

AZALEA QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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AT-LARGE 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.

August E. Kehr, Ph.D.
Hendersonville, North Carolina

FRANK & JAN ABBOTT
THE RHODY FARM
36706 212TH WAY SE
AUBURN, WA 98002
PHONE: (206) 939-0372

STEVE & LYNN ANDERSON
7001 NORTH 10TH STREET
TACOMA, WA 98406
PHONE: (206) 756-7016

DIANE & CECIL BELL
THE RHODODENDRON GARDEN
30807 50TH PLACE SW
FEDERAL WAY, WA 98023-2008
PHONE: (206) 927-3081

CHARLES BORSOM
462 DALE DRIVE
P O BOX 284
BASYS, VA 22810
PHONE: (540) 856-2086

GERTRUDE BRENDEN
2525 112TH STREET E
TACOMA, WA 98445
PHONE: (206) 531-8497

DONALD & LENNIE BUTLER
2609 CINCINNATI
STEILACOOM, WA 98388
PHONE: (206) 582-8066

JAN & ELDON BUTLER
13021 MILITARY ROAD E
PUYALLUP, WA 98374
PHONE: (206) 848-8398

JOANNE & DAN CAMPBELL
5201 GIFFORD ROAD SW
OLYMPIA, WA 98502
PHONE: (360) 352-5150

PAULINE CASIO
19501 94TH STREET E
BONNIE LAKE, WA 98390

JAMES CHERTAUT
10601 125TH STREET E
PUYALLUP, WA 98374
PHONE: (206) 841-2753

DONALD & JEAN CLARK
D & J RHODIES
18008 MOUNTS ROAD SW
DUPONT, WA 98327
PHONE: (206) 964-0530

POLO DE LORENZO
3970 AZALEA AVENUE
SEBASTOPOL, CA 95472
PHONE: (707) 823-6832