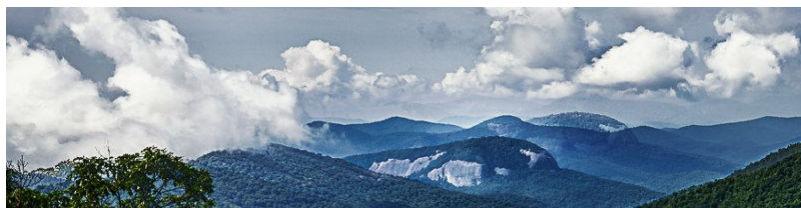




The Blue Ridge Review



SOUTHEASTERN CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

September, 2023

Encouragement of the culture of Rhododendrons

STEVE PETTIS WILL TALK ABOUT LANDSCAPING & TREES

On Sunday, October 8 at 2 pm., please join us at Bullington Gardens, where Steve Pettis will educate us about his two favorite topics, **'Environmentally Friendly Landscaping'** and **'Tree Health'**. Steve is the NC Cooperative Agricultural Extension Agent for Henderson County, specializing in Consumer and Commercial Horticulture.

If you look on the extension website (<https://henderson.ces.ncsu.edu>), you'll find that Steve Pettis is a wonderful source of information on varied topics; he has written many interesting articles to share his knowledge with all. Here are some examples: 'How to control specific pests', 'Environmentally friendly gardening techniques like trimming or design', 'Gardening for pollinators', 'Information about soil and mulch', and even an article about 'Controlling wild hogs'. He also serves us as a research librarian: one article he wrote contains a list of resources about native plants; two others were about moss gardening and landscaping on a hillside. He also posts information on upcoming gardening classes offered in our county. Obviously, Steve is passionate about sharing his knowledge; therefore Steve is also the host of the 'Gardening in the Mountains' radio show, Saturday at 8 am on WTZQ, 1600 am/95.3 FM. He answers listeners' questions and shares expert gardening techniques and insights. You can even listen to past episodes on the 'Gardening in the Mountains' website.



Steve has been an extension agent for our county for almost seven years. Before he was an extension agent in Georgia for 14 years. If you go to the County Extension website (above), then scroll down to the "Lawn and Garden" section on the left, you'll find many informative articles by Steve. He's an expert at sharing knowledge about subjects gardeners are interested in like dealing with pests, native plants, keeping plants healthy, and even landscaping ideas.

In addition to his passion for horticulture, Steve is a former Marine and also a musician who plays Americana music. We welcome his expertise as he informs us about landscaping that helps the environment and about keeping trees healthy.

**Learn About the
Large, Unique
Collection of
Original Dexters
in Asheville**

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PRESERVING AND PROPAGATING ORIGINAL DEXTERS



Ray, Mike, Jackson,
Charlie, and Chuck



Mike, Ray, Charlie, and
Jackson plant cuttings



Jackson instructs

Our newest sustaining SE-ARS member, Charles Dexter Owen, III has welcomed a few of our members to help him with an important project for him, and for all rhododendron enthusiasts. We are working with him to create and carry out a plan to rejuvenate, understand, and preserve one of the largest collections of Dexter Rhododendrons in the world, at his 4-acre estate in Biltmore Forest.

Charlie's grandfather was Charles Owen Dexter's uncle. After his nephew decided to stay in Massachusetts while the rest of the family moved their textile business to the Asheville area, Charlie's grandfather shipped many of the hybrids Dexter had meticulously developed so that he could make the Biltmore Forest estate a legacy to his nephew's genius. None of the Dexter hybrids on the estate are named because their creator did not name them. Dexter Study Groups over time have named 168 Dexters. One of Charlie's mysteries is how many of the Dexters on the estate in Biltmore Forest have been officially named. There's a possibility that some, or even many, of the Dexters on the estate are unique, and have not been named.

Charlie inherited the estate from his father two years ago. After settling in, doing some necessary updates on the house and the property (e.g., expanding the canopy), and having his daughter's wedding reception at the house this spring, Charlie is ready to start working with several members of our SE-ARS Dexter Study group: John Kendall, Ray Head, Mike O'Hara, Jackson McCarter, Aaron Cook, and Chuck Van Rens. One of the ideas Charlie has on his mind is 'how much better can his garden get'!

Charlie's strategy is that the key to preserving the garden starts with taking cuttings to propagate the original plants. Many of the Dexters in the garden are 60, 70, or 80 years old. These need to be preserved by propagation.

The planning for renewing the garden started in May with our group compiling a list of supplies necessary to proceed with a workshop that will root cuttings. One of the major tools for rooting cuttings is using a Nearing Frame. Jackson provided the plans for make one, and Charlie had one made.

The 3-year-plan is each year cuttings will be gathered and rooted from 10 different plants, taking 6 cuttings from each plant.

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A WONDERFUL PICNIC

Seventeen members and two guests met on the patio of the Richards' unique and beautiful home at 2 PM on July 16. Hostess Hazel Richards welcomed guests with a brief history of the picnic which she and Byron have hosted for the many years. Attendance has dwindled somewhat from the sixty guests who attended the first picnic. Hazel blessed the meal which consisted of dishes prepared by members.

Aaron and Hospitality Chairperson Buffy Wells auctioned off 72 plants donated by members. Net proceeds from the auction were \$770.

Some stayed afterwards to tour the fabulous Richards' Garden.

A RESPECTFUL TRIBUTE TO ERNEST YELTON

We pay tribute to Dr. Ernest Yelton, co-founder of the Southeastern Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society, who passed away on August 31st in Rutherfordton, NC, at the age of 102. Aside from his educational training years and his years of service in the US Navy during World War II, 'Doc' (as he was fondly called) lived a full, rewarding life in Rutherfordton. He and his wife, Midge, worked together on the Naval Medical Staff during WWII, and helped rebuild Greece under the Marshall Plan after the war. Midge died two years ago after 72 years of marriage.

'Doc' Yelton was a co-founder of the Southeastern Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and a lifetime member. He served as President and Vice President of the chapter. The Southeastern Chapter, American Rhododendron Society was organized on the 13th of March 1957, at a meeting in the George Vanderbilt Hotel, in Asheville, NC. It was the eleventh ARS group to gain official status. There were twenty-nine charter members, from several localities in the western mountains.

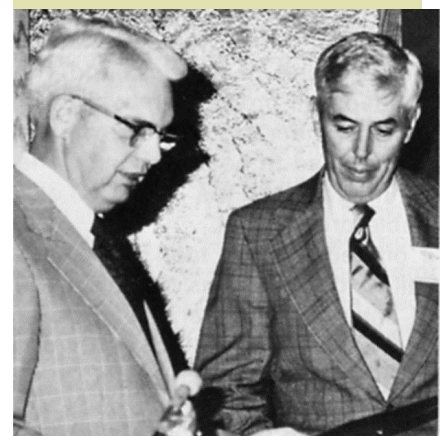
Chapter meetings were held in the Biltmore Forest Town Hall until about 1982, when the meetings were moved to St. John's Parish Hall in Flat Rock, due to a shift in membership more to the Hendersonville-Brevard-and piedmont of North and South Carolina areas.

In the ARS medal presentation to 'Doc' Yelton mentioned on the right, Augie Kerr said that 'Doc' had "contributed vigorously and consistently to the Society, and to the advancement of the practical understanding of the rhododendron culture in the Southeastern United States". Doc served as president of the local chapter, as a flower show judge, as a speaker where he shared his knowledge as a hybridizer; he also participated in Seed exchanges, and was the program director of the 1067 National ARS Convention in Asheville.

We say farewell to an amazing man who left a lasting legacy that should inspire all who appreciate our local horticultural heritage.



Picnic Plants



1976 — Augie Kerr (right), president of ARS, presents Silver Medal and Citation to Dr. Ernest Yelton.

**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

Treasurer: Jackson McCarter
280 Trammell Rd
Travelers Rest, SC 29690

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Directors until 2023—
Ray Head, Leon Pace, April
Sanborn
Directors until 2022—
John Kendall, Buffy Wells

Secretary: Pamela McCarter

Editor: Judy Van Rens

Mark your Calendar **DEXTER CUTTINGS (cont.)**

**Sunday, June 19 at 2 pm-
Bullington Gardens.**

**Steve Pettis Educates
Us about**

**‘Environmentally
Friendly
Landscaping’ and
‘Tree Health’**

ARS/SE-ARS Renewal Time

**Bring \$40 to meeting; give
to Jackson McCarter
Or Mail to Jackson at
address above**

These will be recorded in a database that lists a name for the plant. Examples of names to label the cuttings are CDO 23-1, CDO 23-2 ... CDO 23-10. The database will also list the location of the plant, as well as a photo of the existing plant. Charlie has an aerial layout map that will be very helpful in recording the location of the plants that are being propagated.

The cutting workshop happened on August 1; Chuck, Ray, Jackson, Mike, and John drove to Biltmore Forest. There is a plan for a second cutting workshop in October.

Preserving original gardens like these should be important to all of us; look what happened to the Hague gardens, and John Creech’s garden in our neighborhood. Charlie Owen’s property is a treasure to all of us. We’re thankful it will remain in the Owens’ family for years to come.



One set of 1st cuttings