

MASON-DIXON CHAPTER, ARS

Spring 2025



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Message from your president

Well, another winter is behind us and what a winter it was!

The cold snaps, the drying winds, the low precipitation all combined to stress everything to the max! What didn't die is probably hardy enough to make it! I had a lot of plants that needed to be evaluated and thinned; I don't have that problem anymore.

So, on to spring!

Everything is greening up, the weeds are growing like...well, weeds and the rhododendrons are starting to bloom. The Christmas Cheer has been out for a few weeks, the lepidotes are all blooming and my Grace Seabrook which has been in the ground for seven years is currently blooming for the first time and is it spectacular!

The potted plants are out of the cold frame and are now recuperating in the screen house. The winter wasn't kind to those plants and many may not recover. The only positive note is that I now have room in the screen house for the 1200 to 1500 plants that are getting ready to move out of the basement. Maybe in three or four years I'll have some interesting plants to show! For anyone who hybridizes and propagates, that is the reward for all the time and hard work!

This will be my last note as President of MDARS; after eight years alternating between President and Vice President I am transitioning to Past President to focus on plants, hybridizing and special projects. I will pass the reigns to the very capable hands of Sonny Coble and help him out however I can. I thank everyone who has taught me and everyone who has helped make MDARS a success.

Harry



2025 Calendar of Events

Dates for the 2025 meetings:

July 27, October 5 and November 9

All meetings will be held at Bear Branch Nature Center in Westminster.

Meetings start at 2 pm preceded by a social gathering at 1:30.

Snacks will be provided by members with the following last initial:

July 27, A-G; October 5, H-M; November 9, N-S.

May 10: Flower Show and Sale at the Carroll County Ag Center

May 16-17: White's Nursery spring sale 22531 Wildcat Rd, Germantown

May 17: Spring iris show at the Ag Center, Shawan Rd, Cockeysville

May 18: Open gardens at Carol Warner's gardens at 16815 Falls Rd, 21155 Upper, MD 11-4.

June 5-8: ARS Convention in Wolfville, Nova Scotia For further information view our convention website: ars2025.org

Officers

President: Sonny Coble

Past President: Harry Reid

Vice President: Tom Manger

Secretary: (vacant)

Treasurer: Bill Mangels

Directors: Honors Committee

Chair: Bill Mangels

Directors: Mary Reiley, Bill Meyers, Angie Bowersox

Plant Development Chair: Ray Smith

Membership Chair: John Kaylor

Program Chair: Ray Smith, Sonny Coble

District 9 Director: Richard Mohr

District 9 Alternate: Lloyd Willis

Publicity Chair: Angie Bowersox

Webmaster: (vacant)



Congratulations

John Kaylor

At the ARS Board of Directors meeting, our own John Kaylor was nominated and elected by the Board to be the next ARS Eastern Vice President. Congratulations John and you can depend on MDARS!

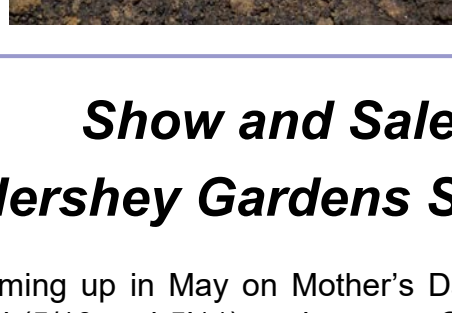
It's soil not dirt

I promised that I would share my findings from my experiences and wanderings. All of the thoughts shared are mine and are offered only for consideration.

I use different soil mixes for different growing stages. All percentages are volume based to make measurement easy.

For seed starting, I have found peat moss with a few percent coarse sand works best. The soil should be moistened ahead of time and a container with a top should be used to maintain humidity. I sew the seeds on top of the mix and mist occasionally. Great flats and humidity domes are available from Bootstrap Farmer.

For rooting cuttings, I use a mix of peat (60%), coarse sand (5-10%) and remainder perlite. I screen the peat through a 1/2" screen to break up any lumps and remove any sticks. The mix should be moistened ahead of time and the container should retain moisture and provide enough vertical space for growth. The sand is added to increase the density of the mix which seems to keep the mix in contact with the stem.



For the first potting of rooted cuttings and/or seedlings (4" pots assumed) I have been using 70% fine pine bark mulch with 20% peat and 10% coarse sand. All components are screened through 1/2" screen to get out large pieces and break up lumps. Moisture retention is key at this stage. There is plenty of variation in the bagged pine bark mulch so some adjustment of the peat may be necessary if the pine bark mulch has mostly fine material.

For the second potting (6" pots assumed) there is a more critical balance between moisture retention and drainage. I use unscreened pine bark mulch (70%), peat (15%) and coarse sand (15%). Again, adjustment might be necessary depending on the fines content of the pine bark mulch. My plants at this point go outside.

Avoid garden soil and compost in all mixes, they are too biologically active for potted plants.

As I mentioned in the first section, peat, which is supposed to be acidic, has a pH of around 7 and the pine bark mulch has a pH of between 5.5 and 6. Since the ideal pH for rhododendrons is between 5 and 6, something will need to be done to reduce the pH of the mix. I have been using some copperas (iron sulfate) in the water to reduce pH over time. The same could be accomplished with Miracle Grow for acid loving plants.

Harry Reid

Show and Sale

Hershey Gardens Show

Coming up in May on Mother's Day weekend (5/10 and 5/11) we have our Show and Sale on Saturday and the Hershey Show on Sunday. We need people to work both events. If you can volunteer please call Sonny Coble at 410-599-8124. Sunday at Hershey Jim V and I could use 2 more people to help us set up, greet people, answer questions and load Sonny's car to take everything home. We as a club cannot keep doing these activities unless people volunteer to help.

Thanks to all of you who helped at the Maryland Home and Garden Show - Bill Mangels, Bill Meyers, Mary Reiley, Mike Robbins, Mike White, Angie Bowersox with special thanks to the Teubners, Tom Manger and Harry Reid who all did double duty and John Kaylor who carried all of our literature, props and plants out as I loaded the car.



Fencing to Keep

the Deer Out

When I moved back to Adams County I learned that I had a much bigger deer problem than I had in Columbia. So as I finished making each raised bed (because of my swamp) and planting it I would fence it. That worked very well and I was happy with it. However as time passed and more beds got fenced as you entered the garden you were looking at a whole lot of wires. You couldn't get close to plants and you had to take pictures through a fence. It got very frustrating.

Finally I knew I had enough fencing around the beds that it would reach around the whole property. So I started taking down fences and putting them back up on the property line. I asked my neighbor if he cared if I did that and he did not. As I write this article I am about 80% finished. What a difference it is making. The views across the garden are so much better than before. It's amazing

So the point of the article is to think about fencing your garden area first then planting. I have gates so I can still drive my car or truck down to the sheds and through a lot of the paths to get things where I want or need them. The views are just so much better and access to the plants is not a challenge.

Sonny Coble



A Thought About

Judging Hybrids

Hybridizing is a fun and challenging project which I enjoy greatly. As the hybrids grow and you start weeding them out it sometimes becomes difficult. From my cross of Sonny's Love x Sonny's Burgundy I had 50 some plants that needed to be judged and I was struggling with the task. I asked Ray Smith, Mary Reiley and Harry Reid to come to my house and judge them. They sat at my picnic table under the giant oak tree and I carried the plants to them. It was fun for me listening to them comment about the plants as I stayed quiet and didn't butt into their conversations (for the most part). Results were as follows:

Keepers—10

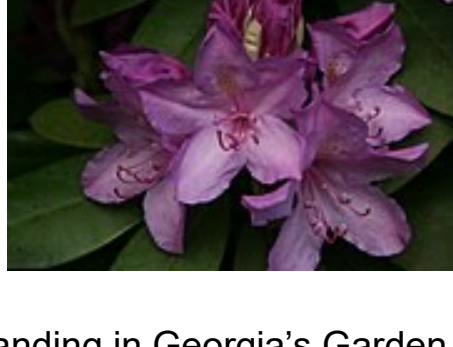
Maybe—16

Let grow another year—10

Trash—17

Possible Bonsai—3

Sometimes it helps to get help. We all enjoyed ourself with the BBQ chicken plus a donut each. Thank you Mary, Ray and Harry. Job well done.



Georgia Myers

Memorial Garden

On March 19th Mike Robbins, his brother Dave, my sister Marie and I, along with several Masons prepared and planted a memorial garden for Georgia Myers. It is located in Westminster at the entrance to the Masonic Lodge on Monroe Street.

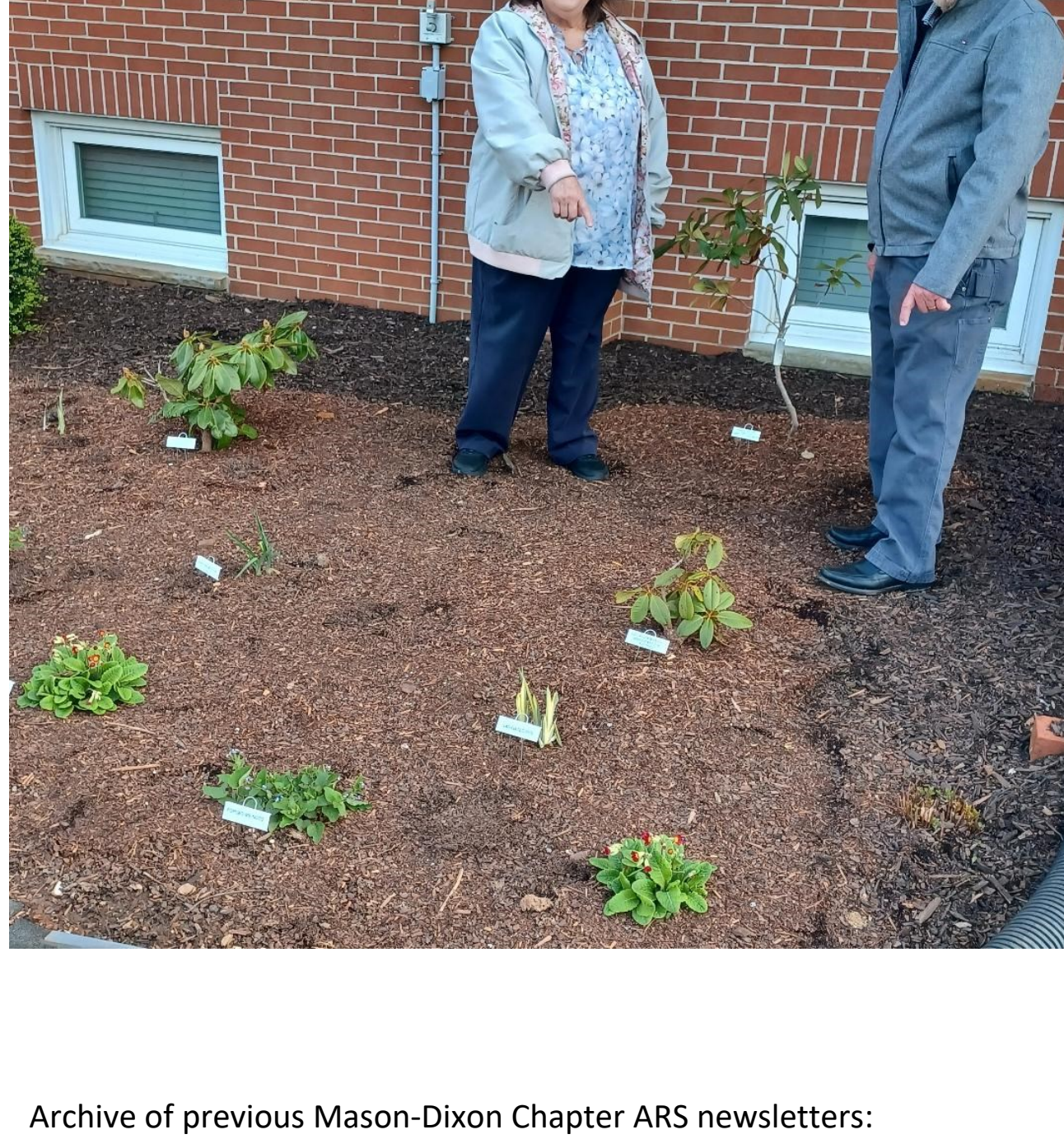
Several large bushes were removed and Dave rototilled the area. We planted two rhododendrons donated by the Mason-Dixon's plant development committee and one of Sonny Coble's hybrids that is named Georgia Myers in her honor. We then added some companion plants donated by Marie. Signage will be added later by her husband Mike Robbins. So if you are in Westminster and want to see the garden, just drive down Monroe Street to the Lodge as it is easily visible from the street.

Georgia was Mason-Dixon's secretary and membership chair for many years. She was very active in our many activities and is sorely missed.

Sonny Coble



Standing in Georgia's Garden are her husband Mike Robbins with her sister pointing to the rhododendron named for her.



Archive of previous Mason-Dixon Chapter ARS newsletters:

[Spring2025](#)

[Winter2025](#)

[Summer2024](#)

[Spring2024](#)