

Florida Native Azaleas



Written by Dara Dobson



Native azaleas are in the
Rhododendron family
Florida has seven naturally
occurring native azaleas

Florida Flame

Rhododendron austrinum



Piedmont/Pinxster

Rhododendron canescens



Alabama

Rhododendron alabamense



*Plumleaf

Rhododendron prunifolium

**Rarely found in Florida , it is a true native of Alabama and Georgia*



Hammock Sweet

Rhododendron serrulatum



Swamp Azalea

Rhododendron viscosum



Chapman's
Rhododendron minus
Var chapmanii



In addition to these 7, there are many varieties of cultivars developed from the natives, some are naturally occurring.

Most evergreen azaleas you see in Florida landscapes are azaleas which came from Asia.

Indica Formosa azaleas are iconic in the south.



While not native, these colorful azaleas, pinks, whites, coral, and reds have a traditional place in typical southern landscapes.



Many sizes and varieties are available, but most have no fragrance.



In contrast our native azaleas are quite fragrant, they attract butterflies, bees and birds, especially hummingbirds



Often native azaleas can be found growing wild by rivers, streams and lakes. Please remember in a garden setting they are **NOT** Drought tolerant.



Letting native azaleas dry out can kill them, sometimes in as little as three days if in a drought and exposed to bright sun.



Most native azaleas prefer part shade, blocked from the hottest afternoon sun. High shade from pines or other trees will provide the dappled sun they thrive in.



Florida native azaleas are typically deciduous, losing their leaves in the winter. Their buds for the next seasons flowers form on bare stems.

*Seed pods shown



Different species may have different bud sizes and shapes.



Native azaleas are quite striking in the winter. Their leaves have dropped, but the silhouettes of buds on bare stems creates a beauty all its own.



Watching the buds as they swell getting ready to open is so exciting...just waiting for that explosion of color and fragrance !



If you decide to prune your azaleas, remember to prune soon after flowering. Pruning after July will decrease bud formation resulting in less flowers for the next season.



The Rhododendron species like an acid PH soil 5.2-5.8. Mixing peat moss and pine bark in the soil when planting helps replicate their natural soil preference.



Never add fertilizer in the planting hole. Native azaleas do not like fertilizer touching their roots. Always use a topical fertilizer, preferably slow release designed for azaleas or acid loving plants.



Florida azaleas should have a 3 inch layer of pine straw or bark around the base, leaving a couple inches of breathing room around the trunk. The mulch keeps the roots cool and conserves moisture.



Fertilize in early spring for optimum results. Native azaleas do not need a large amount of fertilizer. Do not over do it.

Actually using a little less or none once established.



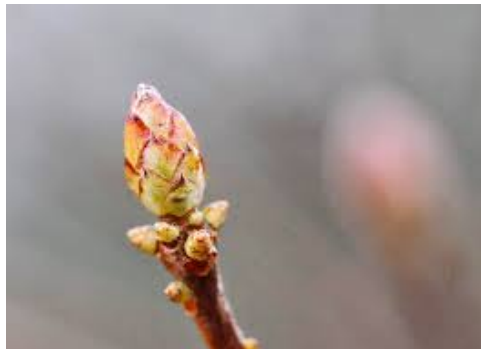
Endangered Florida Flame Azalea

Rhododendron austrinum

6ft to 10 ft

fragrant orange to yellow orange

blooms in April



Piedmont/Pinxter Azalea

Commercially exploited

Rhododendron canescens

10ft to 15 ft

fragrant light pink blooms in April



Endangered Alabama Azalea

Rhododendron alabamenses

5 ft to 12 ft

fragrant white with a pink tinge,
Pale yellow throat, spring blooms



Endangered *Plum Leaf Azalea

Rhododendron prunifolium

8 ft to 20 ft, not fragrant

The rarest native azalea in the Eastern U.S., bright orange to vivid red funnel shaped blooms late summer
Prefers a moist shady spot



Hammock Sweet Azalea

Rhododendron serrulatum

6ft to 15 ft

Fragrant white blooms in late summer, has red leaves in fall



Swamp Azalea

Rhododendron viscosum

- *Some discussion that Rhododendron viscosum and Rhododendron serrulatum are the same species*

8ft to 10ft, white fragrant
blooms May to June



Endangered Chapman's

Rhododendron minus var chapmanii

4 ft to 6 ft

Spring blooms,
with repeat blooms
later in the year



Steve Christman © 2009 Floridafa.com

Chapman's Azalea, *Rhododendron minus var chapmanii*, is our only evergreen species, this rare azalea is endemic to Florida



ENDANGERED SPECIES

Chapman's azalea is evergreen, but can be deciduous. The leaves of this species are much more leathery than most other native azaleas.



Chapman's flowers can range from very light pink, almost white, to medium pink



Steve Christman © 2009 FloridaData.com

3 to 6 ft tall, 3 to 6 ft wide
part shade to shade, acidic soil

There are some cultivars that occur naturally from cross pollination. Often these are then tissue cultured to retain that new characteristic and given a new common name.



Piedmont Azalea Phlox Pink

Rhododendron canescens

10ft to 15 ft

A naturally occurring more upright tree form, fragrant light

Pink with darker

pink tubes

April blooms



Chocolate Drop

Rhododendron canescens

10ft to 15 ft

Found in north Florida
naturally occurring.

It has leaves
that have a chocolate
/pink color, the
flowers are still light pink.



Don's Varigated

Rhododendron austrinum

10ft to 15 ft

Found with variegated

Leaf color , large orange

Flowers

yellowish

swath



Reagan

Rhododendron austrinum

Fragrant , naturally occurring

Lighter pink with orange accents

fragrant



My Mary

Rhododendron austrinum ×

R. Atlanticum × *R periclymenoides*



VERY Fragrant
Yellow with tinge
of pink tones



Razzberry

Rhododendron canescens ×
Rhododendron flammenum

Bright raspberry
color with yellow
blotch



Moonbeam

Rhododendron austrinum

Yellow selection
Lots of blooms
VERY fragrant



Jakes Red

Rhododendron flammeum

3-4 ft dwarf
Showy ball-like
flowers



Florence

Rhododendron flammmeum

3-4 ft can
grow to 8ft
Slow grower
Very fragrant
Lots of flowers



Coast

Rhododendron atlanticum

3-4 ft tall and wide, semi-dwarf

Spreads by stolons

Forms colonies

VERY fragrant



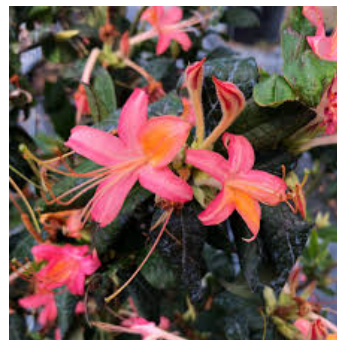
Dozens of other cultivars, just A few for our zone ...



Admiral Semmes



Rising Sun



Pink Ember



Stonewall Jackson



Millie Mac



Pure Yellow



Corley's Cardinal



Clear Creek

Please do not dig them up from their natural areas. Let them remain on the river banks for all to enjoy ... Buy them only from reputable nurseries.

