

11400 Valley Road
Fairfax, Virginia
22030
October 28, 1979

*Dr. Curtis Sidden, President
William Bartram Chapter*

Dear *Dr. Sidden,*

This letter is to enlist your aid, and that of your chapter, in identifying outstanding "good-doer" rhododendrons in your chapter area.

First, what is a "good-doer?" It is gradually becoming recognized through member experience that certain species and hybrid rhododendrons grow better, are more faithful with their flowers, better adapted to heat and cold of area gardens, less subject to insects and diseases, and are generally more satisfactory as garden subjects. For example, a survey of 199 individual members of Eastern chapters in 1973-74 by the late Francis J. Sholomskas, summarized in Chapter VII of Hybrids and Hybridizers, shows an unexpected agreement on "good-doers" from chapter to chapter. Because of the wider soil and climate conditions, encompassed by this new survey of all chapters, a broader range of "good-doers" or best rhododendrons is expected. In areas of better soils and milder climates, recommendations **might be more strongly** influenced by flower and plant quality than on growability. Hopefully, this survey will provide enlightenment on the most satisfying rhododendrons for different areas of the U.S.

The main purpose of this survey is to develop information for those just beginning to grow rhododendrons, and thus enable them to make a successful and satisfying start with some of the best plants recognized as such by more experienced gardeners. This information will be published as a separate chapter of a new ARS book on

rhododendron ratings. Information for the other chapter (on ratings) of this book is presently being compiled and edited by Mrs. A. W. Kraxberger, Portland, Oregon.

Another important purpose, although secondary at this point, is to develop a list of "do-gooders" for each chapter which might form a basis for later use in applying for plant awards. Few chapters have utilized the ARS award process in recent years.

For your review, Policies of the Board (May 1978) on AWARDS and RATINGS are enclosed.

What rhododendrons qualify to be included in your list of "do-gooders"? This may vary greatly from chapter to chapter, depending on the degree to which growability is an important factor. Please be reminded that your list should include those rhododendrons having the best flower and plant habit quality that can be grown under "average" conditions in your chapter. Award plants may or may not be a starting point, depending on the growing conditions in your chapter compared to those where the award rhododendron was developed. No plants have yet been designated in the new "Garden Gem" category, although it is highly likely that each chapter's survey may develop suggestions for rhododendrons suitable for this designation. Whatever the method used in your chapter to develop lists of "good-doers", it should be included with the lists you send.

It is suggested that the guides established by Mr. Sholomskos be used to collect and present "good-doer" rhododendron information. Lists are needed for:

(1) Rhododendrons

Lepidote
Elapidote

(2) Deciduous azaleas

(3) Species rhododendrons

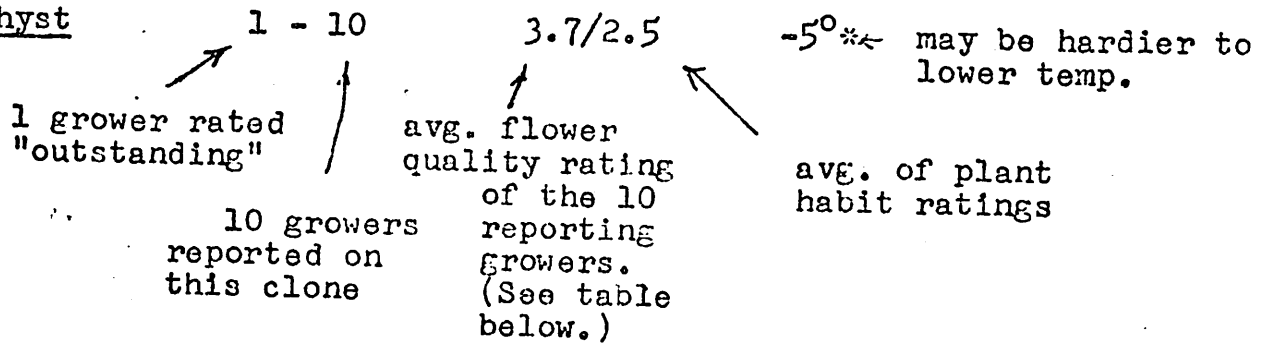
(4) Evergreen azaleas

Where a chapter wishes to establish sub-categories, the additional information is welcomed.

Lists of "good-doers" in the four categories can be developed by chapter committees, by questionnaires to chapter members, or by a combination of the two methods. Mr. Sholomskos was quite successful in developing data by first preparing tentative lists of plants in each category (this might be done by your chapter committee) and then using these lists as a basis for questionnaires to individual chapter members. Each chapter is encouraged to use the technique best suited to its membership.

How many plants should be recommended? This is left up to the discretion of each chapter. Try to keep the survey manageable and of value to readers of the new ARS book. Please be reminded that only those rhododendrons identified as "outstanding" in your area should be included.

A copy of Appendix A in Hybrids and Hybridizers is attached as an example of the type of information that will be useful. In addition to the given data, it is appropriate to also include flower color and blooming time. As in the Sholomskos survey, rating information is desirable. Where the same plant is on the list of more than one chapter, it is expected that ratings may vary somewhat, dependent on plant performance and individual member response. In the way of explanation of the columns of data in the Sholomskas summary, rhododendron Amethyst in Table 1 is used as an example:

AmethystRatingsRange

Quality of bloom
Quality of habit

1 to 5
1 to 5

Where

1 = satisfactory
2 = fair
3 = good
4 = very good
5 = excellent

For those rhododendrons on your list of recommended "do-gooders" that may be difficult to obtain outside of your chapter area, sources of these plants should be furnished with your lists.

The only additional information requested is a brief description of growing conditions to you found in your chapter area. This might be expressed as a range of temperature extremes, rainfall and soil types.

If you have any questions on how to proceed, you may contact me at 703-591-9177 (evenings) Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays, or weekends.

For your chapter recommendations on "good-doers" to be included in the new ARS book, they should be send to me by March 15 , 1980.

Sincerely,

George W. Ring, III
Eastern Vice-president, ARS
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