

"OOHS" AND "AAHS"

AT THE 2006 AUTUMN MEETING

There were plenty of "oohs & aahs" as 24 members of the Midwest Chapter met in Rockford last September 30th and October 1st. Members came from Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan.



The weekend began with a tour of Anderson Japanese Gardens, cited as among the top three Japanese Gardens in the US. Several chapter members have visited the gardens in prior years, and were impressed at the growth – both in acreage and plant material – that has taken place since their last visits. Our tour was led by Sally Nelson, a former Rockford native who spent 28 years in Okinawa & Japan before returning to Rockford and becoming a docent at Anderson.

After a bountiful luncheon at the Olympic Tavern & Restaurant, the group moved out to southeast Rockford to the J Carlson Growers nursery. Jon Carlson greeted us, gave a short introduction to the nursery, and then turned us loose to ogle and fondle the merchandise. No meeting seems complete without the opportunity to acquire new specimens, and several plants ended up in vans, car trunks, or on floors behind front seats!

Later in the day, the group gathered at Giovanni's Restaurant for a social hour followed by our Chapter Banquet in the restaurant's Private Boardroom. Chapter President John Migas honored Gerald Firak with an ARS Bronze Medal. Compliments were many, both for the quality and variety of menu items, and for John Golab's wine selections.

Sunday morning we gathered at Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden, where I led a 3-hour walking tour of the arboretum's 155 acres. Well, "led" isn't exactly true, as trying to lead over 20 keen plants people through an arboretum is akin to trying to herd cats – both groups tend to wander off on their own!

Klehm Arboretum was a new experience for most of our members, as it's only existed as an arboretum & botanic garden for about 20 years. The grounds began as Rockford Nursery in the 1920s, were acquired by the Klehm family in the 1960s, and then generously donated to the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District in the 1980s, to be maintained as an arboretum.

When folks from the Morton Arboretum came out to help inventory the existing plant collection in the 1980s (now since grown to over 650 different species and cultivars), they particularly were impressed with the diversity and condition of the conifer collection. So were many of our chapter members.

However, equally impressive to the chapter visitors (and gratifying to me, as the instigator) was the "Volunteers' Rhododendron & Azalea Dell", begun just two years ago with advice and counsel from several members of our chapter, and a fellow volunteer at Klehm, Ray Luy. The Dell is nestled in a ravine studded with mature Bur Oaks, and within it and one other area at Klehm, we now have over 40 different cultivars of Rhodies and an equal number of Azalea cultivars, aggregating over 150 specimens. As far as I know, we currently have the largest collection of members of the Rhododendron genus extant in a public garden in northern Illinois.

(As a footnote, our Rhododendron Collection has come through the 2006/7 winter quite well, and many plants are budded up nicely. Why not visit Klehm this spring?)

After the tour we held an auction in the parking lot at Klehm, of donated plants and books, and the chapter netted \$182 from it.

For further information, go to www.klehm.org and www.andersongardens.org

Dave Hinde, Treasurer, ARS Midwest Chapter, and Volunteer Curator, Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden
"Volunteers' Rhododendron & Azalea Dell"

2007 ARS Fall Regional Conference

This year's regional conference is being organized by The Great Lakes Chapter and will take place in Eastlake, Ohio on Friday Oct. 12 through Sunday, October 14.

The theme of the conference is "Great Lakes, Great Challenges".

The Midwest Chapter is on the agenda and we plan to charter a bus and attend as a group.

The conference promises to be of interest to all of us and traveling together should be great fun. Also, this should be a fine weekend for fall color so keep your schedule open as we're hoping for a large turnout.

Once details are finalized, we will send out information to all members.



Midwest Chapter Spring Garden Visits

For the first time, at least in recent history, our chapter has made arrangements to visit three of our member's gardens during rhododendron bloom season on Saturday, May 5. Each garden is very different and promises to be a true highlight of the spring.

Each visit will only be at the designated time to allow each host to enjoy the other garden visits.

Barbara Wetzel will provide lunch at the last garden visit of the day. Please be sure to confirm with Barbara at least a week in advance if you plan to attend so she can plan her arrangements accordingly.

Following is the day's schedule:

9:00 am - 10:30 am

Kay Moats
406 S. Wa Pella
Mt. Prospect, IL
847-392-2004

11:00 am - 12:30 am

John Golab
1583 Bedlington
Barrington, IL
847-382-1674

1:00 pm

Barbara Wetzel
20 Braeburn Lane
Barrington Hills, IL
847-658-1528