted with panoramic views and breathtaking displays of fall color.

The first of the planting spots was located a short climb from the highway on top of Oak Knob. This large, grassy knoll is a subpeak of Huckleberry Knob, the highest elevation in the range at 5,560 feet. On Friday morning, the crew set to work. Some were diggers, others planters; a real team machine. They followed the green spots sprayed on the grass, which meant "This is the place to plant one." The process was thus: remove a small section of turf, loosen the wonderfully loamy soil, and nestle in one of the *Rhododendron calendulaceum* seedlings. By Saturday midmorning, 700 plants were in the ground. And then it was on to the nearby Hooper Bald for the last 100. All had been grown by The Southern Highland Reserve from seed collected on Hooper Bald.

We could not have asked for more perfect weather. The mornings were cool, the skies marbled with interesting cloud formations, and there was but a whisper of a breeze. By midday we were glad for some peripheral shade in which to lunch, relax, and chat. It was here that we heard how individuals had spent their time on the way from home. Some had included stretches of the Blue Ridge Parkway in their route. Some had stopped at J Jackson's nursery in Mountain City, Tennessee, called Appalachian Native Plants; a great place to purchase native azaleas. A few had visited Roan Mountain.

After our break, we were treated to a tour by George McLellan. As we walked down the ridge, he pointed out the local flora, including some of the many *R. calendulaceum* specimens that have been documented, named, and tagged. Also present were *Kalmia* (Mountain Laurel), conifers, Ground Cedar, mosses, and natural *R. calendulaceum* seedlings. At the end of the trail, we were introduced to "Hooper Copper", discovered by George and named for its coppery foliage and star-shaped flowers of yellow, orange, and coppery-gold. This had been one of the first plants to be freed from encroaching trees and shrubs. And it responded with vigor, putting on new growth and flowering abundantly, possibly giving rise to the idea of expanding the restoration effort.

We saw evidence of the hard work that had gone into this venture over the years in the form of huge piles of brush. And we heard stories of the history behind the Hooper Bald Project.

Blunt summits, known as balds, had historically been grazed by livestock. These open expanses of native grasses were a great home for *R. calendulaceum* and they had flourished. In spring, their flowers paraded a sea of oranges, reds, yellows, and golds. In fall, the foliage presented another burst of color, which could be seen from miles away. But when the Forest Service started buying land in the 1930s and ended the grazing practices, trees and shrubs seized the opportunity, quickly crowding out the less aggressive understory plants. So the native azaleas were at serious risk of losing their place in the sun.

Starting in the 1990s, a few members of the Species Study Group from the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the ARS would explore numerous sites each year, searching for native azaleas. It was during one of these trips that a treasure trove of *R. calendulaceum* was noted on Hooper Bald. These azaleas had exceptionally large flowers for the type, many attaining diameters of 2-3", and the group discussed the importance of preserving the gene pool.

Jim Brant took on the task of organizing the effort. He contacted Dr Duke Rankin, a botanist with the Nantahala National Forest. Duke was able to open the doors that lead to approval for the ARS and ASA to proceed with what became known as the Hooper Bald Project. The objective was to reclaim the balds for the native azaleas.

George McLellan, Bob and Audrey Stelloh, Don Hyatt, and John Brown, along with Jim, became the core of this project. With the help of others, like the Sierra Club, areas around the azaleas were cleared so that they could bask in the light that they need to thrive and set seed. Mowing twice a year keeps the areas from reverting back to dense thickets.

Each year, *R. calendulaceum* seed is collected on Hooper Bald, and later shared via various group seed exchanges. The hope is to perpetuate the best of the species, and prevent theft of plants from the wild. If you are interested in seed from this special area, please contact Don Hyatt

For more information and photographs of *R. calendulaceum* on Hooper Bald, visit Don Hyatt's website, <http://www.donaldhyatt.com/natives>. There is also a MAC Chapter PDF of a PowerPoint show which you can view at <http://www.macars.org/HooperBald.pdf>.

**Carolyn Beck**

### ***From the President***

As I write this, I'm enjoying the crisp fall weather and the changing colors of the trees. I certainly enjoy the cooler temperatures as it inspires me to get out and work in the garden. Fall is my second favorite season after spring. Thankfully with the introduction of Encore azaleas, my garden is full of azaleas in bloom.

This has been a very enjoyable and successful year in the chapter. Not only did we have some interesting and well received activities for our members, but we also were able to welcome a number of new members (and in one case re-welcome a former member). Additionally, some members who hadn't participated actively in years assisted us in our plant sale and auction. I am so appreciative of the energy and enthusiasm of our members.

This past weekend, a number of members went up to Hooper Bald in the Unicoi Mountains of western North Carolina to help restore native azaleas. This is an extremely worthwhile project and I commend those who participated. I hope I'm able to participate next year.

This month we have an exciting program. We're working with the Norfolk Botanical Garden (NBG) to expand their collection of Glenn Dale azaleas. We will have both Marcus Jones from the NBG as well as Barbara Bullock from the National Arboretum talking about the Glenn Dales. We will ask our members in attendance to assist in selecting the Glenn Dales which they would suggest be added to the NBG collection. After compiling the list, the chapter, perhaps with the assistance of others, will help in the acquisition of plants for the NBG.

We will also have a plant exchange (azaleas or any other plant) at the end of the meeting. As you can see, we'll have a full agenda so we recommend members arrive at 1:30 as we will be starting earlier than normal.

I'm looking forward to seeing you at the 30 October meeting.

**Rick**

*If you would like to receive the clipper via email, saving the club printing and postage, and are not already doing so, please send me a note at: [bsperling@cox.net](mailto:bsperling@cox.net)*

*Pictures of you are available at: <https://picasaweb.google.com/bsperlin/AzaleaMeetings2001>*

*Did you know that we're alive in cyberspace? Check us out at: [www.nv-asa.org/](http://www.nv-asa.org/)*

*A communique from our special, far-flung correspondent in North Carolina:*

I thought I'd tell everyone that Bob and I attended the local chapter of the ARS in Charlotte at UNC-C last Sunday where I got reacquainted with Rick Ellis, the president. We were guests of Barbara Alexander, my lifelong gardening mentor and think we'll go ahead and rejoin ARS as that chapter needs a boost in membership. John Brown, past president of ASA, was the speaker and did an amusing and very educational job of speaking on the Vaseyi's, using some of the same footage that Don Hyatt has used in the past. He gave full credit to Don and introduced folks to many faces already familiar to me.

John also exhorted everyone who could to sign up for the Hooper Bald project, giving all the pertinent information. He did a good job of talking about the ASA-ARS joint convention in Asheville May 4-7 and said he would inquire as to whether they might be able to offer a before- or after-convention tour of the Southern Highlands Reserve. Barbara says it is well worth that steep but short climb.

I met a man named Danny who lives around 10 miles from us down here in Union Co., propagates quite prolifically and wants to come to see our place ASAP. We talked at length and it turns out that he's a true believer in Mike Creel's approaches as he has managed to root Silver Bells and Franklinias among other things. He offered to share one of each with us which I was delighted to accept as I haven't had a Silver Bell in over 20 years and my only Franklinia succumbed to being pushed over by a tractor clearing deep snow in the Valley years ago.

Hope you'll all be at the convention next year as John offered that they'll have 500 plants at the plant sale. You know too, that he raises Japanese maples and will have a goodly number of them there, too.

All the best!

Eve

***Don't forget the Holiday Social at the home of Lars Larson in Fairfax Station on Sunday  
December 4th!***

\*\*\*\*\*

***The Glenn Dale Project Meeting on Sunday October 30th at 1:30 will be at the George  
Mason Regional Library in Annandale, 7001 Little River Turnpike (Rt. 236)  
It is on the south side of Little River Turnpike at the corner of Hillbrook Dr.***

***From the Beltway I-495: go east on Rt. 236 about 1.7 mi to Hillbrook. There is a light there  
and the library is on your right.***

***From I-395: go west on Rt. 236 about 2.75 mi to the light at Hillbrook. Turn left and then  
the library will be immediately on your right***

**President: Rick Bauer**

**Vice President: Carolyn Beck**

**Secretary: Mary Hoioos**

**Treasurer: Paul Beck**

**Corresponding Secretary and Clipper Editor:  
Barry Sperling**