

# 'FASHION'—AN AZALEA FOR ALL SEASONS

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*F*ashion' is an evergreen azalea which provides the gardener with four seasons of interest and utility—spring, summer, fall and winter. Unlike the early-blooming azaleas which burst forth in color while vulnerable to a late freeze, 'Fashion' generally waits until the chance of a freeze has passed to completely cloak its foliage in deep yellowish pink flowers. The flowers yield to a deep green foliage in spring and summer which serves well as a background planting to highlight color.

During the fall when deciduous plants' leaves change in color, 'Fashion' provides a rich reddish bronze foliage when planted in direct sunlight. The winter foliage is muted when compared to the fall but attractive when contrasted with other evergreens in the garden. 'Fashion' provides continually changing displays in rhythm with the seasons.

Although azaleas are best known for their spring show, an unheralded benefit to azalea plantings is the richness of their fall and winter foliage. 'Fashion' is one of the best fall performing azaleas, often lightly blooming with flowers after the arrival of the first cool days of fall and displaying foliage which turns a rich reddish bronze if given sufficient sunlight. The bronzing of the leaves in sunlight is a trait of red and pink flowered azaleas which can be enjoyed for six months of the year. 'Fashion' provides some of the richest leaf bronzing of any widely available azalea in the market today.

Many retail nurseries will not stock azaleas in the fall because their sales volume occurs with flowering in the spring. Retail nurseries which also sell wholesale to landscape contractors are a good source for azaleas throughout the year. When observing variations in leaf color, make sure that the azaleas are getting direct sunlight during a portion of the day. A very effective method in designing azalea plantings is to begin with fall leaf color and refine the design by secondarily selecting the spring flower color. 'Fashion' can be planted next to white flowered azaleas to highlight the contrasts of the leaves. White-flowered evergreen azalea foliage retains its green color throughout the fall and winter. By mixing different textures (different leaf sizes) such as 'Fashion' and 'Mrs. G. G. Gerbing', plantings have enhanced interest combining color and textural contrasts. Azalea leaves are produced in the spring and the summer. The spring leaf is more delicate and a lighter green when compared to the summer leaf. Because the spring leaf is produced first, it is somewhat hidden on the plant by the summer leaf which is produced last.

All evergreen azaleas lose a percentage of their leaves in the fall, some a greater percentage than others. With the onset of fall, the spring leaf dramatically changes in color to the yellows of the white-flowered azaleas to the oranges, reds and bronzes of the pink and red flowered azaleas. Many gardeners assume that there is stress on the plants as the leaves turn color and droop, when in fact it is a very natural process, providing a beautiful palette of color for the fall garden designer. The summer leaf provides the evergreen quality of the winter azalea. During late fall and winter, 'Fashion' when planted in sunlight, assumes its deep bronze leaf coloration. The bronze color is particularly striking when planted next to light green leaves. In the spring the bronze color may appear to be almost black in some light conditions when displayed

next to an earlier flowering white azalea in full bloom. The color variation of a well designed, diverse planting of azaleas will provide months of cool season enjoyment for the discriminating gardener, particularly a planting that contrasts the dark foliage and fine texture of 'Fashion' with the light foliage, light flowers, and bold texture of its companion plants.

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## Back Issues of THE AZALEAN

The Board of Directors has decided back issues of **THE AZALEAN** are to be available as *complete sets* at **bargain prices**. Details will be announced in the September issue. This is an opportunity for members, new and old to obtain their own copies of the journal of the Society back to its beginning in 1979. These issues are a great source of information for growers, landscapers, and nurserymen to say nothing about their importance to those of us who love azaleas.

## Chapter Membership—Danger Ahead?

*Reprinted from THE AZALEA CLIPPER, the Newsletter of the Northern Virginia Chapter*

Just a few years ago, our Northern Virginia Chapter had 110 members. This number has decreased each year and it is now down to about 65 members. We have added new members over this period, but not enough to make up for the loss. Most of the loss has been due to non-renewal of membership by many former members.

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