

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/>) 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 yakushmanum*) 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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