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# "Out of Season" Azaleas

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With proper selection, care and cooperation by Mother Nature, you can enjoy flowering azaleas in your landscape on the Fourth of July and Christmas Day! [In the Dallas, Texas, area, ed.] The spectacular display of azalea color in the spring fosters a human association that often turns to disbelief when the fall blooming azaleas have an exceptionally good year. My criterion for "out of season" is the months other than March, April and May. My laboratory is the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Society's (DABS) Johsson Color Garden and Palmer Fern Dell which are very young gardens, opening to the public in the spring of 1990, featuring over 2,000 cultivated varieties of azaleas. A history of the DABS azalea planting can be gleaned from the September 1991 issue of THE AZALEAN. This article's focus, however, is extending the azalea blooming season beyond spring.

The DABS azaleas are pampered. They are tended by professional horticulturists. An acid-injected irrigation system lowers the water supply's pH, which often is over nine, sustaining moisture levels at a slightly acid pH during dry weather. The azaleas are planted in raised beds of 60% fine pine bark and 40% chunky grade peat moss for proper drainage and moisture retention. Fertilization, disease control, and grooming are administered effectively. Insect pest control has not been a need to date. The plants are given what they require to maintain vigor and have been able to survive two harsh early winter freezes, one to -1 degree, with little to no "hardening off." Total losses of the 2,000+ varieties have been estimated at 3%, with Southern Indian varieties 'Jennifer', 'Kate Arendall', 'Mardi Gras', 'President Claeys' and 'Pride of Mobile' thriving. 'Judge Solomon', which is often thought to be relatively winter tender, has liked its environment.

A summer storm in 1989 uprooted or badly damaged a significant number of trees that were originally conceived as shading requirements in the gardens' design. Naud Burnett II, the landscape architect responsible for the design of the garden, decided to plant azaleas in areas as originally planned regardless of shade or the lack of it. A significant number of Satsukis, for example, can be found exposed to the western sun. The increase in sunlight has resulted, in many cases, in tight compact plants that flower more heavily than their counterparts in more shade.

With that introduction, I will share some of my notes with you. The "out of season" notables listed below have been viewed from February 1990 until February 1992. I am presenting only the highlights of notable flower bloom. Significant fall-flowering cultivated varieties such as 'Dorsett' and 'Opal' are not planted in the gardens. 'Indian Summer' bloomed extensively, but my notes are somewhat lacking because the plant was not tagged by name and I didn't discover its identity until late in the viewing period.

## February 1990, 1991, and 1992

'Festive'  
'Vittata Fortunei'

## June 1990 and 1991

'Macrantha Orange'  
'Sonoma Dwarf Pink'  
'Beth Bullard'  
'Sir Robert'  
'Vermillion'  
'Pink Pancake'

## Summer 1990

'R. oldhamii' (16 weeks) heavy bloom

## Summer 1991

R. oldhamii (16 weeks sporadic light bloom)  
'Narihira' (June 30-November 2) heavy bloom  
'Abbot' (7-gallon cans, full sun, 16 weeks, leaves yellow)

## September 1, 1991 - November 2, 1991

Huang 4-7-13  
Huang 4-6-71  
'Lady Louise'  
'Baton Rouge'  
'Glamour'  
'Pink Cloud'  
'Gratitude'  
'Ho Oden'  
'Choyo No Hikari'

## September 28, 1991 -

November 2, 1991

Huang 3-5-72  
'Oakton'  
'Keepsake'  
'Gartrell 230-3'  
'Cille Shaw'  
'Cherie'  
'Sekidera'  
'Copperman'  
'Dayspring'  
'Dorothy Clark' (solid blooms - no picotee)  
'Hoko'  
'Kayo No Homare'  
'Wakaebisu' (full sun)  
'Rusty' (flowers bleach in full sun)

## November 7, 1991 - January 15, 1992

'Dayspring'  
'Vittata Fortunei'

'Vittata Purple'  
'Red Slippers' (continually  
increasing show)

December 1991  
'Sherbrook'

Freezing weather in early November 1991 eliminated open blooms in the gardens and caused bud damage to the flowers of some varieties in the spring of 1992. 'Dayspring' erupted in color with a vengeance following the November freeze. January 15, 1992 was the first freeze of 1992, reaching 20 degrees F.

Some initial observations are worthy of note. The quantity of fall flowering is positively influenced by increasing sun exposure of the plants to sun. The relatively cool weather of fall and winter extends the life of azalea flowers. 'Narihira' bloomed profusely in full sun through the heat of the summer. 'Abbot' flowered heavily in heat, but the leaves looked stressed and yellow. Observations in Dallas will not totally agree with observations in other parts of the United States. I am finding different forms of flowers as well as growth habits on like named plants which are very familiar to friends in the deep south and northeast.

Azalea enthusiasts in chapters east of Texas will please excuse my exuberance, because until 1990 Dallasites enjoyed 30 or so varieties that bloomed heavily in spring, never appreciating the color in the three other seasons that can be achieved with selection, care and a little help from Mother Nature. Azalea plantings become much more enjoyable if planted for year round interest rather than just for the spring show.

*Steve Brainerd is a landscape contractor and President of the Dallas Chapter of the Azalea Society of America.*

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## Prize for Best Article in THE AZALEAN—1991

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In 1990 an annual prize for best article in THE AZALEAN was announced. The prize was established to encourage authors to submit articles for publication in THE AZALEAN. Funds for the prize were donated by five chapters:

Ben Morrison Chapter  
Brookside Gardens Chapter  
Northern Virginia Chapter  
Richmond, Virginia Chapter  
Tri-State Chapter

Interest from the prize fund is used to provide an annual prize of \$100.00. The prize for 1990 was awarded to Ajit K. Thakur, Ph.D. for his article "The Enchanting Satsuki".

A ballot listing all articles in 1991 issues of THE AZALEAN is included with this issue. Please mark your ballot and mail it to:

AZALEAN Prize Article  
P. O. Box 585  
Glenn Dale, MD 20769

The prize for 1991 will be presented at the 1993 Annual Meeting, to be held in Dallas, TX. □

## ≡ Azalea News ≡

North American Plant Preservation  
Council

The North American Plant Preservation Council (NAPPC) is a non-profit organization comprising of some of the most well known and respected names in horticulture today.

It is modeled after the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens at Wisley, England, and has been formed with their assistance.

The NAPPC goals are to:

- (1) Encourage the conservation of uncommon plants that are valuable because of their historic, aesthetic, scientific or educational value by propagating and distributing them as widely as possible.
- (2) List plants held in important collections and gardens.
- (3) Stimulate the widest possible cultivation of uncommon and endangered plants by arranging conferences, exhibitions, discussions and visits to gardens, specialized plant collections and nurseries.
- (4) Encourage the re-introduction and distribution of uncommon and endangered plants.
- (5) Establish and support National Collections of specific genera and other defined collections of plants for the enjoyment and information of the public and the benefit of science.

The Council seeks inquiries from those parties both private and institutional including botanical gardens, arboreta, colleges and nurseries who are interested in holding "National Collections." A guide will be published listing those collections.

For more information and application form write:

North American Plant  
Preservation Council  
Route 5  
Renick, WV 24966 □