



Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed

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All About Rhododendrons

Site Selection, Planting, Fertilization, and Watering

Rhododendrons can be a wonderful addition to any shady area planting. As a broadleaf evergreen, they do require special care to ensure their continued ability to thrive in your garden. Rhododendrons should be planted where they receive full winter shade, usually the north or east side of the house, or under the protection of a large evergreen. Some fences cast enough shadow to create this microclimate. Container planting is not recommended for rhododendrons. Site your rhododendron away from the eaves of the house as falling winter snow and ice can cause damage to buds.

Rhododendrons require good drainage for best flower and root production. We recommend digging the planting hole twice the width and one-and-one-half times the depth of the container in which the rhododendron is purchased. Plastic, or peat pot containers (from field dug rhododendrons), should be removed prior to planting. Amend the soil with compost or *Acid Planting Mix*, but not steer manure, as the salt residual left in most manure products may damage the plant. *Master Nursery Master Start Fertilizer* may be used as fertilizer at the time of planting. *Master Nursery Rootmaster B-1*, an anti-shock and rooting hormone is also advised.

Rhododendrons thrive on acid fertilizer. *Master Nursery Acid Plant Food*, (mixed with water when applied) is an excellent choice if applied with frequency—usually once to twice monthly during the flowering and growing season. For those who desire less tedious fertilization programs, *Master Nursery Camellia, Azalea & Gardenia Food* require less frequent use—usually 3-4 times per year.

Rhododendrons do not like wet feet—beware of overwatering. For this reason, be careful about planting thirsty annuals beneath your rhododendrons. Drip irrigation utilizing infrequent (twice to once weekly when established) deep watering is best; however, deep garden hose soaking, or soaker hoses will also work. Winter watering, at least once monthly November through March, is essential.

Overwintering & Pruning

As stated previously, winter watering is a necessity. **CloudCover**, **Wilt Pruf**, or **Anti-Stress 2000**, all flexible polymer sprays applied directly to rhododendron leaves, help eliminate water loss through evaporation. These products may be applied at the time of planting, and from October through March.

Pruning of your rhododendron is usually not necessary, selection of the appropriate overall mature growth habit is key. However, should winter damage occur, make your pruning cut where a plant crotch occurs. To prune for height (if you inherited an oversized rhododendron), prune as soon after flowering as possible, as flower buds for the next growing season begin to form early.

Due to limited wholesale grower production, trucking, and weather, not all rhododendrons are available during the planting season. Our largest selection, due to shipping from Oregon, occurs in April. Limited availability exists for special order from container growers and therefore we cannot guarantee special orders. We cheerfully recommend alternate selections.