

Overview

All rhodies and azaleas are members of the genus Rhododendron. Azaleas differ from rhododendrons in that they can be evergreen or deciduous, while most rhodies are evergreen. They tend to have smaller leaves and flower clusters, as opposed to the larger flower trusses of rhododendrons. Azaleas usually have 5-lobed flowers with 1 stamen per lobe, as opposed to rhododendrons, which have 2 stamens per lobe. Other technical points that distinguish azaleas from rhododendrons are best left to those with microscopes.

While there can be some blooms on some plants by February or earlier, the best time to see the maximum show of rhodie flowers is from mid-April to mid-May. Dates vary with weather conditions.

This is just a brief overview of rhodies and azaleas at Shore Acres Gardens. Please contact a member of the garden staff if you want more information about specific plants in the garden.

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Rhododendrons and Azaleas at Shore Acres



Rhododendron basilicum

Rhododendrons (rhodies) and azaleas are popular landscape plants throughout Western Oregon, especially at Shore Acres State Park.

The wide range of flowers and leaf characteristics, plant sizes ranging from dwarf shrubs to small tree sizes and a flowering season that starts as early as February and lasts as late as June, make our rhodie/azalea collection a source of year-round interest and beauty.

Tips on Growing Rhodies and Azaleas

Rhodies and azaleas do not like “wet feet.” They prefer moist well-drained acid soil that contains lots of organic material. If your soil is a heavy clay-type, try to improve it by adding organic material like compost or ground bark. Thoroughly dig or rototill in with the native soil. Do not totally replace the old soil with new material. There should be a blend of native soil and soil amendments in the planting hole. If conditions are really challenging, consider a raised bed with at least half of the root ball above the general ground level and good soil mounded around it.

Most azaleas and small-leaved rhodies enjoy considerable sun in the Pacific Northwest if given adequate moisture during dry periods. Avoid hot spots like the south and west walls of buildings. However the vast majority of rhodies and azaleas will not thrive in full or complete shade. More shade promotes deeper green foliage but low light intensity also reduces flower bud set and produces a leggier plant as it tries to find adequate sunshine.

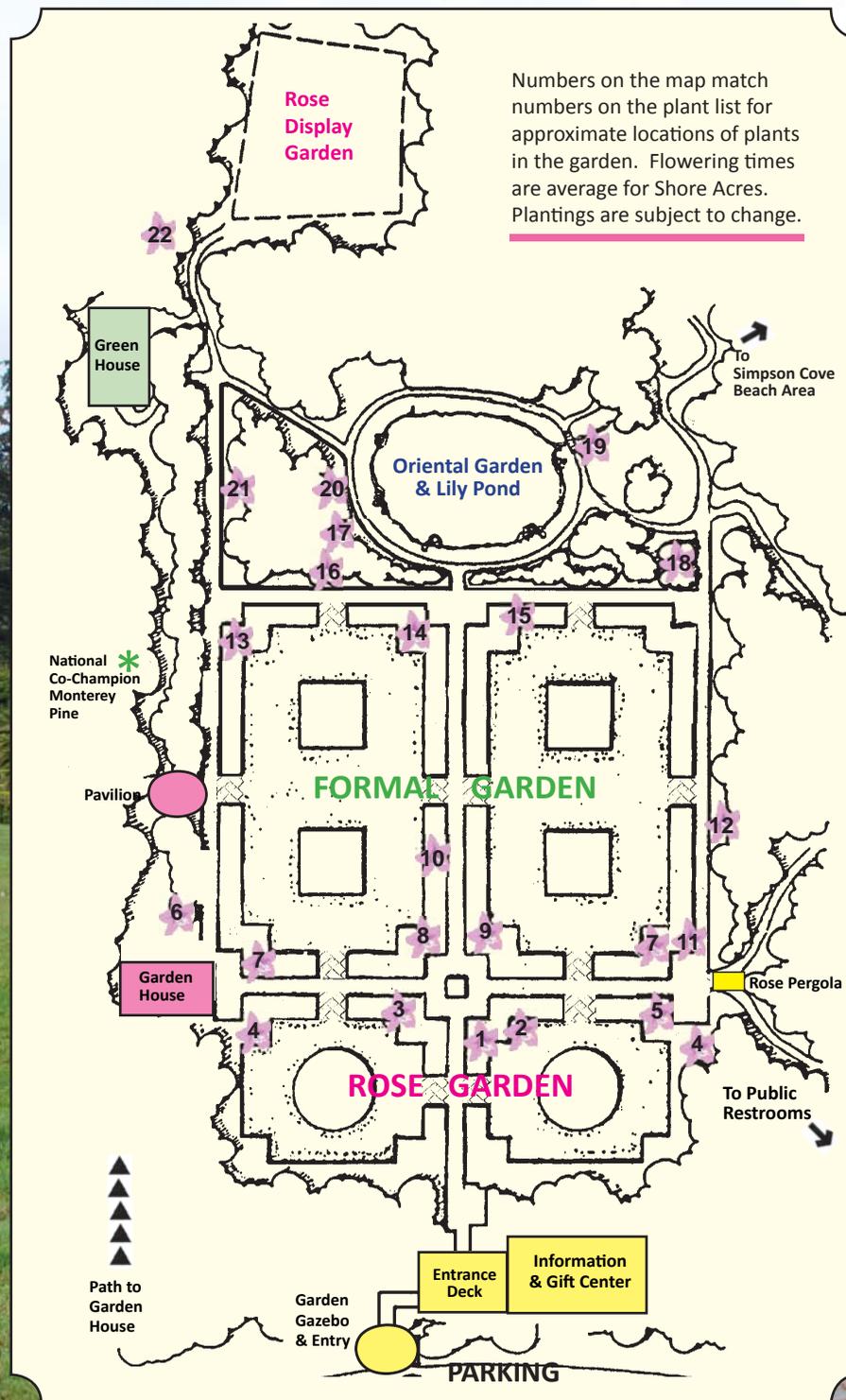
Rhodies and azaleas appreciate a mulch around the base to keep plant roots cool and moist and to help prevent the growth of weeds. Ground bark, compost, or even shredded leaves work well as a mulch material. Don't apply too thick – about 3" to 4" is fine. More can smother the roots and stunt or kill the plant.

Generally speaking, the larger the leaves on a rhodie, the less tolerant it will be of full exposure to sun and wind, especially in warmer, drier inland areas. Plant the bigger leaved rhodies in areas of partial shade. Shelter from strong afternoon sun and protect from wind, which can dehydrate and burn the foliage.

Rhodies and azaleas can be pruned and shaped. A light pruning or shearing after flowering is especially good for evergreen azaleas. Standard rhodies can be shortened and made denser by pinching off single leaf buds on terminal shoots in spring. Leaf buds tend to be narrower than flower buds, which are comparatively broad and fat. Removing terminal buds results in multiple leaf buds with more branches, leaves and ultimately more flowers. Many old established rhodies can be reduced drastically by hard pruning - cutting stems back by half right after flowering. Normally, plants treated this way should re-sprout vigorously, especially if you give them some extra fertilizer and water. You will lose flowering for a couple of years but you will end up with a much denser, well-shaped plant. Ask one of the garden staff for more details on pruning.

- 1 Rhododendron yakushimanum – very compact small to medium sized rhodie (5') pink buds opening to white in late April-May; leaves have an orange suede-like underside; new growth has a white felt-like coating; outstanding in form, foliage and flower; the parent of many new hybrid rhodies
- 2 'Creole Belle' – medium sized rhodie (6'); deep pinkish blue flowers in May; good foliage plant; tolerant of sun exposure on coast
- 3 'Mrs. Furnival' – medium sized fairly compact rhodie (5'); pink flowers with showy dark blotch in mid April-May
- 4 'Anna Rose Whitney' – medium to large rhodie (10') with deep pink flowers in May; vigorous, attractive plant that is tolerant of sun in coastal areas, but foliage best in some shade
- 5 'Blaney's Blue' – medium rhodie (4-5') producing numerous light blue flowers in late April-May, foliage has bronze cast in winter
- 6 'Alice' – an old garden favorite, upright, sun tolerant shrub (6-10'); May blooming flowers open two-tone pink, changing to nearly white

- 7 'Marley Hedges' – medium shrub (5') blooms in May, produces showy purple flowers with a white center and a red-purple flare
- 8 'Buttermint' – small rhodie (3') blooming in late May, produces large yellow flowers with pink on edges and reverse, compact habit with attractive foliage
- 9 'Kosters Brilliant Red' – medium sized deciduous azalea (8'), bright red flowers in April; yellow red fall color
- 10 'Hino-crimson' – low evergreen azalea (3'); covers itself with bright red flowers in March and early April; may show a few flowers as early as December or January; responds well to shearing and shaping
- 11 'Cecile' – medium sized deciduous azalea with deep pink flowers with a yellow flare; blooms in May and June; may exhibit an occasional bloom in October and November; reddish fall color



- 12 'Pink Pearl' – tall rhodie (10' or more) with large clusters of bright pink flowers in May; tolerant of sun exposure on the Oregon Coast
- 13 'Denali' – May flowering, medium size shrub (6') with very large pink trusses against attractive dark green foliage, somewhat heat tolerant
- 14 'Black Eye' – medium shrub (5'), May blooming, reddish purple flowers with a deep black eye, rated as sun tolerant on the coast
- 15 'Jean Marie de Montague' – medium to large rhodie (8') with bright red flowers in April; dark green foliage; one of the best red rhodies for the Pacific Northwest
- 16 'Taurus' – Medium to large rhodie with bright red flowers and large leaves; a seedling of Jean Marie de Montague
- 17 'Cynthia' – large rhodie (12') with deep reddish-pink flowers in April; a tough rhodie tolerant of sun and heat exposure

- 18 Rhododendron ponticum – tall rhodie (10') with purple flowers in May-June; very tolerant of coastal winds and salt spray; can be pruned severely
- 19 Rhododendron occidentale – West Coast native azalea; deciduous; medium to large (12'); pinkish-white flowers with a yellowish blotch; blooms in May-June; very fragrant
- 20 'Loder's White' – medium to large rhodie (10') with pink buds and white flowers in late April-May; compact well branched form; more tolerant of sun than similarly named but unrelated 'Loderi' hybrids
- 21 'Loderi King George' – large (often tree-like) rhodie with huge pinkish-white fragrant flowers; late April to early June; very beautiful plant that requires protection from direct sun and exposure to wind
- 22 Collection of tree rhodies – very large leaves (up to 18" long); native to Himalaya of China and India; some may grow to 30' or more; require mild, moist conditions; species planted: basilicum, montroseanum, and fictolacteam