

Azaleas, Boxwood & Rhododendrons

Growing Tips



Planting

To be successful with rhododendrons, azaleas, holly, and boxwood heavy soils must be conditioned with: perlite, compost, and peat moss. Begin by digging a hole, a minimum of 24" across and at least 24" deep. These plants demand a soil that drains readily. Un-amended soils deprive the roots of air and retain excessive moisture. A good mixture of ¼ perlite, ¼ cotton burr compost, ¼ peat moss, and ¼ topsoil makes an excellent planting site. When planting use Superthrive two times about 10 days apart. Soil sulfur, coppers, or aluminum sulfate will help make the soil more acidic and more suited for these plants.

Location

The best planting location for these plants is an east facing exposure. Rhododendrons and azaleas prefer some shade, especially in the hot afternoon. A good 2" layer of wood mulch will keep the roots cooler in the summer. Keep the mulch 4" back from the stems.

Azaleas

Azaleas are in the same family as rhododendron. One way to tell them apart is that azaleas generally have smaller leaves and are often deciduous. Spent blooms should be removed to prevent seed formation. Prune if necessary immediately after blooming. Azaleas bloom all shades of red, pink, orange, lavender, yellow, white, and bicolor. Some are fragrant. Azaleas usually bloom for two weeks. Some start in April and others may bloom through June and July. The foliage is often purple, orange, or red before dropping in late fall.

Rhododendrons

Rhododendrons come in nearly all colors and also bloom for about two weeks. Many are the first color in the spring garden. Sizes from dwarf to giant are available. The cold hardiness, just as with azaleas will vary, so choose the ones best compatible with your zone.

Boxwoods

Boxwoods are considered the 'Aristocrat' of broadleaf evergreens. It lends itself to foundation plantings, hedges or in mixed bed sites. Boxwoods are easily maintained at desired height with minimal pruning. The best location is morning sun protected from hot afternoon exposure.

They are extremely adaptive and can perform in full sun if the planting site is amended. A soil inhabiting fungus, phytophthora, may cause death to the plant in an over watered or poorly drained site. Avoid rock mulch around boxwood. Several hardy varieties are available at the garden center. Spray Wilt Pruf in mid-December and mid-January to prevent winter burn from the sun and the wind. This is imperative for plants in exposed sites.

Fertilizing

Yearly applications of Fertilome Tree & Shrub Food will supply the plants with a balanced feeding embellished with sulfur, boron, copper, iron, manganese, and zinc for plant health. An organic fertilizer alternative is Dr. Earth's Acid-Lover's Fertilizer.



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