Evergreen Rhododendron
(*Rhododendron* species)

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**Summary:**
- **Foliage:** Evergreen
- **Height:** 6 to 15 feet (depending on species or cultivar)
- **Spread:** 5 to 15 feet (depending on species or cultivar)
- **Shape:** Upright, rounded to oval

There are many *Rhododendron* species and cultivars thereof, as well as hundreds of hybrids. *Rhododendron* species come in many sizes and shapes with a wide variety of leaf and flower forms. Azaleas are in the *Rhododendron* genus and will be discussed in another article.

**Plant Needs:**
- **Zone:** 4 to 7 (depending on species or cultivar)
- **Light:** Partial shade
- **Moisture:** Moist to average
- **Soil Type:** Sandy, loam, or clay loam
- **pH Range:** 3.7 to 6.5

**Functions:**
- Suggested uses for this plant include border, massing, foundation and specimen plant.

**Planting Notes:**
- *Rhododendron* plants do best with afternoon shade. Thus, they are best placed on the east side of a house (within shade pattern). The soil must be well drained, thus a heavy clay soil is inappropriate for *Rhododendron*.

**Care:**
- Mulch plants and irrigate during periods of drought. Prune all diseased branches as soon as noticed.

**Problems:**
- Susceptible to a number of diseases including root rot, petal blight, and dieback.
- Insect pests include aphids, borers, lacebugs, scale insects, and red spider mites, weevils and whitefly.

**Alternatives:**
- Consult garden centers, historic or public gardens and arboreta regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area. The American Rhododendron Society ([http://www.rhododendron.org/](http://www.rhododendron.org/)) covers many issues and types of evergreen rhododendrons.

Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*) cultivars:
- `Roseum Elegans' has lavender pink flowers.
- `Nova Zembla' has red flowers and is cold and heat tolerant.

If catawba rhododendron is in a suitable place it can grow to 15 feet tall and almost as wide. Thus, careful placement is needed.

Yak rhododendron (*Rhododendron yakushimanum*) is a slow-growing species and is more suitable for areas with limited space around a house. There are several cultivars of this species.

There are hundreds of *Rhododendron* hybrids in the nursery trade with a vast array of sizes, forms, hardiness, leaf, and flower characteristics.
Comments:
When selecting a *Rhododendron* species, the most important characteristics to check are the species’ hardiness and tolerance of sun and heat. Once you have determined that the species is appropriate for your area, then select a cultivar with the appropriate size and desired flower/leaf characteristics.

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