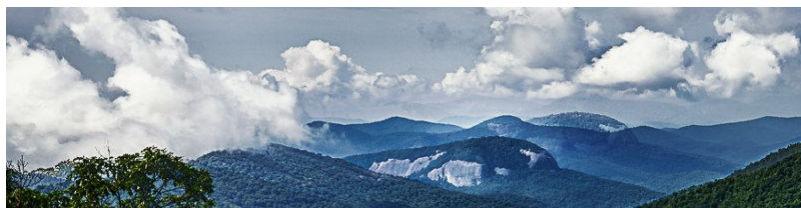




The Blue Ridge Review



SOUTHEASTERN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

September, 2022

Encouragement of the culture of Rhododendrons

TRICIA OCKINGA SHARES CARING FOR DEXTERS

Tricia Ockinga, our presenter at our September 25 meeting at 2 pm at Bullington Gardens, has been the gardener of the Dexter Owen property in Biltmore Forest since the year 2000. The presentation will be a tour of the garden and gardening issues common to all of us. Chuck Van Rens will briefly touch on the topic of 'Why Dexters?'



Tricia says that she was hired by 'Charlie', Jr. because his wife liked the way she trimmed the hedges on the property. 'Charlie' (as Tricia always refers to him affectionately) said, 'she did it better than anyone he'd ever employed, and she did it with heart!' He was not only her employer, but also her mentor, who worked with her and taught her about caring for his beloved

Dexter rhododendrons. She continues to be the caretaker of one of the largest collection of Dexter Rhododendrons in the world, now owned by 'Charlie's' son, Charles Dexter Owen III.

Here's some background on the origins of this collection: The property was established by the aunt and uncle of Charles Owen Dexter, the famous hybridizer of Dexter Rhododendrons from Sandwich, MA. (Charles Dexter used the Chinese species, *Rhododendron fortunei*, and many other plants, to produce hybrids characterized by dense foliage, large stature, and flowers of superior size and color, many of which were also fragrant.) The original owners of the Dexter collection at Biltmore Forest Estate (Charles Dexter Owen I and Catherine A. Owen), moved to Asheville from Massachusetts in the 1920's to establish their textile business; they decided to surround themselves with the exciting hybrids established by their nephew, Charles Dexter. They accomplished this by shipping boxcars full of their nephew's hybridized Dexter Rhododendrons from Massachusetts to Asheville in the 1930's. (continued on page 2)

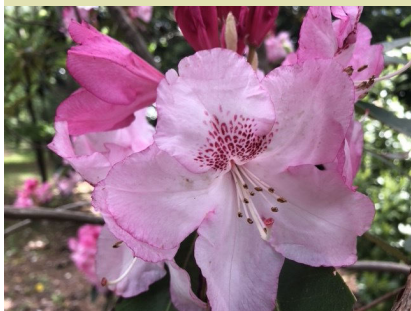


The Dexters in this garden all have informal names; none of them have official botanical names.

Tricia talked about the garden having different rooms; a special room contains a grand and elegant Dexter that Tricia calls "Her Majesty", because it was Charlie's mother's favorite.

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John Kendall, Charles Dexter Owen III,
Ray Head, Tricia Ockinga



TRICIA'S KNOWLEDGE OF CARING FOR DEXTERS (cont.)

On a beautiful day in late May, Chuck and Judy Van Rens visited the Charles Dexter Owen III property in Biltmore Forest; we had arranged a tour of the property with Tricia Ockinga, longtime gardener of this wonderful property. As she took us on a tour of the fabulous Owen' garden, she told us that one of her first jobs was re-designing the perennial beds. She showed us a small greenhouse on the property, which she converted from a carport because Charlie wanted to grow orchids. Tricia and Chuck VR talked about using the greenhouse to rejuvenate the collection by growing cuttings from the original Dexters on the property. (Perhaps someone in our group could help her with techniques for rooting cuttings.)

On our May tour, Tricia talked often about her interactions with 'Charlie', who died in 2021. They used to argue about techniques for caring for the collection: full sun or not for Dexters, irrigation (Charlie's view or not (Tricia's view). We asked her how the irrigation disagreement was settled; her response was that they used to use irrigation, and now they don't.

During our interaction with Tricia, we got the sense of how this special garden has become a part of her; she's very open to learning about how to care for this special garden, which explains Charlie's wonderful instinct when he hired her. She told us that Tom Ranney had been out there, and she talks often about consulting the Buncombe County extension agent. Tricia hopes that part of her sharing with us will result in discussions with our group about some of the issues she is dealing as caretaker of this fabulous Dexter Garden. .

Chuck arranged another 'Tricia Tour' of the garden in August for two Dexter enthusiasts from our group, Ray Head and John Kendall. Ray was a part of a Dexter Study Group within SE-ARS which he joined in the 1970's. He and John are hoping the renewed interest in this group as we interact further with Tricia and the Owen Family's Dexter Garden. Having Tricia Ockinga share with us on September 25th is a good start.

Naomi Dean Clagie Obituary (1925-2022)

Enthusiastic SE-ARS members, Naoma and her first husband, David Dean, retired to Hendersonville, N.C. Together, they started a 7 acre garden featuring azaleas and rhododendrons. They also started a safe home for battered women in the area and helped start a crisis center for people in financial difficulties.

Years after her first husband died, Naoma married a friend, Allen Clague, Jr., who shared Naoma's lifetime enthusiasm of gardening and helping disadvantaged people. In 2000, the couple moved to Rockingham County, VA and sold their property to Melody and Doley Bell, who continued to help their garden thrive.

September, 2022

ANOTHER CHANCE TO PURCHASE BEASLEY AZALEAS

We should all be thankful for another chance to purchase more of the beautiful deciduous azaleas offered by Jeff and Lisa Beasley. This year they will be delivered to Ray Head's place near Rutherfordton. We should have about 110 3-gallon plants available this year. So please mark your calendar for Saturday, October 15 as the day to pick up these plants from Ray.

As the delivery date gets closer, we will have a better idea of which varieties will be available for purchase. Watch for an email from Judy Van Rens in late September or early October listing the choices available. If you can't pick your desired plants up on Oct. 15, perhaps you could ask a friend to do it for you.



Beasley sale— October, 2021

JACKSON WILL SHARE HIGHLIGHTS OF MAY ARS CONVENTION

On Sunday, October 16, at 2 pm at Bullington Gardens, Jackson McCarter will share some experiences from the ARS 2022 Spring International Convention. The McCarters were in the Pacific Northwest for 10 days, including the pre-tour "Around the Sound" north of Portland to Seattle, the Portland area during the ARS convention (which was held in Vancouver, WA across the Columbia River from Portland), and the post-tour south of Portland to the Willamette Valley and Oregon Coast. They visited over 20 gardens, and will present highlights of the convention and tours. Aaron and Lisa Cook also attended the core convention and visited the revitalized Van Veen Nursery; Aaron Cook should have information about their cuttings, rootings, and shipment.

One of the highlights of the pre-tour was Washington Park Arboretum, which is part of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens and is the Pacific Northwest's largest public garden. It was established in 1934 following the plan of the Olmsted Brothers, Frederick Law Olmsted's 2 sons. An outstanding feature of the Arboretum is Azalea Way, which leads through the heart of the Arboretum and is framed by thousands of azaleas set against a backdrop of ornamental spring flowering trees and native conifers.

The post-tour visited a distinctive nursery, four wonderful gardens, and America's largest Sea Caves, where sea lions live.

Jackson's talk should be a fascinating look at gardening in the Northwest, which has similar plants to the ones found in our beautiful area!



One of the Beasley plants from 10/21



Kelsey's Glow— Another Beasley Plant



Washington Park Arboretum



Greer Garden from post-tour

**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)

President: Aaron Cook

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Directors until 2022—

John Kendall, Alan Mizeras,
Buffy Wells

Directors until 2023—

Ray Head, Leon Pace, April
Sanborn

Secretary: Pamela McCarter

Editor: Judy Van Rens

Mark your Calendar

**Sunday, Sept. 25 at 2 pm-
Bullington Gardens
Tricia Ockinga Shares
Highlights of Being
Gardener of Dexter
Collection**

**Sunday, Oct, 16, 2 pm.-
Bullington Gardens
Jackson McCarter Shares
May ASA Convention
Highlights**

**Sunday, Dec. 4, 2 pm
Bullington Gardens
Christmas Party**

**ARS Renewal—Bring \$40 to
meeting; give to Jackson
McCarter**

Wonderful Annual Picnic at Richards Home

On Sunday, July 17, Byron and Hazel Richards again graciously hosted the SE-ARS annual picnic. Twenty-seven members enjoyed the company and good food provided by fellow plant lovers.

Following the dinner, guests were invited to purchase plants brought by members. President Aaron Cook presented Jonathan Hodges with Fred Galle's comprehensive guide to azaleas; he also distributed other books from the library of late member Doley Bell.

Several plants had been contributed by Leon Pace, some from the Bell collection. Many of the plants were rare and unusual cultivars, not available in the nursery trade. Auctioneers were Aaron Cook and Outreach Chairman Buffy Wells. Proceeds from the sale were \$585.00

