

# A Few Forgotten Indians

William McDavit — Sunset Beach, North Carolina

Over the course of 11 years we've managed to collect a number of Southern Indian (Southern Indica) azaleas. Undoubtedly the most popular azaleas grown in Zones 8-9 in the South are the following Southern Indica azalea hybrids: 'Formosa', 'George Lindley Taber', 'Elegans Superba' (also known as 'Pride of Mobile' or 'Watermelon Pink'), 'Daphne Salmon' (also known as 'Lawsal' or 'Pride of Summerville'), 'Judge Solomon', 'Mrs. G.G. Gerbing', 'President Claeys' (syn. 'President Clay'). Some of the old timers in the South, affectionately, call this the Formosa Group. The Formosa Group makes up a very high percentage of total commercial azalea sales in the South.

This group of large-leaf varieties blooms with a floriferous display that is difficult to match. As a group, they cover the spectrum of azalea colors

we have learned to admire. They are fast growers and can gain heights of 10-12 feet without being leggy. They not only survive the summer heat and humidity of the Deep South, but also are extremely drought hardy. 'Red Ruffles', a Brooks-Southern Indica cross, is an exception to the height rule, but belongs in the Formosa Group, otherwise. This low-growing, ruffled, brilliant red flowering variety blooms with the Formosa Group, and is very popular in the South as a border plant.

What more could you want? Well, there need to be more, and that's the rub. All varieties in the Formosa Group bloom at the same time, basically. There are many other Southern Indicas that could take up the slack before and after the Formosa Group display. They have two shortcomings, as seen by nurserymen, landscapers,

and homeowners, alike: They don't grow as fast or get as tall as the Formosa Group. Consequently, the commercial nurseries and landscapers do not get as many requests for these others, and so do not handle the remainder of the Southern Indicas with any consistency. That being the case, the availability of the remainder of the hybrid group is sparse, at best. As an example, we could have purchased any, or all, of the Formosa Group at one commercial nursery, at the same time. To acquire the rest of our present Southern Indica collection, however, entailed a few years of searching and visits to many different nurseries in seven states. At this point, I would like to thank Mr. Michael G. Reeves of Temple Terrace, Florida, for his generous donation of two of the most difficult-to-find Southern Indicas: 'Early Lavender' and 'Early Red.'

## Gender of Azalea Names in Latin Form

Jay W. Murray

At one time, the plants we know as azaleas were considered to be in a separate genus, the genus *Azalea*. Names in Latin form were treated as feminine in gender. More detailed study led taxonomists to abandon the designation "genus *Azalea*," and to place the plants within genus *Rhododendron* where names in Latin form are treated as neuter.

Article 30.2 of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants—1995* states, "When a cultivar or cultivar-group epithet in Latin form is transferred to a genus with another gender, the gender of the epithet is changed to agree with that of the new genus." (The meaning of the term "cultivar epithet" as used in the Code is "the defining part of a name that denotes a cultivar.")

The International Rhododendron Register, in which all registered cultivar names are recorded for genus *Rhododendron*, is governed by the rules of the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants*. Therefore, names such as 'Formosa', 'Indica Alba', 'Rosea', and 'Rubra Multiflora' that were formerly included in the abandoned genus *Azalea*, are now known as 'Formosum', 'Indicum Album', 'Roseum', and 'Rubrum Multiflorum', respectively.

It should be noted that gender corrections apply also to species names, governed by the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature*. For example, the former *A. indica* and *A. mucronata* are now known as *R. indicum* and *R. mucronatum*, respectively.

### Reference:

Trehane, P., Brickell, C.D., Baum, B.R., Hetterscheid, W.L.A., Leslie, A.C., McNeill, J., Spongberg, S.A., and Vrugtman, F. (eds.). 1995. *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants*. Adopted by the IUBS (International Union of Biological Sciences) Commission for the Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants. Regnum Vegetabile 133. Wimborne, UK.: Quarterjack Publishing.

There are many other spectacular Southern Indica hybrids that don't qualify for the Formosa Group. Here I shall describe my feelings about a few of these in the so-called "separatist group."

**'Cavendishi'**—A low-growing, fast-spreading plant with huge purplish pink flowers, with white borders and red stripes. It has very large dark green leaves with good color continuity through the cold months. This Southern Indica blooms about two weeks after the Formosa Group, and draws much attention from the public when in bloom.

**'Duc de Rohan'**—A medium-height fast-spreading azalea with reddish orange flowers, that blooms slightly before the Formosa Group.

**'Duchess of Cypress'**—A sport of 'Duc de Rohan' that is white with a salmon blush. The two bloom and fit well together in the landscape.

**'Early Lavender'**—An early blooming, low growing, lavender flowering variety that blooms three to four weeks before the Formosa Group. It's a pleasure to have this plant in our garden.

**'Early Red'**—Another early bloomer, growing low and spreading, with scarlet red flowers, which blooms just before 'Early Lavender'. It deserves more visibility.

**'Fielder's White'**—A very nice large white flower with a green blotch. This medium height plant blooms slightly after the Formosa Group.

**'Gervin Pink'**—This medium growing plant with light pink 3-1/2-inch flowers blooms a few weeks after the Formosa Group.

**'Pride of Dorking'**—This medium growing compact plant with its brilliant red 3-inch flowers blooms two to three weeks after the Formosa Group. This hybrid happens to be the writer's favorite Southern Indica.

**'Ray's Rubra'**—An upright compact variety with deep purplish red flowers that blooms a week after the Formosa Group.



The large open blooms of the old Southern Indians are illustrated here by 'Early Lavender', which is probably a cross of 'Mucronatum' with *R. simsii*.  
(Photo by William McDavit.)

**'Sablanchalata'**—A low growing spreading plant with bright reddish orange 3-1/2-inch flowers that blooms in late May at Azalea Sunset.

**'Thompson Rosea'**—An upright floriferous hybrid having strong purplish red double 2- to 3-inch flowers. It blooms a week or two after the Formosa Group. This plant is a must in the southern landscape.

**'William Bull'**—A strong low-growing spreading variety with reddish or-

ange rosebud double 2-inch flowers. This plant blooms about a month after the Formosa Group. It makes a great driveway or walkway border plant.

Fred Galle's *Azaleas* book lists many more Southern Indicas than I've shown. Some bloom with the Formosa Group and others do not. We have hopes of acquiring more of these other varieties in our continuing southern travels. All of them enhance the beauty of any southern garden throughout the year.

*Bill McDavit is a retired electrical design specialist from the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC. He and his wife of 32 years, Mary, lived in Oxon Hill, Maryland, before settling into Sunset Beach, North Carolina, in 1988. They collect rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, and iris species and varieties. Their 3/4-acre garden and nursery, called "Azalea Sunset," serves as a site for in-ground evaluation. Bill lectures on what*

*he's learned about how to extend the bloom season to audiences fortunate enough to receive occasional potted samples.*