



# The Blue Ridge Review



SOUTHEASTERN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

January, 2022

Encouragement of the culture of Rhododendrons

## BOB HEAD WILL EDUCATE US ON SUCCESSFULLY GRAFTING RHODODENDRONS — FEBRUARY 6TH

On Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, at 2:00, we will finally meet again at Bullington Gardens to learn from Bob Head. Here's Bob's description of what he will talk about:



"I will do a program on grafting Rhododendron onto John Thornton's cultivars of hyperythrum hybrid Rhododendron! I have discovered a few things that are important to the success of grafting Rhododendrons onto root rot resistant root stocks."

Bob Head's interest in gardening started while he was still a 'school kid' when he started growing vegetables using fertilizer from his father's fish bait/worm casting business. He was encouraged by his teacher who bought the vegetables. This was part of the foundation for Bob's lifelong passion for breeding, growing, and selling plants. While he was pursuing his degree in Ornamental

Horticulture from Clemson University, Bob managed a landscape crew for his family's nursery, Head-Lee Nursery in Seneca, SC. With his degree in hand, he took over the plant propagation section of his family nursery; he also was working as Clemson's Area Horticultural Agent for 15 years.

His passion for plant breeding continued from hobby to business when he and his wife, Lisa, started Head Ornamentals, Inc. in 2000. In 2008 they added Head Select, Inc. to their businesses, which helps expand their markets. In 2010 Bob left the Head-Lee Nursery to focus on his plant development business -- Head Ornamentals, Inc. is a plant introduction and marketing business which breeds, selects, and then patents the plant cultivars Bob developed, and then licenses other nursery growers to produce and sell these plants to the nursery industry. Congratulations to Bob for pursuing his passion.

Among the group of the well-known plants that Bob developed are *Bloom-a-thon* Azaleas, which he introduced in 2012. These wonderful azaleas bloom for 4 to 6 weeks in the spring, and then the blooms appear again for 12 to 16 weeks in the fall. When asked what created his interest in breeding azaleas, Bob replied, "When I was 14 years old, an older nurseryman introduced me to many types of Satsuki Azaleas, Big Leaf Rhododendrons, and Glendale Azaleas. Some of those varieties would bloom in the fall, and that sparked an interest to develop a breeding line of repeat blooming Azaleas."

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### BOB HEAD'S RULE FOR PLANT BREEDING —

"I try to select superior forms of native plants with better qualities and growth habits for the smaller landscape areas of today, which will lead to more native plant use in the home landscape."

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## The Blue Ridge Review

### BEASLEY NATIVE AZALEAS FOR US !!



Aaron & Ray—all the plants



Sieglinde's Prizes



Everyone's Happy Day



Healthy bud on Kennell's Gold

In late September we were offered a wonderful opportunity for our members to purchase two hundred and thirteen native azaleas comprised of seventeen varieties in varying numbers from 1 to 28 available plants per variety. They were two-year-old plants in 3-gallon pots offered to us by members Jeff and Lisa Beasley, former owners of Beasley Transplant Nursery, Lavonia, GA.

Jeff's father, George, opened the continuously family-owned Transplant Nursery 42 years ago. Jeff inherited his father's love of plants and his father's skill in successfully hybridizing them. When Jeff and Lisa became owners of the business in 1988, they discontinued the retail mail-order side and it became a wholesale business, primarily working with wholesale Green Industries. A few years ago, Jeff and Lisa followed the family tradition and transferred the business to their daughter and son-in-law, Camilla and Gaitlin Correia. Both Jeff and Lisa are still actively involved in growing plants, which is why we were offered this great opportunity. It is our privilege to have been able to buy so many beautiful native azaleas that Jeff's father propagated (and then Jeff continued the plant lines) from these gorgeous native azaleas George Beasley discovered many years ago.

Here's what Ray said about these plants:

"This is a chance to get these plants that may never be available again. These were a selection of natives that George and Mary Beasley propagated years ago. They grow great in the South."

We sent a notification out to all of our members giving them a chance to request these plants. By September 24<sup>th</sup> we had requests for 185 plants at \$15 each. After working out delivery plans with the Beasleys, we agreed that we would distribute the plants on October 24<sup>th</sup>, after they were delivered and unloaded on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Aaron Cook arranged for them to be delivered to the Blue Ridge Community College greenhouse, which we had supported with a large donation for renovation earlier.

We did have a couple of issues we had to work out before this all came together: Seven of the seventeen varieties had more sign-up requests than plants available; for instance, we had 29 requests for 14 Firecracker Azaleas and 5 requests for 1 Dawn-at-the-River Azalea. We worked this out through a drawing process, and, hopefully, everyone was satisfied. (Aaron also gave some suggestions for alternative plants, which helped also.) We also had some people who couldn't pick-up their plants on 10/24; that was easy to solve through volunteers. Thanks to all who volunteered to deliver or hold plants for others who had pick-up issues. A few payment problems kept Jackson on his toes, but everyone eventually sent their money. It turns out we sold 196 plants; subtracting payment for plants and delivery, both SE-ARS and Vaseyi received \$326.50 each as profit. The biggest profit was obtaining these wonderful plants! Over 20 members bought plants.

Chuck and I have been keeping an eye on the six plants we purchased. These new plants held onto their leaves longer than our other native azaleas, probably a 'hardening off' process associated with their transfer from the Georgia climate. Now, we're noticing the beautiful, healthy buds on our new plants; we can't wait for their show in the spring! Thank you, Jeff and Lisa.



January, 2022

## VISITING CLEMSON BOTANICAL GARDEN

On Saturday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, we scheduled a group outing to the South Carolina Botanical Garden at Clemson. Here's a lesson: Never schedule an outing to Clemson on the day of a football game!! Chuck and I (and probably others) ran into a huge traffic jam, and, after circling the area, felt that we couldn't reach the garden. Fortunately, seven people (the McCarters, Audrey Stelloh, April Sanborn, the Hodges, and Bob Head) were brave enough to get there. It was a beautiful day, and it looks like everyone had a great time. Below is input from several of the adventurous souls! Also, notice the pictures from this outing.

Audrey Stelloh wrote about the tropical plants section: "What fun to see the tropical plants at the Clemson Botanical Garden. (When I visited in the Spring the tropical plants were still dormant.) First I saw the flowering gingers with their fabulous fragrance. Then I saw lime trees covered with limes. And the giant blue leaved Agave Century plants were stunning. And the Fatsia were in full bloom and covered with their white round, spikey balls. All the plants were in fine form and our group had a wonderful time learning about all the rare plants from Bob Head. Thanks to Bob for generously touring us all around the gardens. "

Jonathan Hodges said, "Big thanks to Bob for leading us around on the tour of the beautiful garden!"

Pamela McCarter informed us that "Bob identified the plants and gave us some history as well as plant habit, origin and cultivation."

## FAREWELL TO SEVERAL OLD FRIENDS

**Ernest Koone, III**, age 70, of Pine Mountain, Georgia, died in early January after a brief illness. He was the owner (after his father) of Lazy K Nursery, the largest grower of native azaleas in the country. He was a recognized authority on native azaleas and was interested in all native shrubs of the Southeast. He was active in several horticultural groups and was a Board Member of the Rosalyn Carter's Butterfly Trail. In March 2019, he was awarded the Distinguished Award of the Azalea Society of America, their highest honor.

Ray says many members knew him, and Ray had dealings with him for 25 years.

**Evelyn Ritterson Bowman** died in March, 2021. Evelyn and husband Robert moved to Hendersonville from Wilmington, Delaware after Robert retired in 1977. They joined the SE-ARS Chapter in 1979 and were members for several years. Together they chaired a flower show and worked in numerous others. On June 17, 1990 they were awarded the Bronze Medal.

When Robert served as President Evelyn always set up for the meetings. They developed and maintained beautiful gardens at their home on Sky Valley Rd in the Crab Creek Community, Henderson Co.

They were neighbors of Jean and Leon Pace, and thanks to their invitation the Paces attended our first meeting and joined the SE-ARS Chapter in 1992.



A Beautiful Day at Clemson



Audrey loves the holly



Bob teaches about Camellias



April & Pamela Enjoying the day

**Southeastern Chapter of  
American Rhododendron Society  
280 Trammell Rd.  
Travelers Rest, SC 29690**

WEBSITE - WWW.SE-ARS.ORG

**Officers and Directors**

(beginning July 1, 2021)

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**Mark your Calendar**

**Sunday, February 6th—  
Time—2 p.m.**

**Place—Bullington  
Gardens, 95 Upper Red  
Oak Trail**

**Speaker—Bob Head,  
Grafting Rhododendrons**

**Make Sure to Check Out the  
SE-ARS Website —  
[www.se-ars.org](http://www.se-ars.org)**

**BOB HEAD'S GRAFTING PROGRAM (cont.)**

Recently Bob has added to the repertoire of re-blooming azaleas that he has created; these azaleas are named ReBloom™. They offer amazing cold hardiness (0 to-10 degrees; they're also very heat tolerant.



*Red Magnificence ReBloom™*

We get a sense of what motivates Bob Head from his answer to a question about the types of plants he is passionate about. Here is his answer:

"Although I love experimenting with Azaleas, Camellias, Daylillies, Hardy Hibiscus, Big Leaf Rhododendron, and flowering ornamental Cherries, I really

enjoy trying to develop the right plant for the right environment. I am always on the lookout for new plants and am constantly searching for plants that are unusual or do not fit what is normal for that plant species or variety. Since plants mutate and change all the time, many of these changes make for better usage in the landscape."

We look forward to learning from Bob's experience and creativity on Sunday, February 6th!!