Florida Native Azaleas

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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 season's 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
Chapman’s Azalea, *Rhododendron minus var chapmanii*, is our only evergreen species, this rare azalea is endemic to Florida.
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. They are 3 to 6 ft tall, 3 to 6 ft wide, and prefer part shade to shade with 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
My Mary
*Rhododendron austrinum* ×
*R. Atlanticum* × *R. periclymenoides*

VERY Fragrant
Yellow with tinge of pink tones
Razzberry
*Rhododendron canescens x Rhododendron flammeum*

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 flammeum

3-4 ft can
grow to 8 ft
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.