



The Blue Ridge Review



SOUTHEASTERN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

March, 2020

Encouragement of the culture of Rhododendrons

DON HYATT WILL SHARE HIS VAST KNOWLEDGE AND ENTERTAIN US

On **Saturday**, March 21st at 2:00 at Bullington Gardens, we will be privileged to hear from Don Hyatt of Northern Virginia. Don is recognized as a national authority on both rhododendrons and azaleas and has served on the national boards of both the Azalea Society of American and the American Rhododendron Society.



The title of his talk with us will be **Things I Tried That Died.**

This talk is a humorous look back at Don Hyatt's 69 years of gardening at the family home in Northern Virginia on a 3/4-acre wooded lot. He will focus on rhododendrons and azaleas, of course, but he will mention various trees and companion plants as well. He will discuss why some plants grow easily for us and others do not, emphasizing proper variety selection and the need for heat and cold tolerance. He will touch on other factors like good and bad cultural practices, insect and disease problems, his constant battle with critters, and how he is dealing with unpredictable environmental challenges.

Even though he had a 33-year teaching career at Fairfax County Schools, with a specialty in computer science, Don claims to be a "plant person" at heart rather than a computer scientist. He started his first garden at the family home in Northern Virginia when he was only three. The spectacular private garden he developed over 60 years has been on many garden tours.

Don also has run a commercial nursery, Stonehouse Creek Nursery, since 1978 in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. He is currently focusing on the preservation of hard-to-find native azalea species and natural azalea hybrids in the wild. Most of the business of this nursery is associated with plant society sales and garden clubs.

Don also has great artistic talent as is illustrated by this watercolor design of rhododendron prunifolium on the right. He offers limited edition prints of these and many other botanical drawings for sale. You can find them, along with more information about him, on his website: www.donhyatt.com.

We are very lucky that he will be sharing some of his vast knowledge with us on March 20. Be sure to put this on your calendar.



RAY SAYS:

“DON HYATT HAS KILLED THOUSANDS OF PLANTS”

WE LOOK FORWARD TO LEARNING FROM HIS EXPERIENCES ON SATURDAY, THE 21ST!!

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The Blue Ridge Review

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES — FOOD, FUN, AND A GLIMPSE OF THE MCCARTERS' EUROPEAN ADVENTURES

A good crowd attended our pre-Christmas meeting/potluck on December 15. The food was delicious. Audrey brought several beautiful Velma Haag paintings which were sold to members. What treasures these paintings are.



Velma Haag's Paintings

After a wonderful time of enjoying delicious food and enjoyable conversations, Jackson McCarter entertained us with information and pictures from he and Pamela's May, 2018, trip to the International Rhododendron Conference in Bremen, German. The theme of the conference was "North America meets Europe".

The McCarters' European gardening adventure began with a pre-convention tour of outstanding gardens in the Netherlands. Gardening has been popular in the Netherlands since the Renaissance, and the country has become a horticultural industry center in recent years. Their first stop was at Zaanse Schans Village, which gave them a strong feel for the cultural heritage of the country. This village, close to Amsterdam, has many fully restored 16th and 17th century windmills and green wooden houses; it was a good way to get a feel for the country.



Keukenhoff Garden

Next on the tour was the famous Keukenhoff Garden in Lisse. This 79-acre garden in South Holland, located across from the 1642-built Keukenhoff Castle, is one of the world's largest flower gardens. It was created in 1950 by the mayor and local bulb growers for a flower exposition. Every year different Dutch bulb growers plant bulbs at 6, 8, and 10-inch depths in order to get a succession of blooms the following spring. The list of flowers consists of 800 tulip cultivars, along with daffodils, crocuses, and hyacinths.



Esveld Nursery

'Variety' seems to be a theme of many Dutch gardens; the tour continued at the Planten Tuin Esveld in Boskoop, which is the only place in Europe that has as many different garden plants. When the McCarters arrived, this large nursery (which has been owned by the same family since 1865) had its fields covered a rice hull top-dressing to suppress weeds. This nursery and town has historical connections to Von Siebold who named R. Metternichii after his friend and fellow gardener Prince Metternich from Bavaria.



Utrecht Old Town

Another touring day involved several high points of the Dutch tour. The first was a visit to the private garden of Professor Lou Traas, a longtime ARS member who has a wonderful one-acre garden where he grows many west coast hybrids, and is pleased that yaks grow well in his garden.

The tour continued to Utrecht which has an old town (medieval) with a cathedral from the 14th century. The University of Utrecht has two separate botanical gardens which are designed with various types of gardens to support the educational purposes of the university.

The pre-tour concluded with visits to several distinctive German destinations: The Hobbie Rhododendron Park in Linswege is a 173 acre park which has been run by the Hobbie family for 90 years. The third generation H. Hachman Nursery in Barmstedt offers the broadest range of rhododendron cultivars in Europe, over 640 different varieties. Visiting both of these was a once-in-a-lifetime adventure for the McCarters and their fellow travelers.

More gardens, along with educational speakers, were part of the Convention itself in Bremen, Germany. The Bremen Rhododendron-Park was a good place to start; it presents the second largest collection of rhododendrons and azaleas in the world, including 600 species and subspecies and over 3300 cultivars. The group also toured several large nearby nurseries in County Ammerland, the world's largest rhododendron-producing area. These nurseries were usually run by second generation hybridizers. A high point was the Schröder Nursery, which produces 1.5 million grafted rhododendrons for European nurseries. They use 'Cunningham's White' for a strong root stock on which they graft large flowered elepidote hybrids. Another distinctive nursery was the Van den Berk nursery, which specializes in large landscape plants (often 10-feet tall when shipped). The primary growing area is a 124-acre drained moorland (or peat bog). Van den Berk is known for the exceptional quality of its plants.

Thanks to Jackson for giving us a glimpse of their delightful and educational adventure.

HONORING HARRY SAMOTIS AND HIS WIFE, RUTH

Harry Samotis passed away in January, 2020, 15 years after his wife, Ruth. They moved here permanently in 1990 and established a beautiful garden at their residence on Hebron Rd. Ruth was the driving force for their garden, and an active participant in the mountain hikes our chapter members took in search of rhododendrons and azaleas. Their garden was featured in the March/April, 2002 issue of Carolina Garden Magazine. One of the unique features of their garden was a bog garden. Harry ran water from their downstairs sink and shower to provide irrigation to the bog garden. Both Harry and Ruth were very community-oriented; they volunteered at hospitals and at hospice, and were known as genuinely kind neighbors to all.



The Hachman Nursery



Bremen Rhododendron Park



Van den Berk Adventure Tour



The Folks who Live on the Hill:
Dedicated gardeners, Ruth and Harry Samotis

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

WEBSITE - WWW.SE-ARS.ORG

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Mark your Calendar

Saturday, March 21st, at 2 pm.
Speaker—Don Hyatt. Don
will give a presentation on
'Things I Tried That Died'
at Bullington Gardens

April 29 to May 3rd—
ARS Convention 2020
Vancouver, WA

MAKE SURE TO CHECK OUT
THE SE-ARS WEBSITE!!
www.se-ars.org

Articles for next newsletter due April 15

**DETAILS ABOUT THE UPCOMING ARS
CONVENTION NEAR PORTLAND, OREGON**

The 2020 ARS Convention is from April 29th to May 3rd; it will be in Vancouver, Washington, right outside of Portland, Oregon. The convention will start with two days of tours of area gardens and nurseries. Standouts on the tour choices are visits to the Portland Japanese Garden, the Lan Su Chinese Garden, and famous wholesale plant supplier, Iseli Nursery.

On the last 2 1/2 days, there will be educational workshops and inspiring speakers: classes include a hands-on class on growing rhododendrons as bonsai and another on the science of rhododendrons. Examples of speakers are an evening called Rhododendrons Around the World, featuring experts from Russia, Africa, Japan, and Tasmania. Other evenings present several speakers on Exbury Gardens, including a presentation called 'Rothschild Rhododendrons at Exbury' by Lionel de Rothschild.

Check out the website at **ARS75.org** to find out more details about the convention