



LANDSCAPE · NURSERY · GARDEN CENTER

# RHODODENDRON AND AZALEA

Rhododendron and azaleas are adored for their spectacular spring flowers. They also have attractive foliage, sometimes year round, and are useful companion plants in the shrub border and foundation plantings.

## What is the difference between Rhododendrons and Azaleas?

Both azaleas and rhododendrons are included in the genus *Rhododendron*. In our area, the rhododendrons are evergreen with larger, bolder foliage while the azaleas can be either evergreen or deciduous (leaves shed in fall) with smaller leaves.

**Rhododendrons** are either large leaf or small leaf types:

- Large leaf types have leathery leaves 3 to 6 inches long and 1 to 2 inches wide, and bloom in mid to late May. They grow best in morning or filtered sun with protection from strong winter sun and wind.
- Small leaf types have leaves 1 to 2 inches long and ½ to 1 inch wide, and bloom in late April. They grow well in full sun to part sun.

**Azaleas** are either evergreen or deciduous types:

- Evergreen types may still lose a portion of their leaves going into winter. Blooming in late April, they grow best in morning or filtered sun with protection from strong winter sun and wind.
- Deciduous types have been bred for cold hardiness and rich flower colors. Blooming in late May into June, they grow best in full sun to part shade. The leaves often show good fall color.

The **hardiness temperature listed** for each rhododendron and azalea **is the flower-bud hardiness**. Dropping below this winter temperature means the plant will probably not flower the following season.

### Large Leaf Rhododendron

Name	Size	Description
Catawbiense Album	5'x5'	Pale lilac buds open into pure white blooms with yellow spots in the throat. -25° F
English Roseum	5'x5'	Rosy pink flowers. -25° F
Highland Purple Passion	6'x4'	Rich purple flowers. Vase-shaped habit. -25° F
Hoopla	5'x5'	Rose pink flowers with yellow throat. From UConn. -20° F
Inkarho	5'x5'	Light pinkish violet flowers. From Germany, this type of rhododendron is a little more tolerant of alkaline soil. -25° F
Lakeview Pink		
March Madness	5'X5'	Frilly rosy flowers with a red blotch. From UConn. -25° F
Nova Zembla	5'x5'	Dark red flowers. One of the best dark red rhododendrons for Midwest. -25° F
Roseum Elegans	5'x5'	Lavender pink flowers. Deep olive green foliage. -25° F
Slam Dunk	5'x5'	Rose purple flowers with burgundy throat. From UConn. -20° F

### Small Leaf Rhododendron

Olga Mezitt	3'x4'	Deep pink flowers blooming after PJM. Light red fall foliage. -30° F
PJM	5'x5'	Lavender pink flowers. Mahogany fall foliage. Proven performer. -25° F
PJM Landmark	5'x5'	Dark lavender pink flowers. Mahogany fall foliage. -25° F
Sugar Puff	3'x3'	White flowers edged in pink. Bold red stems in winter. Heavy bloomer. -20° F

### Evergreen Azalea

Bixby	2'x3'	Bright red flowers. Small, dark green leaves. Dense, compact form. -20° F
Chalet Exclusive Introductions	4'x4'	Chalet's very own azaleas are varieties of the hardy and vigorous Korean azalea. Available in Appleblossom, Blush, Glowing Pink, Orchid, Plum and Rose. -25° F
Compact Korean	4'x4'	Pale lavender flowers. Orange-red fall color. Sheds lower leaves in winter. -25° F
Karens	4'x4'	Lavender purple flowers. Sheds lower leaves in winter. -25° F
Rosebud	4'x4'	Pink rose-like buds open to rosy pink flowers. Orange-purple fall color. -20° F

## Deciduous Azalea

<b>Cannon's Double</b>	4'x4'	Double flowers in shades of peach, pink and cream. -20° F
<b>Gibraltar Exbury</b>	5'x4'	Flame orange, frilly flowers. Orange, yellow and red fall color. -20° F
<b>Klondyke Exbury</b>	5'x4'	Golden yellow, fragrant flowers. Bronzy, mildew resistant foliage. -20° F
<b>Lemon Lights</b>	4'x3'	Yellow, fragrant flowers. -35° F
<b>Mandarin Lights</b>	4'x4'	Orange-red flowers with ruffled petals. Bronzy purple fall color. -35° F
<b>Northern Hi-Lights</b>	4'x5'	Creamy white, fragrant flowers with yellow accents. Red-purple fall color. -35° F
<b>Red Sunset Exbury</b>	5'x4'	Deep, true red flowers with frilly petals will attract hummingbirds. -20° F
<b>Rosy Lights</b>	4'x5'	Dark pink, fragrant flowers with rose shading. -35° F
<b>White Lights</b>	5'x5'	White, fragrant flowers from pink buds. Burgundy fall foliage. -35° F

### SITE SELECTION

The ideal exposure is part shade. 3-5 hours of morning or late afternoon sun is good for foliar growth and flower bud formation. Plants should be protected from midday sun and wind, particularly in the winter. Use an anti-desiccant such as **Wilt-Pruf** for additional winter protection. Heavy shade produces spindly plants with few flowers. The soil should be loose and well-drained, never soggy. The best location would be the east side of a building or fence or in the filtered shade of large trees or evergreens.

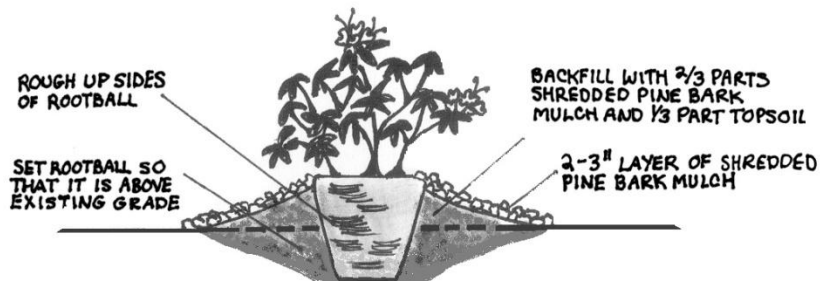
### SOIL PREPARATION

**Deciduous azaleas** can be planted much the same way as other shrubs (see Planting Instructions) the only difference being they definitely benefit from the addition of shredded pine bark mulch as a soil amendment.

**Evergreen rhododendrons and azaleas** have shallow, fibrous root systems and do best in well-drained, acidic (low pH), organically rich soil.

Since our North Shore soils tend to be poorly

drained and alkaline (high pH), plant the root ball  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  above the soil line, add pine bark mulch to improve drainage and soil sulfur to lower pH. Dig holes that allow you to place the rootballs  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  above the soil line, then backfill with 2 parts pine bark mulch to 1 part removed soil. Add 1 cup of **soil sulfur** per plant. Mix  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup into the backfill mix and sprinkle  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup at the bottom of the planting hole, covering it with 2" of backfill mix. Pine bark mulch also increases air space, contains natural fungicides and promotes growth of soil microbes that help prevent "root rot".



### PLANTING

Gently remove containerized plants from the pot by slicing the pot open with a sharp knife. Rough up the roots with your fingers if they are tightly circled around. Place the plant into the hole, fill around the rootball half way with the backfill mix. To settle soil and to remove air pockets firm soil gently by hand, then fill partially with water and allow to drain. Finish by mounding to the top of the rootball and feathering backfill out towards the edges, then water thoroughly. Apply 2-3" layer of mulch.

### WATERING

**It is better to water deeply and infrequently rather than lightly and often.** Do not use overhead sprinklers. Hand water using a long-handled wand with a water breaker to reach under foliage and deeply water the rootball, applying water evenly and deeply over all the roots. A deep soaking once or twice (if hot and dry) weekly should suffice. **Keep plants evenly moist, but be careful not to over-water.** If leaves are rolled like cigars and hanging down limp against the stem while the soil is still moist, it is a sure sign the soil is not draining or the plant is being overwatered. The roots may be dying due to root rot or the fungal disease *Phytophthora*. **Once the leaves show these symptoms, little can be done to save the plant.**

### MULCHING

Mulching not only reduces weed growth and retains moisture, but insulates roots against soil temperature fluctuations due to heat and cold. Use **shredded pine bark mulch** (2-3") as it also contains natural fungicides and increases beneficial soil microbes that help prevent "root rot". Keep mulch several inches away from the trunk for air circulation and to discourage winter rodent damage. Replenish as needed to keep the depth uniform year round.

### FERTILIZING

The first season use a starter fertilizer such as **Bonide Root & Grow**. Thereafter, fertilize twice yearly - once after spring bloom and again in late spring or early summer. Use a slow-release granular fertilizer like **Espoma Holly-Tone**. Apply before July 15 to prevent promoting soft late season growth that is more prone to winter injury. Water plant first, pull back mulch, sprinkle fertilizer evenly over surface, water in lightly, and then replace the mulch. **Add soil sulfur** in spring and fall **to lower soil pH**. Use  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup per plant, applying just like fertilizer.