

Azaleas are spectacular flowering evergreen shrubs that grow well throughout north and central Florida. During winter and spring these popular shrubs put on a display of blooms that few other ornamental shrubs can compete with. Azaleas are commonly known as sun-loving plants; however, in Brevard County where sandy, dry soils are prevalent, they should be used in shady locations, or areas with north or east exposure. Azaleas have a shallow root system that must be kept moist or plants will decline and die. Leaves of azaleas are hairy and should appear bright to dark green. They are arranged oppositely along each stem. Flowers are present during winter or spring, depending upon each variety, although some dwarf varieties may bloom throughout the year. Flowers may be single or double in form, and colors range from white to pink, lavender, orange and red, and with color combinations.

Azaleas are considered cold hardy, but have little or no tolerance to salty well water or salt spray along coastal areas. Azaleas can be used in the landscape in mass plantings, shrub borders or informal hedges. They may also be grown in clay pots or urns for use in screened patios and pool areas.

PLANTING

Azaleas require a rich, organic soil on the acid side (low in Ph) in a well-drained area. The addition of **CoirBrick Coconut Fiber Peat** to the top six inches of soil over the entire planting area is recommended for azaleas. Mix **Espoma Bio-tone Starter** in the soil to promote healthy root growth. After removing each plant from the growing container, gently "rough up" the surface of the root ball with your fingers; this encourages the roots to spread out into the wider soil area instead of remaining in the original root ball. Container-grown azaleas should be planted so that container soil level is same or slightly higher than the soil level of the area where it is to be planted. Select an area in partial shade or where it will be protected from the severe heat and exposure of the noonday and early afternoon summer sun. An organic mulch two to three inches thick should be applied over the area of azalea planting to help keep the shallow root system of the plants moist and cool. Pine bark mulch is recommended for azaleas. When applying the mulch, keep it a couple of inches away from the base of each plant. Water newly planted azaleas daily the first week, then every two or three days thereafter; be sure that the water is safe to use on Azaleas, i.e. minimally low in salt content.

Rhododendron spp

FERTILIZING

Azaleas should be fertilized two to three times during the growing season. Use **Espoma Holly-Tone**, applying late spring after blooming, and then again mid-summer and early fall. Use one-half to two cups of fertilizer per plant, depending upon size of plant, distributing lightly over the entire root zone of the azalea planting area. Supplemental applications of **Miracid**, water soluble fertilizer, may be spray-applied to the plant if iron chlorosis or yellowing of the leaves is a problem.

PRUNING

Azaleas should be pruned to shape only once each year. Pruning should be done when azaleas have finished their heavy blooming in spring. Follow the pruning immediately with fertilizing. *Azaleas form their buds in summer and fall, so pruning anytime but spring would sacrifice the new buds and greatly reduce the next spring flowering.*

Leaf spot disease: Small dark spots appear on leaves; this is a fungus usually caused by excessive moisture.

Powdery Mildew: A powdery, whitish film that appears to cover the surface of the leaves.

Solution: Spray with a **copper fungicide** applying at the proper rate as directed. Alter watering practices so as not to keep foliage damp at night.

Spider Mites: Sucking-type pests that remove plant juices through the underside of the leaves, discoloring and 'bleaching' the leaves. Heavy infestations will cause decline of plants.

Solution: Spray with **Pyrethrin**, applying at the proper rate as directed.



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Azalea Varieties, some of the more popular for Brevard County

<u>Variety Name</u>	<u>Flower Size</u>	<u>Bloom color</u>	<u>Plant size</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Aaron White	2" sng	White w/red flakes	3-4'	intermittent bloomer
Alaska White	2" dbl	White	3-4'	blooms vigorously
Celestine	2 1/2"	Red	2-3'	very good bloomer
Duc De Rohan	2 1/2" sng	Salmon-Pink	3-4'	mid-season flowering
Duchess of Cypress	2 1/2" sng	Pink-Salmon throat	3-4'	mid-season flowering
Fashion	2" dbl	Dark Salmon-Pink	3-4'	blooms vigorously
Formosa, Lav	3 1/2" sng	Lavender	4-6'	early to mid-season bloom
Formosa, Red	3 1/2" sng	Burgundy-Red	4-6'	mid-season bloomer
George Taber	3 1/2" sng	Light Pink w/dark throat	4-6'	mid-season bloomer
Happy Days	2 1/2" dbl	Dark Lavender	3-4'	blooms vigorously
Little John	3 1/2' sng	Burgundy-Red	3-4'	compact red foliage
Madonna White	3 1/2" dbl	White	2-3'	dense large foliage
Midnight Flare	2 1/2" sng	Burgundy Red	3-4'	mid-season bloomer
Pink Ruffle	2 1/2" dbl	Pink	4-6'	fall to spring bloomer
Red Ruffle	3" ruff sng	Red	2-3'	blooms vigorously
Southern Charm	3 1/2" sng	Pink	4-6'	mid-season flowering
Tomano Hada	6 " sng	Pink-Dark Pink	4-6'	spring
Triple Red	2 1/2" trip	Red	3-4'	blooms vigorously
Wakaebisu	3" sng	Rich Pink	2-3'	blooms vigorously
White Duc	2 1/2" sng	White	3-4'	mid-season flowering
White Gerbing	3 1/2" sng	White	4-6'	mid-season flowering