

# The Trillium



Piedmont Chapter  
North American Rock Garden Society  
Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, NC

## Our Virginia Garden

by Bill & Linda Pinkham

Bill is the “artiste” and I am the head weeder. We met in the ‘60s in Blacksburg when we were both majoring in Ornamental Horticulture at VA Tech (when Frank Beamer was playing football).

After graduation, Bill had to make Uncle Sam happy, so he joined the Navy and got stationed near home in Norfolk. After we married and settled in the Tidewater area, we started a nursery/landscaping/garden center business in Smithfield and Suffolk. That was our life from 1972-2002. But since we lived on the site with the garden center, we had started looking for another property in the late ‘80s.

In 1990 we moved a few miles away from the garden center in Isle of Wight County with finally a place for plants. I actually had a small garden at the garden center house, but when I went out to enjoy it, customers thought I was working. So I always ended up working.

At first, we were way too busy with the business to do much more than have a vegetable garden on our new property, but we had a beautiful view overlooking the James River. When we got closer to the time we thought we might retire from the business, we thought it might be a good idea to start landscaping while we had a crew available to us in the slow seasons.



Photo by Linda and Bill Pinkham

**Garden of Bill and Linda Pinkham**

During the slide presentation, we will show pictures of how the planting progressed and some of our favorite plants. Bill did all the designing. His love of rocks shows through. We collected plants (our favorite thing to do) and decided where to plant them together. Therefore, I thought we would spell out some of the practical aspects of our maintenance program here.

Starting after the first of the year, we cut back the Helleborus (not the ones with stems) first, so the blooms

will show up well when they come. They certainly have been taking their sweet time this year, but I don't blame them. It has been a horrible winter.



Photo by Linda and Bill Pinkham

**Garden of Bill and Linda Pinkham**

Next we cut back the herbaceous perennials and grasses that don't look good. We leave the most tender of the perennials like *Salvia greggii*, *Salvia leucantha*, hardy lantanas and Butterfly Bush and cut those back around St. Patrick's Day. In between, we prune the roses, around the middle of Feb.

There are tons of leaves and pine cones to remove from the beds, as we have many oak and pine trees over the property. All the clippings and clean up material goes to the compost pile, except for the pine cones and rose clippings. They go on the edge of the property where the deer will have to step on them. It doesn't deter them, but it gives me some sense of pleasure.

Once the beds are clean, we like to apply a pre-emergent herbicide such as corn gluten, Snapshot or Treflan (Preen). We try to make the application right before a rain in order to "seal" the soil with a barrier that will nuke those emerging little varmints. And of course, ALL the existing weeds have been pulled before this point – isn't that the case in everyone's garden? Then we fertilize everything with

Espoma Plant Tone. I will give the ericaceous plants and iron lovers like gardenia Holly Tone. I have been experimenting with my daylilies and feeding them a slow release high nitrogen lawn food (4-1-2 ratio). They are heavy feeders and seem to like it a lot. But now, the phosphorous has been removed, so I'm searching for old bags.

Next comes the BIG MULCH! It takes about 3 tractor trailer loads of shredded hardwood to cover all the beds. Yes, we get help to do this. It usually takes our crew of 6 four days to accomplish the task (we are 2 of the crew members). What a relief when this job is over. How do we keep all those cut back hostas and peonies from getting buried? I flag them with bright yellow and orange flags so I can go back later and uncover the poor things. Note: this year we are actually adding a layer of compost down before the mulch. I'm sure the plants will love it.

Once this gigantic chore is behind us (hopefully by mid-late Mar), we are ready to start scouting for new addi-



Photo by Linda and Bill Pinkham

**Garden of Bill and Linda Pinkham**

tions. We run around like maniacs at all the places in Raleigh like Plant Delights and Camellia Forest and load up our car and come home and fill the driveway. We have to pack light so we have maximum space for hauling the plants. We also load up at our old garden center, Smithfield Gardens, since they still love new plants like we always did.

I have found I MUST make the labels for these new plants right away. Once they get planted, it sometimes takes us months to find them again! For labeling, I use the Rose Labels from PawPaw Everlast Label Co. They are grey metal and don't stand out too noticeably. I print the labels on clear 1" tape (TZ-151) in my handy dandy Brother PTouch. The letters are burned on the tape like a thermal printer, so the labels last for years unless they get stepped on or weed whacked. I put the botanical name and include (PP) for patented plants so I'll know if I can't propagate them.

No, we don't always know where we are going to put them when we buy them. But enough things keep dying each year that we usually find a spot within a few months. After many buying trips during the growing season, we try to have the driveway clear again by Oct.

In addition to planting all season, we also have the daily/weekly task of deadheading and trimming. For all the fall bloomers, like mums and *Salvia leucantha*, I shear them in half with the hedge shears in April and July. I always get a laugh when I see the newspaper say to "pinch" them. That would take all year. Once the daylilies start blooming in May, we like to go around and look at them each morning. If we snapped off yesterday's blooms the evening before, they really look fresh and lovely. During this time I'm out dabbing pollen to see if I can create longer blooming daylilies. I try to only cross the really good rebloomers, but some of those other gorgeous ones seem to call me like they call a bee.

Weeding by hand and with roundup takes up a great deal of time during the summer. We don't apply the pre-emergent every 90 days like you can, but we do try to hit the beds that are worst for winter weeds again in Sept. The daylilies get a liquid feeding of Miracle Gro, fish emulsion, liquid iron, Epsom salts, soluble plus whatever insect or fungus control is needed at the time. This is done with a backpack sprayer about every 6 weeks during the growing season.



Photo by Linda and Bill Pinkham

**Garden of Bill and Linda Pinkham**

August and September are months for dividing daylilies or other perennials and adding lime to the bearded iris, peonies, lilacs and other plants that like a more basic soil. Maintenance is a never ending cycle.

I have found a database program that I like for keeping track of my plants called PlantStep. It can be found at [www.plantstep.com](http://www.plantstep.com). Bill and I are looking forward to sharing pictures of our garden with you at the March meeting.  Linda Pinkham

# In Search of Albert Reid's Linwood Hardy Azaleas

By Allen Lacy

It was a no-brainer. It seemed easy to accomplish, although it turned out to be a frustrating task that could well end in failure. But it had to be done.

The Linwood Arboretum at Belhaven, New Jersey absolutely had to include a reasonably complete collection of Linwood Hardy Azaleas, which had been hybridized by Linwood resident, G. Albert Reid (1911-1986). After all, these plants had come into existence at Fischer's Greenhouses, just two miles from the site of the future arboretum. Furthermore, although a few were named for persons ('Doctor Franklin West') or for visible traits ('Orchid Beauty'), the names of eleven of them started with "Linwood" and another six with "Garden State."

Some explanations are in order. The arboretum was founded in 2007 by action of the town's city council, and funded in 2008 via an Open Spaces grant from Atlantic County. Its first 200 shrubs and trees were planted by thirty volunteers in September, 2009. Its most immediate value to its community was that it replaced a highly unlovely scrap of real estate, formerly home to an electrical substation. It was America's newest arboretum, also, at just under one acre, its smallest. But it was also the most visible. This public garden sits directly across from a middle school and adjacent to a well-traveled bicycle path. Bounded by three busy avenues, it enjoys heavy traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular. Today, when its nine hybrid witch hazel cultivars come into bright and fragrant bloom in early February, many people will see and admire them, perhaps consider getting one for their own home patch of earth.

Such visibility would have delighted my friend J. C. Raulston. He thought that witch hazels should be planted in front of fast food restaurants, where many would see them, not just at the arboretums that were so typically located in out-of-the-way locations. If Raulston's leading motto was "Plan—and plant for a better world," he also advised "Plant good stuff where people can see it." (Raulston's name is highly appropriate here. It comes first on the cornerstone of the Linwood Arboretum, which was inspired by his vision of such institutions as emphasizing uncommon but neglected shrubs and trees especially suited for suburban home landscaping. Furthermore, many plants in our arboretum are strongly associated with J.C. Just for starters, consider *Campsis* 'Morning Calm', *Ulmus alata* 'Lace Parasol', *Calycanthus raulstonii* 'Hartlage Wine', and *Styrax japonicus* 'Emerald Pagoda'.)



'Linwood Lustre'

Photo by Bob Stelloh with permission

Working at Fischer's from 1953 until 1967, Al Reid's major assignment was hybridizing ever-green azaleas sufficiently winter hardy to be grown outdoors until potted up and greenhouse-forced for the Valentine's, Easter, and Mother's Day markets. Fischer's azaleas were highly profitable, but they were tender and took up valuable greenhouse space throughout the year. If breeding could produce much hardier sorts, profits would soar even higher. And thus Reid set to work. His project was no trifling affair. By the early 1960s, a quarter million azaleas grew in Fischer's fields, planted in beds six feet wide. The beds were side by side, but had they been end to end, they would have stretched over ten miles, a spectacular sight rivaling the tulip fields of Holland.

In his later years of hybridizing, Reid's goals changed. His interest switched to home gardeners and their landscaping needs. Accordingly, he wrote in 1980, shortly before his death, "Fischer kept the Linwood varieties best suited to the commercial florists' needs, and I concentrated on plants better suited for outdoor planting."

These, not the commercial varieties, became the Linwood Hardies, which Frank W. White, writing in the azalea society's journal described as "among the most outstanding American hybrids yet produced," for their pure and vivid colors, their double or hose-in-hose blossoms, and their excellent form in the landscape.

My initial role with the Linwood Arboretum was a huge delight. I was responsible for choosing and finding the plants we would grow. My wife and I visited many of the fine wholesale nurseries in New Jersey. Two Linwoods turned up immediately, in March, 2009 as the Rare Find Nursery in Jackson offered 'White Gardenia' and 'Opal'. Both were beautiful, even if name of the former disappointed slightly by being white but having no more scent than a piece of paper. 'Opal' was a strange pink lending toward fuchsia purple, but it had the agreeable habit of blooming profusely, once in May and then again in October, until blackened by the first hard freeze.

These two were a start, but more than a start, for Hank Schannen, the owner of Rare Find, pledged his assistance, telling me of a mysterious somebody who had every one of the Reid introductions, a number sometimes estimated as 40, sometimes as 50. But his "somebody" was cranky and temperamental. Hank didn't give me his name. It would be hopeless for me to make contact; Hank would do it, and he thought that the result the following June would be many cuttings that he would root for the Linwood Arboretum.

Hank's pledge of assistance came in late August 2009. On September 16 he died of a heart attack.

For a year and a half there was a near dead end. I thought I might be able to find many Linwoods in Linwood. It stood to reason, since in his later years Reid had sold azaleas from a small front yard nursery. But these were single-flowered culls, not the double-flowered ones that were the exclusive object of his affection. Singles didn't count as the real thing. One that was the real thing, 'Peach Fuzz', did turn up in the catalog of Greer Gardens, where it was described as "overall, a very nice addition to any garden," also having semi-double pink flowers capable of causing "temporary blindness."

I took the risk anyway and ordered 'Peach Fuzz', but the breakthrough did not come from a nursery, at least not from a large commercial nursery.

Thirty-two rooted cuttings of several Reid hybrids—six each of 'Carol Kitchen', 'Doctor Curtis Alderfer', and 'Reid Red', plus four each of 'Linwood Pink Giant' and 'Pink Pincushion'—are about to be mailed from Azalea Hill Nursery in White Hall, Arkansas. This nursery's owner, Ronnie Palmer, is by profession an engineer, but he's an engineer with an avocational passion for evergreen azaleas, including the Linwoods. In offering them for sale, he helps them avoid passing into extinction. Palmer is more nearly a private collector than a professional nurseryman.

And it is private collectors that will be responsible for the eventual display of a large collection of these colorful shrubs of high spring,



Photo by Joe Coleman, with permission

'Janet Rhea'

probably in the fringes of a nearby forested woodland that's part of our town's system of parks. Two other passionate partisans of evergreen azaleas turn out to have large, true-to-name Linwoods in their vast collections. Like Palmer, these men are willing to propagate for us, and supportive of the proposition that Al Reid's work should be fully represented in Linwood decades after his death. I do not identify them here by name, to avoid disturbing them, but I can say that both are Southerners and both are professionals, and neither is a cranky and mysterious somebody.

Now, looking ahead, let's say that a decade from now a large number, perhaps 75% of the azaleas that were registered and introduced are growing in their place of origin. There's a crucial question to face, the question of their true value. If they were truly superior plants, why weren't they more widely available? Could the reason be that they had great merit that was simply overlooked?

The answer might be "yes," since they are azaleas. Like daylilies, azaleas are so beloved by amateur and professional breeders alike, that their cultivars number in the many thousands. The noted plantsman Ben Morrison introduced over 400 azalea cultivars in his Glenn Dale series. Most grow today in the National Arboretum in Washington (also a large number of Morrison's unnamed seedlings whose de-accession is a matter of recent controversy.) What's more, the Glenn Dales are just a tiny fraction of the azaleas that have been bred and named. The competition is huge. Very beautiful azaleas can end up unnoticed and unloved. After all, Thomas Gray reminded us that —

*Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.*

I think that the Linwoods are probably very beautiful. But that's not the only reason for us to grow them here. For us, they have great historical importance, having originated only two miles away, just beyond a patch of ancient forest where a pair of bald eagles has recently taken residence. Even if the 'Garden State Pink' and 'Linwood Lustre' are merely "nice plants," not among the finest azaleas that have ever carried on photosynthesis, they are ours, they are Linwoodians. And this is no small thing. Local history is certainly not inconsequential. In the America of our time, every place tends toward resembling every other place. The same retail stores occupy mall after mall. Sameness has even invaded out gardens, in the form of bedding and basket plants that are patented or trademarked, because they are primarily objects of commerce not subject of a garden. Many now claim to be gardeners who have never planted a seed.

The American landscape, moreover, tends toward the same kind of monoculture that J. C. Raulston despised and sought to abolish. It starts with our lawns, so drenched in chemicals that our streams and bays are endangered. It goes on with overplanted items, like callery pears and forsythias in the spring, and little muffins of chrysanthemums in autumn.

If other towns want to have Linwood Hardy Azaleas, fine! But if not, they should at least find a home, as a collection, in the town whose name they bear. Our English cousins are way ahead of America in establishing collections of woody plants devoted to a single genus, like Hamamelis. It's just one more idea worth borrowing. ❧

*Bionote. Allen Lacy is a native of Dallas, whose inhabitants tried to raise azaleas in chalky soil. Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Horticulture at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, he is currently curator and co-founder of the Linwood Arboretum at Belhaven. He is the author or editor of twelve books on gardening, including The Inviting Garden: Gardening for the Senses, Mind, and Spirit.*

# Topiarist Pearl Fryar

by Bobby J. Ward



Pearl Fryar's house in the Broad Acres neighborhood on the outskirts of Bishopville, South Carolina, is easy to find as the street address, number 145, is shaped by the arrangement of "carved" shrubs in his front yard. But you already know you are in a remarkable area when you spot spiral topiaries in the parking lot of the Waffle House restaurant just off the interstate.



Photo by Bobby Ward

**Pearl Fryar**

Self-taught artist Pearl Fryar has created a topiary garden of living trees and shrubs that he has shaped into striking, seemingly impossible, forms. You envision giant chess pieces that suddenly morph into masts of tall sailing ships when your perspective changes as you walk among them.

Most of Fryar's topiaries are evergreen woody plants, with Leyland cypress, live oak, boxwood, hollies, arborvitae, and cedars dominating the collection. There are intertwining arches and hearts, columns and spires, doughnuts and fishbones, fans and pompoms, and shapes that elude description. A large, cube-shaped live oak took years to tame. Fryar, 70, was raised on a farm in Clinton, North Carolina, went to college in Durham, and served in the U.S. Army, including time in Korea. He worked 36 years for a can manufacturing company at various locations, the last in Bishopville, where he is now retired.

How did an interest in topiary begin? Fryar became fascinated with a sheared plant he saw at a nursery a few years after he and wife Metra moved into their Bishopville home thirty years ago. At the time he didn't know what topiary was, but he was given a few minutes demonstration. Using culled plants from nursery scrap piles, Fryar set about landscaping his yard and soon devised his own shapes. After 10- to 12-hour shifts at the factory, he would come home and work late into the night on his plant designs, the putt-putt of his gas-powered hedge trimmer sounding over the quiet neighborhood. Fryar seemed so obsessed at first that Metra and the neighbors wondered if he was well.

His immediate goal was to earn "Yard of the Month" from a local garden club (he got it). Now, more than two decades later, Fryar has amassed nearly 500 plants that he has clipped into an intermingling of myriad shapes and sizes, with rare duplication; many often take five years to obtain the form he visualizes. "This is one time that ignorance paid off," he tells one of the many visitors that regularly step off tourist buses to see his unique creations, his strong voice resounding across the yard. "I don't have a horticulture background and thus no limits of what I can't or can do." His garden continues to be a work in progress.

"I wanted to create a garden with a message and once you walk through it there is always something to remember. And one that no one else can duplicate," Fryar says. Thus there are knee-high hollies manicured into the letters "L-O-V-E" and neatly dug trenches on the lawn that shout in large letters "LOVE PEACE+GOODWILL."

His garden is a clear blend of horticulture and art. Polly Laffitte, president of the Friends of the Pearl Fryar's Topiary Garden—a preservation project of the Garden Conservancy that is working to preserve the garden—says Fryar has the mind and eye of a sculptor and that his creations are Dr. Seuss meets Edward Scissorhands. Laffitte and Fryar are planning a book, which Fryar describes as "What you don't find in other books." Fryar is artist-in-residence at Coker College in Hartsville, S.C., where he cajoles art students into thinking outside the box to stimulate creative ability. He has helped students there design and install a topiary collection and he dreams of a foundation to fund scholarships for local "C-average" students, to inspire those who "may not be gifted academically but are gifted artistically."

Fryar is the subject of a documentary, "A Man Named Pearl" (2007). "In my high school class if someone said one of you will make a movie, I wouldn't have believed it," he says. Fryar's neighbors, also in the film, have gotten topiary fever and make their own designs. And the town of Bishopville has installed Fryar's topiaries in its downtown street medians. ❧



Photo by Bobby Ward

**Topiary by Pearl Fryar**



## Piedmont Chapter Meeting

JC Raulston Arboretum  
Ruby McSwain Education Building

**March 19, 2011 9:30am**

**Bill and Linda Pinkham**  
Carrollton, VA

**“Our Virginia Garden”**

*The Trillium*, Newsletter of the Piedmont Chapter  
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### OTHER SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS:

Sept. Plant Sale Manager: Kirtley Cox  
Refreshments: Gwen and Maurice Farrier

### Next Piedmont Chapter Program

**Apr. 16, 2011**

"Confessions of a Former Garden Writer of the Last Century", Allen Lacy, Linwood, N.J.

**Spring picnic May 14, 2011**

A visit to Pearl Fryar's Topiary garden in Bishopville, SC. and Swan Lake Iris Garden in Sumter, SC. The bus leaves from the JCRA at 8:30 am, arriving at Swan Lake Iris Garden for lunch and to see the garden's large collection of Japanese iris (which should be in bloom). Then we continue to Pearl Fryar's before returning to the JCRA by around 6:00 pm.

The cost is \$50/person for bus transport and a catered box lunch. There are just a few spaces left.. If you are interested, call Bobby Wilder, 755-0480, right away to reserve your space..

### Food Goodies to Share

If your last name begins with the letter below, please consider bringing something to share.

**March Sp—Z**  
**April Any and All**

If you would like to invite NARGS members to your garden, send an e-mail to Bobby Ward at nargs@nc.rr.com

**Come Celebrate the Beginning of Spring**  
**Saturday, April 16, 2011**  
**4904 Hermitage Dr. Raleigh 27612**

**Fifth Annual Open Garden Art and Plant Sale**

**Returning artists with jewelry, pottery, metal art, Hypertufa troughs and concrete leaves.**

**New artists bring fiber art and sculpture.**