

## Chipmunks with Azaleas

I didn't take much with me when I left home to go to college in Philadelphia. My dormitory was a repurposed hotel and the administration warned me ahead of time that I had two roommates and a very small suite of rooms that included a kitchenette. My mother insisted that I take a teapot to "stay civilized" so I wrapped this Brown Betty pot in my sundress and placed it carefully between sketchbooks in my knapsack. My roommates and I made endless cups of tea to stay up all night working on our freshman projects with inexperienced hands and when we passed our finals, we filled it with whisky and poured tiny Chinese tea cups to celebrate.

Brown Betty teapots were made in the Stoke-on-Trent area of Britain starting back in 1700. They feature a magnesium based "Rockingham" glaze over local dark red clay that holds heat amazingly well. The glaze is beautifully reflective and the pot is large enough that objects and light are perfectly visible in my paintings - although I still use it to make tea and miss it dreadfully when it has to stay in place, full of flowers or serving as a dark background to a bowl of fruit, while I finish a composition.

I have no idea when my family acquired the pot and it isn't dated. It has survived many generations and travels by now and I hope to pass it on!

The flame azalea was a parting gift from neighbors here in Town Hill who ran a landscaping business. It was a tiny twig and I was warned that it might not be completely hardy. Twenty years gone by and the shrub is a multi-branching colony about 8' by 8' that turns to an orange bonfire in the late spring. For some reason the deer don't seem to find it attractive so I can pick branches at my leisure for paintings.

I suspect this pair of chipmunks were rescues, released from the Acadia Wildlife Refuge at the end of our road. They seemed fairly tame and were content to scamper around the garden closely enough (and invade my hoop house studio) that I could include them in the composition. They are tremendously athletic and the markings are fascinating - very distinctive yet allowing them to camouflage very well with the understory.

*Amy Pollien*