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## CULTURAL NOTES

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### Recommendations by Arthur and Anita Frazer

*Reprinted by permission of Anita Frazer. Anita and her late husband, Dr. Arthur Frazer, operated Columbia Nursery near Mount Vernon, Virginia, and published the following information in their newsletter "AZALEAS" in Spring 1969 and Spring 1970.*

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### Feeding Azaleas

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It is not essential to fertilize azaleas, especially older plants, if they are growing well and appear vigorous. However, they respond well to a light application of fertilizer.

We feed all our azaleas once a year, because we are naturally interested in promoting strong, vigorous, well formed plants for our customers.

We fertilize in early spring—the earlier the better, because we want to stimulate that first flush of growth that usually begins early in April. This is usually before blossom time. However, don't assume that this promotes this year's blossoms. They were formed and developed in mid-summer and early fall last year—and the vigor of bloom depends primarily upon favorable conditions then (and the severity of the winter) rather than upon anything you do this spring.

If the urgency of other chores delayed your schedule, you can fertilize anytime up to the first of June. Avoid fertilizing later for reasons fully explained in the section on winter damage. [See September 1996 issue of **THE AZALEAN**, ed.]

Use only an acid type fertilizer because azaleas do not tolerate alkaline soil conditions. They are especially sensitive to nitrate of soda such as is used in the ordinary garden type 5-10-5 or lawn type 10-6-4 fertilizers. We use a combination of ammonium sulphate (20-0-0) and superphosphate (0-20-0). But where you have only a limited number of azaleas, hollies, camellias, conifers and other acid-loving evergreens, it is more practical to buy a ready mix such as "Holly-Tone" or "Rhodo-Azalea Food".

In any event use no more than one-half measuring cup per large plant and one-fourth cup on a small to medium size plant. Sprinkle it under the plant in a circle from the stem outward, six inches radius for small plants, up to 12 inches radius for large plants. Do not attempt to scratch in the fertilizer. You will inevitably damage the delicate hair roots which lie just beneath the surface.

For the uncompromising "organic" gardener, the Urea-Form fertilizers, especially "Uramite," are good sources of organic slow-acting nitrogen, but care must be taken to avoid over-fertilizing. Cottonseed meal is excellent—but very expensive, and should be supplemented with raw rock phosphate. Do not use bone meal on azaleas.

(We confess to being oriented toward the benefits of organic gardening, and we religiously plow all sorts of organic material—leaves, sawdust, grass clippings, etc.—back into our nursery and garden. We are delighted with the obvious results of such soil conditioning. But we do not use organic fertilizers. First, economic considerations prohibit. Second, our experiments a few years back convinced us that it wasn't worthwhile. We still use bone meal on our bulbs, tubers and peonies—but there we draw the line.)

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### Transplanting Your Azaleas

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Many of our customers and friends inquire about the feasibility and technique for transplanting their azaleas that have outgrown their space—and become overcrowded. This is a very common situation especially where young small azaleas were originally planted close together for immediate effect.

In our travels we see many, many examples of overcrowded azaleas, other shrubs—and even trees, for the above reason. We have a few such bad examples which we inherited with our own property—and we are gradually thinning them out. Azaleas, other shrubs and trees must get adequate light and air to thrive, and to develop their natural shapely beauty.

(Understand we are not opposed to planting small young azaleas and other shrubs closer together to avoid a sparse looking landscape. In fact we recommend such procedure. A three- to five-year-old azalea is usually less than one-fourth its mature size, and would admittedly look puny for three to four years if set three to four feet from another small plant. So we always suggest what we believe is an ideal solution. When buying young small azaleas plan to set them out on 18-to-24 inch centers, measuring from the main stem of one plant to the other. Then in about three to four years lift out every other azalea and start a new planting with the ones being moved. In that fashion you get the benefit of immediate landscape effect—plus a group of azaleas with which to landscape another area.)

Depending on whether you are striving for mass effect, or for individual specimens, mature azaleas should be located between three and five feet apart (measuring stem to stem). We prefer the mass effect of several azaleas of the same variety in one group—usually on three- or four-foot centers. But remember that a wide spreading azalea (several of this type)

or an especially vigorous grower may thrive best — and look better — on a five-foot center.

Although judicious pruning is occasionally desirable—see earlier discussion—heavy regular pruning to correct overcrowding is definitely the wrong solution. Ditto for heavy shearing to keep azaleas within bounds, or to keep them below window sill levels. Transplant them instead.

Azaleas because of their compact root structure, may be transplanted any time of the year with complete safety. The best time is early fall, the next best is during the spring.

Be very careful not to plant the rootball too deep. This is a very frequent, but understandable mistake. Azaleas are surface rooted and will sulk, and possibly die, if the small network of fine surface roots are more than an inch or so below the soil surface. Replant so that the top of the root-ball is level with the surrounding soil. Better yet, when you transplant carefully check, your fingers to see if the accumulation of surface soil has buried the surface roots too deep. They should be no more than one to two inches below the surface. If more, gently remove the excess soil to the proper level.

In digging cut a circle clear around the rootball, with the spade pointed straight down. DO not undercut. For a medium size plant a 15- to 20-inch circle is adequate; for large plants, about two feet. After cutting the circle—the full depth of the spade, use the spade as a lever to break the rootball loose from the soil. Be careful—do not break the rootball, or you'll produce transplant shock.

After transplanting mulch heavily—two to three inches with sawdust, tan bark, leaves, peat moss, or other mulch. And water conscientiously. □

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## IN MEMORY

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### GLENN TAYLOR

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Glenn Taylor, 1911-1997. The Northern Virginia Chapter has lost one of its founding members in the recent death of Glenn Taylor.

Early in 1980, Glenn and Art Vance, who were in the Chrysanthemum Society together, learned of an offer by Frank White to supply cuttings of all the Robin Hill and Linwood azaleas to anyone who would agree to grow the complete collection of these azaleas. Both Glenn and Art were fond of azaleas and decided to form the azalea chapter, starting by growing these azaleas. The chapter was chartered in May of 1980 with 12 charter (founding) members.

During his long membership in the Society, Glenn served as national treasurer of the Azalea Society of America for approximately 11 years. He also served as president of the Northern Virginia Chapter for two elected terms, and a third term (reluctantly) when no one else volunteered. As Convention Committee Chairman, he successfully managed the preparation for the hosting of the national convention in May of 1990 by the Northern Virginia Chapter.

Glenn thoroughly enjoyed propagating and growing many varieties of azaleas as they came along. Although he was not too interested in hybridizing, his efforts in this direction did produce one beautiful plant that he appropriately named 'Marj T' for his wife. All those in attendance at the convention in 1990 received a potted plant of 'Marj T' to take home. He represented the chapter at many cultural meetings by giving demonstrations on rooting azaleas.

Glenn enjoyed meeting people, and he attended all but the last two national conventions. He and his wife, Marj, worked as a team to further the cause of the Azalea Society. He could always be counted upon to do more than his share of the chapter work, but due to health reasons, he was not able to be active these last two years. Glenn and Marj were married for 64 years.

At the 1996 Annual Meeting and Convention in 1996, it was announced that Glenn and Marjorie Taylor were to receive the honor of being awarded the Society's Distinguished Service Award (*THE AZALEAN*, June 1996, p. 38).

Glenn Taylor's notable contributions are a great credit to the Azalea Society of America, and, in particular, the Northern Virginia Chapter of the Society. *Contributed by Frances Louer.*

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### BRYANT EDWARD JENKINS

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The many friends of Margie Jenkins were saddened by the death of her husband, Bryant. Bryant died at home January 2, 1997, following a prolonged battle with lung cancer. He was 70 years old. Margie and Bryant had been married 50 years. Together with their children they established Jenkins Farm and Nursery which wholesales azaleas and other plants throughout the southern states. In 1992, the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen gave Margie and Bryant their Nurseryman of the year award. Bryant was also recognized as an outstanding forester in Louisiana and was a leader in the Louisiana Forestry Association. *Contributed by Robert Miravalle.* □