

Planning and Running a Convention

Azalea Society of America

Planning and Running a Convention

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Version

Version	Date
Version 1.0	7 July 2019

Introduction - One of the benefits of being a member of the Azalea Society of America (ASA) is attendance at the annual convention. This event is sponsored by individual chapters in the ASA, possibly in conjunction with other chapters in the ASA or another plant society.

Responsibility for sponsoring a convention rotates among the various chapters in the society. Sponsoring a convention may appear to be a daunting task....especially if you have never sponsored one. This document lays out guidelines and suggestions for running a conference. It does NOT prescribe what you MUST do, but identifies areas which should be considered. It is written by folks who have done this before and have learned lessons on what to do (and in some cases not do).

Basics - The basic things to consider in planning a convention are:

1. Scope (how many attendees? How long? When?)
2. Bus Tours – what do you want to show the attendees? How much will it cost?
3. Meals – (breakfast if not provided by the hotel, tour lunches, banquets, other)
4. Speakers – consider not only the speakers fees, but also expenses for travel, food and lodging
5. Plant Sales (this can range from no sale to an elaborate sale)
6. Budget (price event to preclude a loss)

Planning Committee - The convention planning should be done by a planning committee. Following are suggested positions for the committee:

Convention Chair - this person has overall responsibility for the running of the convention. He/she coordinates the efforts of all other committee members. If you have co-chairs, it is highly recommended that the responsibilities be clearly defined between the co-chairs. For example, one might be responsible for evening programs (e.g., banquets and speakers) and the other responsible for day programs (e.g., tours), hotels and registration. Key is that all functions have a clear chain of supervision/responsibility.

Treasurer – this is a key position. The treasurer handles the finances of the convention and coordinates the development of the budget. He/she also tracks the expenditures against budget. Some considerations for the treasurer:

- a. Establish a separate checking account for the convention. Many banks will allow you to establish an account for the convention. Many will require that you show it to be a “serious” operation. This can frequently be done by presenting a copy of planning meeting minutes. If, for some reason (e.g., joint conventions) your key personnel dealing with funds are located in multiple dispersed locations, consideration should be given to using banks with a regional or nationwide presence.

- b. A budget should be created. Using applications such as Excel can be useful especially for tracking revenue and expenses for items which are dependent on numbers of attendees (e.g., convention bags, tours, meals etc.). Revenue and expense could automatically adjust based on the number of people registered. Unless the chapter or some other entity is subsidizing the convention, revenue needs to exceed expenses. A sample budget in Excel is at enclosure 1.
- c. The treasurer may consider giving check writing authority to another person. In this case, clear rules for the scope of the check writing responsibility should be prepared. This could even include getting pre-approval for each check written. In all cases, the treasurer should be made aware when the check is written.
- d. If the Treasurer and the Registrar do not live near to one another, the Treasurer may well wish to obtain a book of deposit slips and an endorsement stamp and give them to the Registrar. Checks can be deposited as received and the funds made available quickly.

Secretary – The secretary should take the minutes of each planning meeting, documenting discussions or decisions made. These should be distributed to all the participants shortly after the meeting.

Additional areas - The following areas should all have people assigned responsibility. One individual may have responsibility for multiple areas, however each area included in the scope of the convention must have someone responsible for it. Each area should also provide input to the overall convention budget.

- a. *Hotel* –
 - i. finds a hotel which meets the needs of the convention (e.g., number of rooms, meeting areas, area for plant sale, banquet room, restaurant)
 - ii. coordinates and/or signs the contract with the hotel(TWO OR THREE YEARS IN ADVANCE IF POSSIBLE)
 - iii. stays in touch with the hotel periodically in the interim to be aware changes. While it is not uncommon for the franchise to change (e.g. Doubletree to Holiday Inn) it is very, very common for the conference manager to change. On occasion they keep no record of prior contracts and commitments. Regular, brief contact with the manager will help to assure early warning in time to “get things back on track”. Also, on one or two

occasions the hotel itself has closed (permanently) and a late scramble for hotel space becomes necessary.

b. *Registration* –

- i. Establishes the registration system (e.g., determines what information is required and develops a method for collecting it) See enclosure 1 for a sample registration form. Ensure that the information collected supports the needs of ALL the stakeholder (person coordinating meals, tours, badging etc.).
- ii. Coordinates with the Treasurer to arrange payment system(s) for registration. While some may prefer to mail checks with their forms, many will prefer to register and pay online. A number of systems (e.g. PayPal, Square, Eventbrite) exist to support registration and payment, and each committee will want to choose their own.
- iii. collects and records registration forms.
- iv. provides registration information to “downstream” stakeholders (e.g., providing the number of persons signing up for tours to the tour lead)
- v. Coordinates convention bags and contents
- vi. Coordinates manning of the registration table at the convention
- vii. Coordinates badging of members

c. *Board of Directors Meeting* –

- i. The Board of Directors normally meet the afternoon of registration day
- ii. A meeting room must be programmed for the board meeting.
- iii. Convention planners must coordinate with the society president as to the time and number of attendees.
- iv. Refreshments such as water, coffee or tea should be provided.

d. *Tours* –

- i. Coordinate busses. Evaluate and select bus firm(s) adequate to transport the anticipated number. Contract with the firm (usually requiring a deposit a couple of years in advance). Stay in touch with the firm periodically in the interim to be aware of any changes (e.g., the firm's going out of business).
- ii. Coordinate with venues to be visited
 1. Provisions for groups (e.g., special rates, guides etc.)
 2. Bus parking/access routes
 3. Any special exhibits during the convention period
 4. Venue marketing materials
- iii. Recruit bus captains
- iv. Reconnoiter routes. BEAR IN MIND THE LIMITATIONS OF A LARGE BUS IN TURNING, TURNING AROUND, AND PARKING. THE BUS COMPANY DOES NOT PRE-DRIVE THE ROUTES. Also consider the movement of multiple busses along narrow roads. Prepare route maps and bus driver instructions.
- v. Prepare route maps and bus driver instructions.
- vi. Coordinate refreshments
- vii. Coordinate any literature (e.g., schedules, garden descriptions etc.) to be disseminated
- viii. Coordinate lunches
- ix. Speakers
- x. Identify possible speakers for the convention
- xi. Determine costs for speakers
- xii. Based on the speakers selected, coordinate procuring the speakers

- xiii. Ensure audio visual support, as necessary, is provided. This can be done with inhouse (i.e., society) resources or through a third-party vendors. Sometimes hotels provide this service, normally for a fee.

e. Banquets

- i. Work with hotel (or caterer) to determine what offerings they have for banquet menus.
- ii. Make selections of menus to be offered (ensure availability of a vegetarian option. Also ensure that other special diets be addressed on a case by case basis (e.g., gluten free).
- iii. Coordination of agenda – the agenda includes convention organized events such as a happy hour, dinner and speaker. There must also be a block of time scheduled for the annual meeting. This time must be coordinated with the society president and will include things such as awards, election results, selected committee reports, report on Board of Director’s decisions and information and invitations about the next convention.

f. *Plant Sales* –

- i. Determine scope of the sale (i.e., how many plants)
- ii. Coordinate schedule (open times) for the sale
- iii. Coordinate procurement of plants (purchase, propagate in-house)
- iv. Coordinate layout of plant sale room
- v. Arrange for tables, chairs and other necessary equipment. These may require rental and should be included in the budget
- vi. Recruit team to set up, tear down and run the sale. Coordinate their activities
- vii. Coordinates with the Treasurer to arrange payment system(s) for the Plant Sale. Consider borrowing the Society’s Point-of-Sale system, which very much reduces checkout time for purchasers. Regardless of method used, acceptance of credit cards has been found to increase sales significantly.

g. *Other activities* which, if included, need someone to coordinate

- i. Photography show
- ii. Flower show
- iii. Third party tours (e.g., other sights on interest in the area of the convention)
- iv. Book sales

- v. Pre and/or post convention tours.

Planning Sequence

Below is a suggested approach for planning. In going into this process, it is good to have a general idea of what you are attempting to do (concept of operation). The typical convention event template (i.e., two full days (plus arrival and departure days), two days of garden tours, two-three nights of speakers, banquet, plant sale etc.) is a good start. This template can be modified based on the particulars of the location and the availability of venues.

Timeline

Depending on whether the decision to host the convention was made well in advance—or at the last minute—several factors come into play. Often the two longest-lead items are hotels and buses. Convention planning has started as little as one year in advance and as long as three years—the latter because of the limited number of hotels that would house the group and the number of competing organizations. Two years is recommended as a minimum to organize the Committee and start planning in earnest.

Target Participation Level

The first thing to do when planning a convention is to set a target participation level. This will help in setting up an initial budget and help in choosing facilities (hotels, banquet venues, meeting space etc.) and in planning to ensure capacity limits (e.g., parking, number of participants in a garden at one time etc.) are not exceeded. For planning purposes, 100 +/- attendees is a good planning figure. Most recent ASA conventions have been in the 80-140 range. At this point you should also have an idea of what facilities are available (e.g., hotels which can support a convention, gardens or other venues which could be visited etc.)

Timing and Length

The next thing to consider is timing and length. Conventions should be scheduled to attempt to hit peak bloom periods, though this is subject to the whims of Mother Nature. It is also advisable to avoid conflicting events (e.g., Mother's Day weekend, Easter, other religious holidays etc.). ASA conventions normally have two event days (both with tours, one with banquet), plus a day of arrival with evening program and a day of departure (normally just breakfast). Conventions can run over the weekend (e.g., Thursday evening –Sunday morning) however some have run during the week to take advantage of more favorable hotel pricing. Either approach works.

Budgeting

At this point you should start putting together a draft budget. Most convention activities are “pay as you go” (i.e., the expenses of the activity are paid for by the enrollment fee for the activity). Of bigger concern is fixed costs. These include items such as convention bags, bag contents, badges, and total

cost per speaker (fees plus expenses). These are normally paid through convention registration fees which have been historically in the \$50 range per person. For example, using a planning figure of 120 attendees and a \$50 registration fee, you would be working with a fixed cost budget of \$6000. Also, there should be a source of **seed money**. This is upfront money needed to put down deposits for some venues and busses. This is a loan to the convention and is expected to be paid back by enrollees' fees. It is normally provided from the assets of the sponsoring chapter. Specific items to be considered in the budgeting process are located later in this document.

Speakers

For a two day convention, you normally have a minimum of three speakers (arrival day, first full day of touring and banquet key note speaker). Frequently an additional speaker is scheduled for either the arrival or first day or both...but this is left to the planning committee and is subject to available funds. An additional option is to have a short presentation during any of the lunch times. Normally speakers's expense is funded from registration fees.

Tours

The tours normally conducted go to gardens, both public and private. Hopefully there is a focus on azaleas in the gardens, but this is not an absolute requirement for ALL gardens. This does not preclude stops at other non-garden venues of interest in the area (though this should not be the prime focus of the tours). Conventions in the past have included stops at nature preserves, zoos, and museums. A number of other considerations in pricing are discussed later.

Tour itineraries should also plan for rest facilities. While many busses have restrooms, if the itinerary does not include a number of public gardens with rest facilities, alternate stops should be considered.

Plant Sales

Plant sales can be an excellent source of additional revenue for the sponsoring chapter. Additionally, the sale might meet other goals such as supporting specific hybrids under the Legacy Project. Consideration should be given to scope of the sale (i.e., how many plants), types (you're not limited to azaleas), source: in-house propagation, purchase or consignment (provider is paid only for those plants sold) or outside vendors participating with a profit-sharing approach. Other chapters are also a possible source for plants. The approach chosen may impact the amount of seed money required.

Plant nurseries may be willing to sell plants at a reasonable price (e.g. White's Nursery in Gaithersburg, Maryland; Octoraro Farm in Kirkwood, Pennsylvania; van der Giessen Nursery in Wilmer, Alabama; Transplant Nursery in Lavonia, Georgia). They may even be willing to start plants from cuttings for you.

One key thing to consider with plant sales is lead time. If you have specific plants which you want to feature in the sale, the cuttings need to be started at least two years before the event if you want to provided liners. A longer lead time is required for larger plants. Plans should include how many of what type, who will provide, and where they will be stored prior to the convention. Plant expenses should also be programmed.

Conventions are also a prime venue for supporting the Legacy Project. Convention sponsors can coordinate with other chapters/Legacy Leads within the society, to provide liners or larger plants from Legacy hybridizers. Cost sharing agreements would be made between the sponsors and the plant providers.

Consideration should be given to providing boxes or plastic bags for customers to use in carrying their plants.

Receipt books and cash boxes should be procured to write up each sale and collect revenue. Plans should be made for providing small change seed money for the cash boxes. Provisions must be made for secure storage of valuables (cash etc.). Easy to use point of sale options such as Square© and others should be considered to allow the acceptance of credit cards. As of publication of this document, a point of sale system is available in the society for quickly processing and tracking sales. Coordination should be made with the society treasurer well in advance of the convention (i.e., a year) if this is an option the planners want to pursue. Signage should be provided giving plant prices as well as how to make out checks. Ideally you should plan to have separate volunteers checking out the plants/providing receipts and taking payments.

Space for the plant sale must be included when booking the facilities. It is highly recommended that a schematic be made of the room layout. A critical feature is flow of customers and final checkout. If there is limited space in the plant sale room, consideration should be given to having someone control the number of people in the room at one time. Allowance of 7' for the main aisle and 5' between the tables on the side should be programmed in the layout plan. Aligning two rows of tables back to back is a more efficient use of space than a single row of tables. Rectangular tables are more efficient than round. All tables, including checkout, should be covered with plastic. If the floor is carpeted, it should be covered with plastic also and well secured to preclude tripping.

The space should have multiple entrances and exits. Exits to the outdoors are desirable (though not absolutely necessary) for the purpose of set up and tear down of the sale). There should be an easily accessible source of water for watering the plants during the sale. Ideally the room should be able to be secured. If so, provisions must be made for getting a key(s) to the room. Finally, sufficient electrical outlets should be available to support any equipment (e.g., computers, printers etc.) required to support the sale.

Contact information for the facilities representative should be obtained and provided to the necessary team members for access to the plant sale space and for answering any questions. **PLAN ON MORE SPACE THAN INITIALLY ESTIMATED FOR THE PLANT SALE.** Consideration should also be given for providing a pre-sorting/staging area since so that plants can be organized outside of the plant sale area prior to moving the plants inside.

Make arrangements with the facility staff for daily vacuuming (as necessary).

To ensure that everyone has a fair chance of purchasing plants, consideration might be given to prioritizing entry to the plant room based on some factor such as registration date (e.g., first to register is first allowed into the plant sale). It is also recommended that on the first trip through, that there be a limitation on the number of plants a person could purchase. This would help preclude the best plants from being sold out before everyone had a chance to purchase plants.

In scheduling the plant sale, consideration must be given for providing time for sale volunteers and attendees to return from tours and to prepare for evening events.

Consideration should be given to posting a plant list (with prices, descriptions and photos if possible) on the website several weeks in advance of the sale.

Plans should be made for training of volunteers. A list of all volunteers with cell phone numbers should be created. Plans should be made for setting up and tearing down the plant sale, including where the remaining plants should go.

Meals

Whatever meals are provided, there should be a vegetarian option and provisions must be made for special menus to meet dietary needs (e.g., lactose or gluten intolerance). Identification of these needs should be an information element required during the registration process.

Breakfast is normally provided as part of the convention. It is best to have this included in the negotiated room price with the hotel. There have also been cases where the breakfast has been provided as an added expense in the convention registration. Leaving breakfast/costs arrangements to the attendee is also an option.

Lunch is provided as part of tours. Lunches are normally box lunches. In order of complexity they are:

1. One offering (everyone gets the same thing, plus exceptions stated above)
2. Multiple offerings (need to keep track of different numbers of each item, need to ensure people get the option they signed up for – more complex management)
3. Buffet meals can also be provided though this requires more complex setup and facilities. It makes food selection easier however since people could take only what they wanted to eat

Dinner is always provided for the banquet. Other nights may be provided or (less likely) on the attendees own. Dinners (banquets included) may be buffets or sit-down service. In the latter case, a couple of options are normally available (plus vegetarian and individual based special dietary meals). The attendee's selection is normally indicated by table tent cards (placed in their badge holders) or other indicators such as tickets. It is HIGHLY recommended that some indicator of the menu selected be provided and used in the serving of sit-down meals.

Registration items (normally funded from registration fees)-

Convention Bags – these are normally provided at the convention. They can be specific to the convention, labeled with the convention name and theme or they can be more generic (i.e., no labeling) or complementary provided by a vendor (e.g., Encore). The themed bags are the norm and can run in the neighborhood of \$5-6. Given the normal ordering lead time, the trick is ordering enough to meet the attendee demand without being short or having too much excess. Bags with multiple uses (e.g., grocery bags) should be considered.

Convention Bag Contents – These can vary. They normally include paper and pens for use by the attendees. They can also include samples provided by vendors (e.g., single use fertilizer packs) and information from the local tourist bureau or chamber of commerce. **Lists of attendees and their chapters/hometowns are popular inserts which should be considered.** Convention information (e.g., schedule, attendees etc.) could also be included and the printing costs for the items should be programmed. Lists of recommended restaurants and plant nurseries are also useful.

Convention Favors – Attendees are frequently given favors. These are normally plants and are normally azaleas (liners). These may possibly be obtained at no cost from a donor or for a small fee. These are best distributed at the registration table.

Badges/Badge Holders – Attendee badges are a must for any convention. They identify the attendees and may include information on activities they have signed up for. Badges require badge holders. These can be customized with the convention information (normally costing ~ \$3-4) or can be generic, such as those produced by Avery. Customized holders tend to be more expensive, have greater lead times and have the problem of ordering a sufficient number (enough, but not too much excess). Generic are less expensive (and likely will not last much longer than the convention), are readily obtainable with no lead time required to purchase making it more likely that you can avoid a large excess of single use holders. Badges should contain the attendee's name and it is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that it include their chapter (or At Large) and their home town. A sample badge is at enclosure 2.

Publicity – Articles with information on the convention are normally published gratis by **The Azalean** (as of the date of this document). Consideration can also be given to running ads for the convention in **The Azalean** and other plant publications, though this is not the norm. If so, costs of the additional publicity should be included in the budget.

Insurance – It is a good idea to have a liability policy for the convention. It may be possible that coverage can be provided as a rider on your existing liability policy for the chapter.

Credit Card Fees - Accepting credit cards can be advantageous, resulting in greater expenditures by participants. Consideration should be given to the cost of processing these fees.

Other Activities – These could be events such as Flower Shows or Photography Shows which would likely generate expenses but no income. Expenses could be supplies for conducting the show (e.g., vases, boards for posting photos) as well as badges for winners. Room requirements and costs (if any) must be considered when scheduling these activities

Miscellaneous – this would be any unexpected expenses. It is useful to program an amount in the budget)

Tours

Busses – The number of busses required is based on a projection of members attending the tours and the bus capacity. Many bus companies allow modifications to the contracted number up to a certain date prior to the actual tour. It would be prudent to make the registration cutoff date before or at least close to the cutoff date for making changes to the bus requirements.

It is unlikely that you will exactly fill the number of busses chartered. It is recommended that all voluntary events have a cost designed to preclude a loss on the event. Bus cost should be programmed to be paid by a passenger load less than full capacity (e.g., spreading the cost of the bus over 45 passengers for a 50-55 passenger bus). This helps preclude losing money on a partially filled bus.

Other fees to be considered are parking fees or tolls.

Bus Captains – Each bus should have a bus captain(s). The bus captains should be given an instruction manual (more later). The main role of the bus captains is to ensure that participants are provided with the necessary information on the day's agenda. The most important is when to be back at the bus (and where the bus will be located). The bus captain's most important job is to take roll. They must insure that all passengers are accounted for before the bus leaves a location.

Ideally, bus captains will have driven the route prior to the convention. If this is not possible, the route should be reconnoitered by members of the planning committee and strip maps provided. If any coordination is required at a visited site (for example, obtaining and passing out tickets), this information should be provided to the bus captain. A telephone list should also be provided with appropriate telephone numbers, including emergency numbers. A sample Bus Captain packet is at enclosure 3.

Bus Drivers – Bus drivers will, of course, be provided by the bus company. Many companies will require an itinerary prior to the convention. It is recommended that in addition to the itinerary, other useful information (e.g., where passengers should be let off of the bus; where busses should be parked at a garden etc.) should be included. Sample instructions are at enclosure 4.

Chase Cars – organizers might want to include a chase car (and volunteer driver) in their planning. This is a member driven vehicle which follows the busses and is available to transport an

attendee in an emergency situation (short of one requiring an ambulance). For example, an attendee might fall ill or injure themselves and need to be taken to a clinic, hospital or back to the hotel.

Entrance Fees – Some of the venues may have entrance fees (e.g., public gardens). Group rates may be available. The total cost of the fees should be included in budgeting.

Lunches – lunches are normally box lunches or buffets. The per person cost of each lunch should be included in the overall tour price. **Gratis lunches should be programmed for the bus drivers.** If multiple lunch options are offered, a small excess amount of each lunch should be programmed in the overall tour costs.

Refreshments – as a minimum, water should be available for participants. Unless extremely hot conditions are expected, two bottles of water per participant should be programmed. If you plan on cold beverages, be sure to include the cost of ice and the provision for ice chests (sometimes these are provided by the bus company). Other refreshments can also be considered, in which case the costs should be included in the total tour cost. Plans should also be made for procuring and loading the refreshments.

Driver Tips – It is customary to tip the bus drivers. This can be left to the individual participants (i.e., they tip the driver (or not) on the way off the bus at the end of the tour), or can be programmed in the cost of the event. In the latter a \$1 tip could be programmed for each attendee and included in the price. If the latter, the bus captain or other individual designated by the organizers would present the tip to the drivers.

Literature – It might be advisable to produce handouts with the daily itinerary including assembly and departure times for each garden as well as information on the venues being visited (including maps of the garden as appropriate). The total cost of this literature should be programmed. It is advisable to provide the bus captains and the bus drivers with information on the tour to include schedules, strip maps, parking information etc. The cost of producing this information should also be included.

Advertising –

Potential attendees need to know about the convention. Normally society members are made aware of future conventions by their listing on the society website.

Convention Presentation - The first major announcement of the convention and program are normally done by a presentation at the end of the prior convention. This is normally done via something like a slide show, though it could be as simple as a verbal description of what will occur.

Flyers - Planners might also want to put together a flyer on the convention to give to attendees or to pass out to chapter presidents (or other chapter representatives) to pass out to their members at

home. These flyers could also be posted to the society website for all members (and non-members) to access.

Articles - An article on the convention should be submitted to the editors of *The Azalean*. This article should be coordinated with the editor and should normally be submitted to be published in the Fall issue of the magazine. In addition to the article, copies of the registration form should also be provided. This will be included on either the front or back outer cover of the magazine.

In addition to articles on the convention itself, planners might consider coordinating articles on various venue (e.g., public and private gardens) to be published in the issues prior to the Fall issue.

Convention Setup

The two major aspects of onsite setup are the registration table and the plant sale room. Other setup may be required if features such as Flower Shows, Photography Shows, Book Sales or other features are offered.

Plant Sale Setup

The plant sale is normally the most complicated aspect of the convention to setup. Tables have to be placed, protective plastic placed on the tables and frequently taped on the floors. Plants should be watered (but not too wet) and water and watering containers should be available to keep the plants watered, as necessary, during the convention. Pots should be fairly clean. Instruction and pricing signs need to be posted.

Plants need to be placed in an orderly manner (e.g., by hybrid group or alphabetically etc.) and check out. Having a printed list of each group helps with arranging the plants.

Finally, check out tables (and chairs) must be set up. It is highly recommended that flow be considered in setting up the tables (this should have been considered during planning, but may need to be adjusted). Depending on the size of the room, priority of entry into the room (e.g., based on registration date) and limitations on initial purchase quantities and number of people in the sale room at one time may have to be controlled.

Registration Table

A table or more likely tables need to be set up at a central location to provide attendees with their registration materials. Unless prominently located in the hotel lobby, signage should be provided to direct attendees to the registration table.

Other

While most other aspects of the convention will be set up by others (e.g., the hotel). Additional setup may be required for audio-visual, flower shows, photography show or any other event scheduled as part of the convention.

Running the Convention

After months of planning, it is finally convention time. The more time spent in planning the less problems you will face during the convention.

The first thing the attendees will likely do is check in to the hotel (reservations and checking in are normally done independently of the convention organizers, once a contract for room rates and included services has been entered into with the hotel by the organizers).

The second thing will be visiting the registration table. The registrars will record that the attendees have arrived (normally by checking off their names from an attendees list) and will provide them with their badges, information (as a minimum the schedule) and convention bags.

Welcome Reception

The evening of registration day has a welcome reception of some sort. This can be an open bar with snacks or a sit-down dinner if that is what was planned by the organizers. In either case, seating provisions must be made for attendees.

The program for the evening will be presented in accordance with the convention plan. Frequently there is a speaker scheduled the first night. **AS A MINIMUM**, attendees should be provided the schedule for the convention and in particular the next day. This includes:

- Breakfast times and place
- Meeting time and place for busses
- Itinerary for the next day
- Location and times for the plant sale

Plant Sale

The plant sale normally opens on the day of registration. It may open before or after the initial reception (or both). Location and times should have been included in the registration materials provided.

Tours

Attendees should have been notified when and where to catch the busses. Bus captains should provide information on when the busses will be leaving gardens and where to meet them (departure points might be different than the drop off points).

Evening Meals/Banquets

Attendees should have been notified of the times and locations of the meals. Printed programs might be provided for the attendees though this isn't absolutely necessary. The evening's program must be planned (i.e., have an agenda) will be executed as planned.

Conclusion

Hopefully with detailed planning you will have a smooth running and profitable convention. The greater the care taken in planning, the less likely there will be problems in execution. If problems occur, they are more likely to be minor and easy to resolve. Thanks for volunteering to conduct a convention for the Azalea Society of America and best wishes for a successful convention.

Enclosure 1 – Sample Budget

(Disclaimer – this is a sample only. It should be modified to meet the specific needs of your convention. All embedded formulas should be checked before relying on it for planning)

20XX Azalea Convention Budget									
Expenses	# Units	Variable cost		Income	# units	Variable income		Net	
			\$				\$		
Registration									
				\$0	Registration fees	100	\$45	\$4,500	
				\$0				\$0	
				\$0				\$4,500	\$4,500.00
Hotel and Catering									
	National Meeting Room	1	\$150.00	\$150				\$0	
	Salon A	1	\$200.00	\$200				\$0	
	Plant sale room		\$0.00	\$0				\$0	
	Hospitality Room		\$0.00	\$0				\$0	
	Other		\$0.00	\$100				\$0	
Banquet	Salon C	120	\$37.00	\$4,440	Banquet Fees	120	\$37	\$4,440	
				\$4,890				\$4,440	(\$450.00)
Gardens and Tours									
	Estimated tickets (54 per bus max)	172	\$72.00						
	Busses	4	\$1,500.00	\$6,000	Tour tickets	172	\$45	\$7,740	
	Box Lunches	172	\$9.00	\$1,548				\$0	
	Soda/water	172	\$1.00	\$172				\$0	
	Meadowlark entry	172	\$3.00	\$516				\$0	
				\$8,236				\$7,740	(\$496.00)
Speakers									
	Honorariums	6	\$300.00	\$1,800					
	Transportation	2	\$500.00	\$1,000					
	Rooms	6	\$94.00	\$564					
		2	\$37.00	\$74					
				\$3,438					(\$3,438.00)
Convention Materials									
	Tote Bags	100	\$1.00	\$100				\$0	
				\$0				\$0	
				\$100				\$0	(\$100.00)
Plant Sales									
	Plastic Sheeting			\$0	Plant sales	200	\$15	\$3,000	
	Tape			\$0				\$0	
	Receipt books			\$0				\$0	
	Plant Costs	200	\$4.00	\$800				\$0	
	Price tags	200	\$0.50	\$100				\$0	
	Tables			\$0				\$0	
				\$0				\$0	
				\$900				\$3,000	\$2,100.00
								Net Revenue	\$2,116.00

Enclosure 2 – Sample Badge

Azalea Society of America
2009 Convention
John Smith
Chapter: Lake Michigan
Sat: Roast Beef Sun: Turkey Bacon
Banquet: London Broil

The badge contains the following information:

- John Andrews** (circled in black, with a callout box labeled "Required Information")
- Centerville, TN** (circled in black, with a callout box labeled "Highly Recommended Information")
- Vaseyi - ASA** (circled in black)
- Banquet--Pork** (circled in black, with a callout box labeled "Suggested Information")
- A1:RICH--Turkey** (circled in black)
- A2:NOR--Chicken** (circled in black)
- A3:GLO--Turkey** (circled in black)

A small photograph of a brick building is located on the left side of the badge.

Enclosure 3 Sample Bus Captain Packet

(examples of all of the contents are not included in this convention document where self explanatory)

Table of Contents

Bus Captain Instructions

Schedule (for tour participants)

Itinerary (provided separately to bus drivers, but for your information)

Strip map/directions (just in case)

Phone numbers

Tour Participants List (on clipboard)

Other

DVD's (if applicable are in the sleeve(s) of the binder)

Schedules to hand out to participants

Garden Maps (where available)

Bus Number (for placement in the bus window)

Handicapped Symbols (for placement on front rows of seats)

Bus Captain Instructions – Norfolk Bus 1, 2 and 3

Thanks for volunteering to be a Bus Captain for the 2016 ASA/ARS Convention. The primary role of the Bus Captain is to be the official representative of the ASA/ARS to ensure that convention participants have an enjoyable and safe tour.

Specific responsibilities include:

Double checking that water is loaded on the bus in luggage area (water will be delivered to the bus and loaded by convention staff). You will also be provided trash bags and wipes.

Maintaining tour participant count and ensuring all are on board prior to departure from a garden (you may do a by name list using the enclosed tour participant list...that is up to you)

Knowledge of the tour route as a backup to the bus driver (Mapquest instructions are provided for use AS NEEDED)

Providing the tour participants with information on the gardens to be visited, to include scheduled departure from the gardens (**handouts are provided for this purpose**)

Place handicapped signs on the 1st and one set of 2d Row seats This is a self identifying process (i.e., those who need the seats should take them...you needn't check handicapped cards). Once the bus is loaded, if the seats are still empty, open them to all.

Providing information on the execution of the tour:

Availability of water – (NOTE:water will be delivered to the bus by convention staff and loaded underneath. Water will also be provided for you to hand to folks as they get on the bus.)

Lunch arrangements – Lunches will be served in the picnic area at Norfolk Botanical Garden

Trash disposal – you will have trash bags in your bus captain bag. Please collect trash after lunch or as otherwise needed. Coordinate with the bus driver to place the trash under the bus. The bus company will dispose of the trash.

Recyclable disposal – there are no provisions for collecting recyclables. If you desire to do this on your own, you may handle the collection and disposition...however the bus company will treat it as trash.

Schedule examples

Schedule 21 April Richmond Bus 1 and 2 –

Load busses at bus entrance starting at 8:15

Depart Fort Magruder Hotel 0830

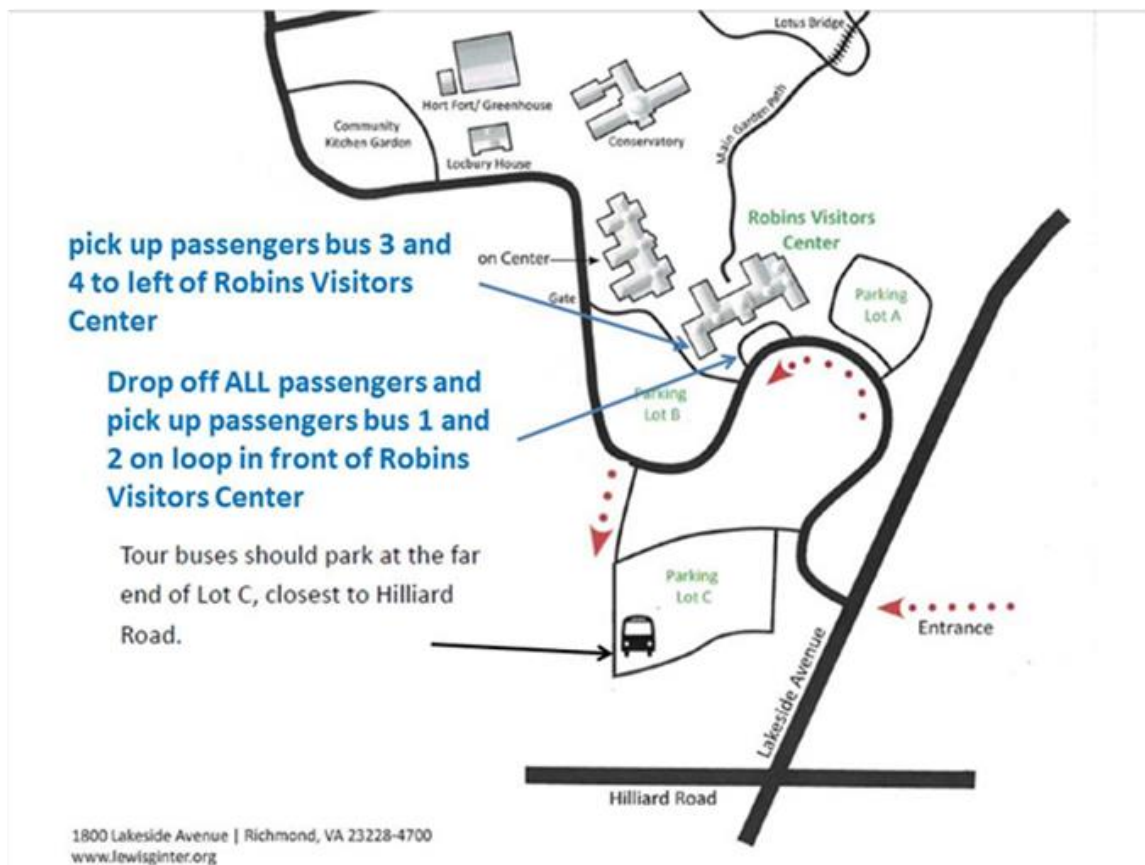
Arrive 09:30 am - Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden - convention badge is entrance

ticket

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden:

The Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond will be a featured attraction on this trip. It is ranked as one of the top public gardens in North America and has many wonderful floral displays that change with the seasons. Enjoy its 50 acres of spectacular gardens surrounding a scenic lake, a 63-foot classical domed conservatory with tropical plants and orchids, and more than a dozen themed gardens. **(restrooms available) Tour on your own**

Load busses 12:00 Front of Robins Visitor's center/get lunches on bus



Schedule 21 April Richmond Bus 3 and 4 –

Load busses at bus entrance starting at 8:15

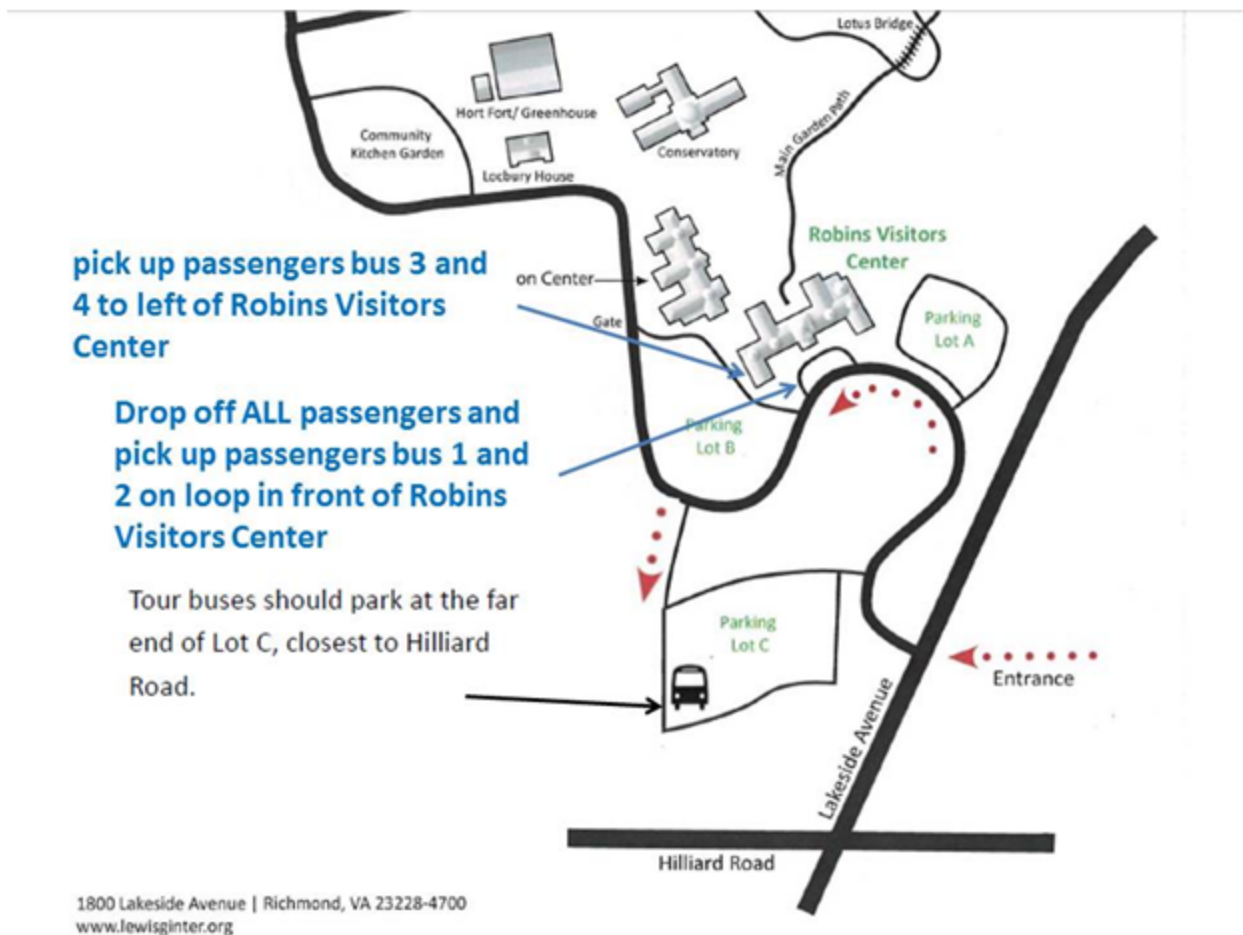
Depart Fort Magruder Hotel 0830

Arrive 09:30 am - Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden - **convention badge is entrance ticket**

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden:

The Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond will be a featured attraction on this trip. It is ranked as one of the top public gardens in North America and has many wonderful floral displays that change with the seasons. Enjoy its 50 acres of spectacular gardens surrounding a scenic lake, a 63-foot classical domed conservatory with tropical plants and orchids, and more than a dozen themed gardens. (restrooms available)

Load busses 12:00 **LEFT SIDE OF** Robins Visitor's center/get lunches on bus



Schedule Norfolk/Carrollton - Bus 1, 2, and 3

8:15 am Load Busses at Fort Magruder Bus Entrance

08:30 am Depart Fort Magruder Hotel

Arrive 9:30 am Pinkham Garden

Pinkham Garden

The beautiful garden of Bill and Linda Pinkham encompasses 6 waterfront acres on the James River. The Pinkhams, former owners of Smithfield Gardens Nursery, started developing their garden in 1997 and have amassed an impressive collection of rare plants including choice perennials, conifers, camellias, and woody plants. The landscape features large stone accents they have collected and some of Bill's ceramic sculptures. Linda is a noted daylily hybridizer but they won't bloom until later in the season. **(No restroom – restroom on bus) Bill and Linda Pinkham to lead tours of their garden.**

10:50 am – load busses

11:00 am – Depart for Norfolk Botanical Garden

Norfolk Botanical Garden

The bulk of our time will be spent at the Norfolk Botanical Garden. This 155-acre waterfront garden has 12 miles of paved trails and 52 themed gardens that can be viewed by tram, boat or on foot. The landscape features extensive azalea and camellia plantings, and they recently added the McDonald Azalea Garden showcasing the evergreen azalea hybrids of Dr. Sandra McDonald. An impressive Chinese outdoor art exhibit titled Lantern Asia will be making its debut during our visit. **(restrooms available)**

12:00 noon – arrive Norfolk Botanical Garden

Load on to trams for Tram Tour of the Garden after which the tram will drop you off at the Picnic Area for Lunch See map on reverse side (or explore on your own)

12:30 -1:30 Lunch will be served in the Picnic Area after which you can explore on your own

2:30 pm – Assemble in front of Visitor's Center (point A on map)

2:45 pm Bus departs NBG

~3:45 pm Bus Arrives at Fort Magruder Hotel



2:30 Depart Perrin Garden

2:45 Brent and Becky's Bulbs, 7900 Daffodil Lane, Gloucester, VA 23061
Parking location to be determined

3:45- Depart Brent and Becky's Bulbs

4:30- Arrive Fort Magruder Hotel 6945 Pocahantas Trail, Williamsburg

Enclosure 5 Plant Sale Supplies

The following items are recommended in supporting the plant sale

Supplies and Equipment

Carts and/or wagons to transport plants from vehicles to plant sale room, and to help customers

Tarp for staging area, especially if it is a rainy day

Plastic rolls, tape if covering the entire floor

Photo of each cultivar and a method of displaying these. The photos may be placed inside re-sealable plastic bags for protection.

Plant list(s), with descriptions is beneficial.

Clipboards or some way of securing various papers

Empty pots and trays in case of breakage.

Extra plant tags

Watering can(s)

Pruning shears

Landscape ribbon and permanent markers for plants that have been sold, but remain in the plant sale room.

Sturdy shallow boxes and plastic bags for customer use.

Cleaning supplies (paper towels, cloths, general household spray cleaner)

Trash bin with plastic liners

Electronics (computers, Ipads, printer with paper and extra laser cartridge, power strips, extension cord(s) + duct tape) power supply and cord, credit card reader

Tables and chairs for cashiers

Cash boxes with a generous amount of small bills

Receipt books, calculators, pens, pencils, rubber stamp "paid"