

Lifestyles

Azaleas need spring care

Azaleas grow best with a moderate and even level of fertility. There are several special azalea fertilizers available which are excellent when used at recommended rates because of their slow release ability.

Most homeowners will get satisfactory results from an 8-8-8 or 10-10-10 analysis.

Over fertilization can cause severe damage. Therefore, split applications should be made in March, May and July. Small plants, less than 12 inches in height, should receive one teaspoon per application.

For larger plants, a level tablespoon per foot in height should be sufficient.

For large bed areas, 2-3 pints per 100 sq. ft. can be broadcast.

Maintaining the correct pH (somewhere between 5-5.5) and fertilizer requirement can only be determined by soil testing.

Pruning. Contrary to popular opinion, many azaleas do need pruning.

Pruning is especially desirable to produce more handsome and compact growth for tall-growing cultivars.

Any heavy pruning should be done immediately after the flowering period. Tall, rangy limbs that appear in the top of the plant should be removed down inside the body of the plant.

To induce branching, pinch out tips of new growth between flowering and the first of July. Later pinching will reduce next year's flower production. Always remove



Extension News
Willie Featherstone Jr.
County Extension
Chairman

any dead or injured branches when shaping or heading-back azaleas.

Dwarf azaleas also benefit from pruning. This gives better shape and improves flower clusters on established plants. For more information, request Horticultural Information Leaflet No. 630 by calling the county Extension Office at 875-3461.

SPRING SOIL PREPARATION

Soil should be prepared for future flower beds including annuals, perennials and summer bulbs at this time of year. Don't work in soils when they're wet. Add large amounts of compost, decayed sawdust or pine bark to soil, adjust pH, and add fertilizer before planting. After last chance of frost consider planting Tuberous begonia, Canna, Allium, Amaryllis, Aneome, Dyclamen, Dahlia, Gladiolus, Iris, and Lily.

SOURWOOD....A LANDSCAPE JEWEL!

One of the more underrated landscape trees in North Carolina, and possibly the South, is the Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*).

A possible explanation for the lack of use in the state, is the fact

that the sourwood is found growing commonly in many areas of North Carolina.

The potential of this tree as a landscape tree is great, particularly in locations where it is not found naturally in abundance.

The sourwood has tiny white flowers that resemble that of lily-of-the-valley. Normally they are blossoming in mid-summer. In some localities the tree is best known for the delicious honey made from the nectar of its flowers.

Autumn is by far the ideal time to observe the sourwood. This tree displays some of the best fall leaf color found. It is brilliant red, and often in Western North and South Carolina, the show begins as early as late August. The maturing spike-like seed clusters make an attractive contrast with the fall color.

The tree itself likes a moderately fertile soil, a little on the acid side. It can grow in both sun or shade, but the autumn color is not as pretty when grown in heavy shade.

The only apparent negative trait of this tree seems to be its tendency to grow crooked. In the landscape the sourwood has a number of uses. It can be used as an understory tree in a woodland setting.

Being versatile is an outstanding trait of this landscape tree. With its fall leaf color, the sourwood is very striking in mass plantings, and in some instances it will make an interesting specimen tree.



Past their prime
Azaleas in the Hoke County area are now past their prime. The blooms were hurried on the way by cold temperatures and lack of rain. These flowers were captured at their peak at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Barbour.

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