cover, it reduces moisture loss. I have seen cold frames made from boards, cinder block, and all kinds of materials. Mine are made of outdoor plywood, 4 x 8 x 2 feet deep with one foot being underground. They are covered with old windows with the glass painted white to reduce overheating from direct sun, but I have also used wood frames with heavy plastic sheeting as covers. Sometime in December I cover the cold frames for the winter and don't open them again until March or April. I check periodically to see if any watering is needed.

Conclusion

The method for propagating azaleas at home is not complicated, and by following a few simple procedures you can obtain a high level of success. The process presented here can be adjusted to produce just a few plants or hundreds. An ending word of caution: friends who have used these instructions have gone from yards of a few azaleas to yards of many hundreds, and they are still propagating. A restrained approach to propagation is a good idea.

Comments

(1) I buy many supplies in bulk from Mellinger's Inc. of North Lima, Ohio.

(2) The best pen I have found is the "Nursery Marking Pen."

(3) My mix is the result of combining suggestions from a number of growers.

Selecting, Planting and Caring For Azaleas

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Azaleas are beautiful as small trees, shrubs and ground covers, capturing the interest of many new gardeners as well as new azalea enthusiasts. The requirements for planting and caring for azaleas are well documented by many fine references including Fred Galle's book, *Azaleas*[1], which is recommended reading for anyone with more than a passing interest in these plants. The focus of this article is to give the new azalea enthusiast a quick start approach which will enhance success and enjoyment in selecting, planting and caring for azaleas.

As with any worthwhile endeavor, preparation is a key to success. If a significant number of azaleas is contemplated for planting, then it is best to begin the process with a landscape design which comprehensively addresses plant, architectural and climatic relationships at the site with human requirements. If the azalea planting is limited in scope, then an appreciation of the geographical climate zone may be the logical first step.

Many azalea varieties are adapted to broad geographical areas in the United States. The hardiness zone map published by the United State Department of Agriculture divides the United States into temperature zones designated from 3 in the North to 10 in the South. A tropical azalea requiring a hardiness zone 10 may not tolerate freezing weather. Conversely, many cold-tolerant azaleas will not be happy with the hot, dry summers typical of the southwestern United States. Viewing established plants in the locale where planting is desired is a good start. A visit to a local arboretum is usually helpful. Contact reputable local nurseries to see what varieties are available for purchase. If a local nursery specializes in azaleas, you have probably found the best source for advice and direction in plant selection. Mail-order companies are excellent sources for unusual varieties, but be sure to verify the recommended hardiness zone for each purchased plant. *Azaleas* has a hardiness zone map, hardiness zone recommendations for thousands of azalea varieties and lists of regional azalea favorites.

The planting site is very important. It is useful for beginners to think of azaleas as woodland plants. Some characteristics of woodlands are frequent rainfall, overhead protection of shrubs and small trees by the larger canopy trees, relative wind protection (as opposed to open prairies), and acid, well drained soils which have a humus built up from years of leaf and tree decay. By imitating nature's woodland sites, the success of azalea plantings will be enhanced. Most planting sites have microclimates. In the United States, north- and east-facing building exposures will generally afford azaleas protection from the sun as do the canopy trees of the woodlands. Too much shading, however, restricts photosynthesis, in turn reducing blooming and proper plant growth. Azaleas must be planted in well drained, acidic soil. Leaf mold and decaying organic matter provide a rich well drained growing medium for woodland plants. The gardener can duplicate nature's soil with materials such as peat moss, leaf mold, compost or pine bark. Highly alkaline clay soils may require complete replacement with a well drained, loose, acidic soil mix. One technique is to build beds on existing

1 Galle, Fred C. *Azaleas*. Timber Press, 1985. Portland, Oregon.