Over the past seven years, Arboretum horticulturists have successfully revitalized Beatrix Farrand’s Azalea Border design by nurturing a number of established and new plantings. A total of 45 *Rhododendron* taxa (kinds) represented by more than 140 plants flower in lavish hues between April and July. Among these, *Rhododendron molle* ssp. *japonicum* (260-2007*A*), Japanese azalea, bears yellow flowers of singular brilliance in May. Each dorsal petal of the broadly funnel-shaped flowers is blotched with green, offering an enticing tonal contrast. These ornamental qualities along with winter hardiness have enticed hybridizers to breed Japanese azalea with other Asian, European, and North American rhododendron. Many azalea cultivars grown by the Arboretum are suspected to have *R. molle* ssp. *japonicum* in their parentage.

The direct source of our handsome specimen can be traced to George Hibben who selected an open pollinated seedling from a plant in his garden. George’s plant grew from hand-pollinated seed that Dr. Uno Paim of Fredericton, NB, Canada, made available to the American Rhododendron Society (ARS) in 1990. Although many hands and possible pollen parents are implicated in the lineage of our fine specimen, the hardness (noted by ARS to be -25 Fahrenheit) and traits of this *R. molle* ssp. *japonicum* are evident. Curatorial investigation into the deep history of our accession is ongoing with a goal to identify all seed and pollen parents.

A dedicated volunteer at the Arboretum since 1988, George joins a distinguished list of *Rhododendron* hobbyists, hybridizers, and institutional partners who have collaborated with Arboretum staff to develop our outstanding collection. His passion for the genus extends to his own garden selections and longtime involvement with celebrated institutions: the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society has honored George with numerous awards and his descriptions of two hybrids—‘Dick Brooks’ and ‘Robert Stuart’—have been published in *The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist* of the Royal Horticultural Society, UK.

Visit the Arboretum this spring to see *R. molle* ssp. *japonicum* and many other striking azaleas in bloom. On June 2, join us for *Collections Up Close: Rhododendron Ramble*, featuring tours and activities spotlighting the diversity of large-leaved evergreen specimens in Rhododendron Dell. 

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**In our Collection**

*A Rugged and Resplendent Rhody*

*Kyle Port, Manager of Plant Records*

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