

Florida azalea

Latin name: <i>Rhododendron austrinum</i>	Texture: Medium ¹³
Common name: Florida azalea	Growth rate: Slow ¹²
Flowers: Fragrant showy clusters of flowers ¹² in yellow, cream, gold, orange or nearly red in the early spring ¹³	Light: Part-sun to high shade, avoid afternoon sun ¹³
Fruit or cones: Capsule ¹⁰	Moisture: Moist, well-drained, drought-tolerant when established ¹³
Height & Width: 8-10' H x 8-10' W ¹³	Soil*: Sandy, acidic soil, pH<6.8 ¹⁰
Type: Deciduous ¹²	Hardiness zones: 6 to 9 ¹²
Habit: Erect ¹³ , loose, irregular ¹²	Origin: Native to the lower Southeast US – Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Florida ¹⁶
Wetland indicator category**: Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plain: FAC, Eastern Mountains and Piedmont: FAC ¹⁷	Ecosystem benefits: Attracts hummingbirds and butterflies ¹² , bumble bees ¹⁰ and specialized bees ¹³

(Numbers identify sources listed on page 2-3)

Features: *Rhododendron austrinum* is a loosely-shaped¹² shrub that provides multi-season interest. In spring, fragrant yellow-orange flowers appear before the leaves emerge¹³. During the summer, green leaves take over. The leaves turn yellow in the fall¹³, and reddish-brown branches¹⁰ provide winter structure to the garden. Florida azalea is heat-tolerant and, once established, drought-tolerant¹³, as well. Spring flowers benefit hummingbirds, butterflies and bees and bring beauty to their environment^{10,12,13}.

Siting: The Florida azalea, makes both a beautiful specimen plant with its large fragrant clusters of springtime flowers as well as a mass planting in borders, native gardens, and the edges of natural woodland areas where it will slowly colonize¹². This plant should be sited in a moist, but well-drained area as it will not tolerate flooded soil¹².

Care: Protect plant from afternoon sun and provide dappled to high open shade¹². Plant so root flare is visible at soil surface¹⁴. At planting, water the root ball daily with two gallons of water per inch of trunk diameter for two weeks, every other day for two months and then weekly until established. Modify water recommendations to reflect site drainage and rainfall. Apply 3" of mulch over the planted area. Do not allow mulch to touch the trunk¹⁴.

Pests: Florida azalea counts aphids, mites, thrips, whitefly, borers, leafhoppers, lace bugs, nematodes, mealybug, and scale as insect pests¹³. Several diseases such as rot, leaf spot and powdery mildew can cause problems¹³. While deer can be an issue¹³, it is somewhat rabbit resistant¹². Phytophthora root rot can be alleviated by well-drained soil or by choosing a root rot-resistant species¹³.

This plant **does not** appear on the following invasive plant lists on 10/19/2023:

X USDA SC Invasive Plant Species Web site at <https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/>

X SC Exotic Plant Pest Council Web site at <https://www.se-eppc.org/southcarolina/>

Image:



Image source: https://s3.amazonaws.com/eit-planttoolbox-prod/media/images/Rhododendron_austrin_86WqPJT5aWZg.jpeg,
<https://s3.amazonaws.com/eit-planttoolbox-prod/media/images/Rhododendron-austrinum--Eleanor-1--CC-BY-NC.jpg>

Sources:

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- (2) Armitage, A. (2006). *Armitage's native plants for North American gardens*. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press.
- (3) Armitage, A. (2008). *Herbaceous perennial plants: A treatise on their identification, culture, and garden attributes*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia.
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- (5) Clemson Cooperative Extension Home and Garden Information Center.(2011). *Groundcovers & vines fact sheets*. Retrieved from <http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/groundcovers/>
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- (14) Strother, E. V., Ham, D. L., Gilland, L. (2003) *Urban tree species guide: Choosing the right tree for the right place*. Columbia, SC: South Carolina Forestry Commission.
- (15) University of Florida, IFAS Extension. (2011). *Landscape plants A-Z*. Retrieved from https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/entity/topic/plants_a_to_z
- (16) USDA. *Plants database*. (n/d). Retrieved from <https://plants.usda.gov/home>
- (17) USDA. *Plant wetland indicator status*. (n/d). Retrieved from <https://plants.usda.gov/home/wetlandSearch>
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- (19) Clemson Extension. *Carolina Yards plant database*. Retrieved from <https://www.clemson.edu/extension/carolinayards/plant-database.html/index.html>

***Soil pH is determined using a professional soil test. Contact your Clemson University County Extension service for assistance www.clemson.edu/extension/. Click on "local offices".**

****2012 Plant Wetland Indicator categories (quantitative derived)** Lichvar, R.W. et al (2012). US Army Corps of Engineers. *National wetland plant list indicator ratings definitions*.

<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/documents/national-wetland-plant-list-indicator-rating-definitions.pdf> Page 2, Table2

Indicator Code	Indicator Status	Comment
OBL	Obligate Wetland	Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands
FACW	Facultative Wetland	Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands
FAC	Facultative	Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte
FACU	Facultative Upland	Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands
UPL	Obligate Upland	Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands