

AZALEA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

NEW MEMBERS

In the last issue of **THE AZALEAN**, Azalea Questions and Answers Section, there was a question of growing azaleas in Oneonta, New York. The answer was somewhat non-committal and in the interests of our publication being fully responsive to the readers, I should like to submit some helpful and constructive information.

I spent most of my childhood in the Susquehanna River Valley, just a few miles from Oneonta and know the area very intimately. I would therefore like to submit the following as an adjunct to the response made in the above reference:

Answer: Yes, you can grow azaleas nicely in the Oneonta area. There are native species of azaleas that grow there very well. They are known locally in your area as Pinksters. In actuality, the species name is Rhododendron prinophyllum (or earlier known as R. roseum). This species is a very choice plant and is widely sought by growers in other areas. Unfortunately it is rarely found, except in the better nurseries and gardens. It is about the most fragrant of all azaleas, and is hardy up into the Adirondack Mountains.

Another species that will grow very well in your area is R. calendulaceum. In fact a plant of this species has grown in the area just south of Oneonta for well over 50 years and is now at least 10 feet tall, with bright yellow flowers. The University of Minnesota has developed several extremely hardy hybrids, known collectively as the Northern Lights Series. They include cultivars with names such as Pink Lights, Rosy Lights, Spicy Lights, and White Lights. All the above are deciduous azaleas and most of them are found in a catalog of a nursery on Long Island [Roslyn Nursery, see ad this issue, ed].

There are a few evergreen azaleas that you might try, but which may be marginally hardy for you. The above nursery lists one named 'Pink Discovery,' that was found in some plants of R. poukhanense, which is listed for -25 F. You might also like to experiment with R. kiusianum, which survived and even flowered in the writer's garden at -19 F, the only evergreen azalea to do so. You could protect such evergreen azaleas somewhat by covering them in early winter by pine boughs. With such protection it is probable you could enjoy flowers for most seasons.

You are encouraged to experiment with species and hybrids of azaleas and help the Society to enlarge the knowledge of growing these beautiful plants in very cold areas.

I hope the above will be useful.

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