

cultivars that have a large cold requirement to break dormancy. This probably would not occur in places with more consistently cold winters.

Late-flowering cultivars were conspicuously low in flowering effectiveness. The 24 cultivars with mean peak flowering date in May averaged less than 15% flower coverage at their peak, whereas the 72 cultivars that peaked in March averaged 58%. This lack of effectiveness is due partly to the gradual flowering of many late cultivars at this location and partly to the lack of longevity of individual flowers at the high temperatures that can be expected in May.

Southern Indian hybrids usually flower here without fail, but 1992 was a disaster for 'Pride of Mobile', 'George L. Taber', 'Mrs. G. G. Gerbing', and 'Formosa' and its sports. Most of the flower buds on these plants had presumably been killed by a 26°F air temperature on November 5, 1991. Such occurrences make predicting azalea flowering time and quality about as much a gamble as predicting the weather itself.

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## Success With Rhododendrons and Azaleas

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**Author:** H. Edward Reiley

**Publisher:** Timber Press

*Reviewers: Charles & Wanda Hammers*

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This book covers the full spectrum of rhododendron and azalea culture in a concise and easily understood manner. As the author states, the information presented is sufficient to lead the beginner to success in growing and can assist current growers to grow more successfully. Much of the book reflects the author's years of practical experience in propagating and growing azaleas and rhododendron in his personal garden and a commercial nursery. Had the book been available 20 years ago, we could have avoided many of the pitfalls of learning by trial and error.

After a brief introduction to the origins and taxonomy of the genus *Rhododendron* (includes azaleas) the author digs right in to the cultural requirements; soil, drainage, organic matter, guidance on selecting and purchasing plants, landscape, planting, fertilizing, mulching and pruning—all vital to success in growing these plants.

The cultural information can be tailored to specific locations using the provided climatic data and plant recommendations for selected regions around the world. The appendix includes tables of characteristics (hardiness, ten-year height projections, color, etc.) for several hundred azalea and rhododendron species and hybrids.

For both the beginner and those already addicted to "these most beautiful of all plants" the chapters on propagation (seed, cuttings, layers and grafting), hybridizing and flower shows could spark the thought of starting a small nursery. To this end the book includes a remarkable chapter discussing commercial growing including the relative advantages and disadvantages of both field grown and container grown plants, information also of value in selecting plants for the home landscape.

The book includes a timely description and updating of information related to insects and diseases, in part derived from university experimental station reports.

While our methods of caring for rhododendron and azaleas may vary slightly from Mr. Reiley's we have no doubt that his methods work and will lead to "Success with Rhododendrons and Azaleas". □

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Rhododendrons and azaleas cannot tolerate strong winds and on windy sites would benefit greatly from a good windbreak. This is because reduced wind speed reduces both moisture loss from leaves and leaf damage. Preventing moisture loss is important in the summer and perhaps even more important in below-freezing temperatures. I bought this because it was cheap, plus I like Azaleas and Rhododendrons but do not have a clue about caring for them. I am also in the mode of beginning a small home based nursery business and thought I should get to know plants better. I have had only a chance to glance through this book so that why I gave it only 3 stars for now. Growing rhododendrons and azaleas. Pink rhododendron in bloom in mid-spring. Choose your site carefully: Avoid planting where strong prevailing winter winds can dry or desiccate the leaves. Rhodos need some sun for flower bud production, but they grow best if they're in shade during the sunniest part of the day, both in summer and winter. Dappled shade under pines or oaks is perfect, but avoid planting them underneath maples, which have greedy surface roots. You can also plant them in the shade cast by a north-facing fence or the north wall of your house, as long as you avoid constant heavy shade. Rhododendrons and azaleas, both from the genus *Rhododendron*, have long been mainstays of late spring because of their spectacular clusters of showy blooms plus, large green leaves that often stay green through winter. About Rhododendrons & Azaleas. The flowers are tubular-, funnel-, or bell-shaped and often fragrant. In regions with severe winters, wrap evergreen rhododendrons with burlap in the fall and apply extra mulch around the base of the shrub. Azaleas and rhododendrons may be transplanted at any time during the growing season, but they transplant most successfully during fall or early spring, when they are dormant and temperatures are cool. Pruning Rhododendron & Azaleas. Learn about the differences of Azaleas vs Rhododendrons. This quick & easy guide will help you quickly tell the two similar plants apart. Most Azaleas are deciduous, meaning they will lose their leaves in the fall. Most Rhododendrons are evergreen (keep their leaves during winter), with the exceptions of *R. mucronulatum* and *R. dauricum*. Azaleas have appressed hairs which is hair parallel to the surface of the leaf. Instead of having hair, most Rhododendrons are often scaly or have dots underneath the leaves. Azaleas also have tubular or funnel shaped flowers. Rhodi flowers are more bell shaped. Lastly, Rhododendrons have more than 10 stamens or 2 per lobe. Azaleas usually have 5 stamens per lobe, and have 5 lobes in a flower. So also rhododendrons and azaleas. But what, and when and how much? Especially in the growing season the plants need to be fertilized. New plants don't need too much fertilizer the first growing season. And if you mulch well, the mulch will provide the plants with what they need to a certain extent. Note, that overfertilizing can burn the roots which can cause diseases. So, be moderate in fertilizing; as long as the plants grow and look healthy, they don't need that much. Regularly I get questions about pruning rhododendrons and azaleas. They have grown too high or broad or gardeners want to prevent this. Moreover they grow more compact when you prune them.