

14 Northwoods Road, Radnor, PA 19087

Chapter's Website: www.ValleyForgeARS.org

BONUS NEWSLETTER *December 2021*

Each year we normally have 5 newsletters and skip July and December. We decided to repeat the December bonus issue dedicated to a single topic of unusual but general interest. We hope you enjoy. We hope to meet together soon. *The Editor*

President's Message

Once again the Valley Forge ARS Board decided not to schedule our November Banquet since some members are still a bit cautious about attending indoor social gatherings. And once again our District 8 Director, Steve Henning, contacted me and thought it would be nice to distribute a bonus 2021 December issue of the Valley Forge Newsletter. This year the focus is on our beautiful native Rhododendrons, which fits in nicely with the Native Rhododendron Germplasm Repository project that was launched by Jenkins Arboretum in 2020. I'm certain everyone will find it an enjoyable read.

Our first meeting will be live and held on Sunday, January 16th at Jenkins Arboretum. Our speaker will be Olivia Kirkpatrick, Tyler Arboretum's Wister Rhododendron Gardener, who will fill us in on her ideas and plans as she moves this historic collection to the next level, definitely not to be missed!! In the meantime, please enjoy this special Bonus December Issue of the Newsletter.

Sincerely,

Jerry O'Dell, (610) 608-2018,
westdell@verizon.net

Reminder:

Membership Renewals Are Due Dec. 1

Thank you if you renewed already. If not, please support the ARS and send in your dues. Even if our meeting schedule has been disrupted, we hope you enjoy the ARS Journal and our chapter newsletters. We appreciate the many Associate Members from other chapters, too.

Members must renew by December 1 to avoid Journal disruption, so try to renew on time.

The ARS now accepts online renewals for those who prefer to pay by credit card or personal Pay Pal account. To avoid dealing with the mail, check out the ARS Office and click on Membership Services:

<https://www.arsoffice.org/>

You will need your "membership number" to complete the renewal process which is on your Journal mailing label.

If you didn't receive or misplaced the chapter's dues mailing or you want to be a new member, use the online form at <http://valleyforgears.org/join.html>. If you have any questions, contact Darlene Henning at 717-735-7116 or mdhenning@earthlink.net.

VF ARS website: www.ValleyForgeARS.org

Native Rhododendrons & Azaleas of North America

According to the USDA native stands of species of rhododendrons are found in all US states and provinces of Canada except: Arizona, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. According to the USDA, the ten marked with a † are native to Pennsylvania

There are 28 species of *Rhododendron* that are native to North America.

18 Deciduous Azalea Species:

alabamense (Alabama Azalea)	cumberlandense (Cumberland Az.)
albiflorum (Cascade Azalea)	eastmanii (May White Azalea)
arborescens (Sweet Azalea) †	flammeum (Oconee Azalea)
atlanticum (Coastal Azalea) †	occidentale (Pacific Western Azalea)
austrinum (Florida Azalea)	periclymenoides (Pinxterbloom Az.) †
calendulaceum (Flame Azalea) †	prinophyllum (Rhod. Roseum) †
canadense (Rhodora Azalea) †	prunifolium (Plum Leaf Azalea)
canescens (Piedmont Azalea) †	vaseyi (Pink Shell Azalea)
colemanii (Red Hills Azalea)	viscosum (Swamp Honeysuckle) †

1 Deciduous Elepidote Rhododendron Species:

camtschaticum (Camtschaticum)

3 Evergreen Elepidote Rhododendron Species:

catawbiense (Mountain Rosebay)
macrophyllum (Pacific Rhod.)
maximum (Great Laurel) †

6 Lepidote Rhododendron Species:

diversipilosum ssp. subarticum (Wild Rosemary)
groenlandicum (Labrador Tea) †
lapponicum (Lapland Rosebay)
minus var. minus (Carolina Rhod.)
minus var. chapmanii (Chapman Rhod.)
neoglandulosum (Trapper's Tea)
smokianum (Smokianum Rhod.)

R. alabamense, the Alabama Azalea – 4 ft.(1.2 m), -5°F (-21°C).

It is a deciduous azalea found in Alabama and adjacent states. It has snowy white flowers with a prominent yellow blotch. Blooming in midseason, the flowers have a distinct lemon-spice fragrance and measure .8 to 1.5 inches across. It grows naturally in north central Alabama, and western to central Georgia and South Carolina. *R. alabamense* is low to medium in height, and spreads by underground stems or stolons. It propagates with relative ease from softwood cuttings and makes a delightful landscape plant. Natural hybrids of *R. alabamense* and *R. canescens* are known to occur.

Usually *R. alabamense* grows in drier woods and *R. canescens* grows in bottom-lands and near streams.



R. albiflorum, the Cascade Azalea – 3 ft.(0.9 m), -25°F (-32°C). It is an upright, white-flowering, deciduous azalea that is found in western North America from British Columbia and Alberta to Oregon and Colorado near the timberline. John G. Millais reported having seen thousands of acres of it growing above 4,000 feet elevation in the mountains of Washington State and British Columbia in such dense thickets as to be called "The Miner's Curse." Although it does not do well in cultivation except in Scotland, it is classified in Section Sciadorhodion, which includes *R. vaseyi* and *R. schlippenbachii* which do well in cultivation.

R. arborescens, the Sweet or Smooth Azalea – 5 ft.(1.5 m), -15°F (-26°C). It is a deciduous azalea found from Pennsylvania south to Georgia and Alabama. It is a good late flowering, scented species that can be used in cultivation. The flowers have a strong, cinnamon-like fragrance. It has white to blush pink flowers with red stamens. It blooms in late spring to early summer and individual flowers measure 1.5 to 2 inches across. It has glossy leaves and red fall foliage. This species has a wide distribution in the eastern United States, but can usually be found growing near streams or moist areas. It is sometimes known as the "Smooth Azalea" because the stems are very smooth and do not have hairs similar to the other azaleas.



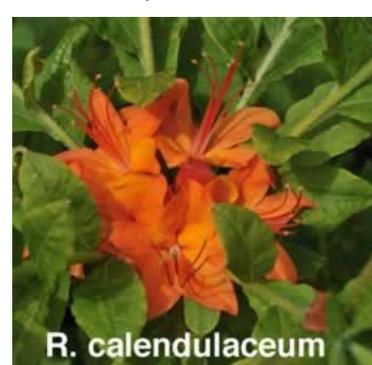
An excellent landscape plant, *R. arborescens* can perfume a wide area when in bloom. Relatively easy to propagate, there are a number of excellent forms in the trade. Natural hybrids are known to occur with *R. cumberlandense* and occasionally with *R. viscosum*.



R. atlanticum, the Atlantic or Dwarf or Coastal Azalea, – 3 ft.(0.9 m), -15°F (-26°C). It is a low deciduous azalea found on coastal plains from Pennsylvania and Delaware south to Georgia. It is a good late flowering, scented species that can be used in cultivation. Flowers have a rose-like fragrance. It is a common understory plant along the southeastern coastal plains of the United States. The white flowers are 1 to 1.5 inches across, but are often blushed with pink on the outside and some have a yellow blotch. Spreading by underground stems, *R. atlanticum* can develop into very large colonies of an acre or more in sandy soils. *R. atlanticum* is easy to propagate, and makes a nice landscape plant in heavier soils

which will restrict the spreading habit. It is a tetraploid, meaning it has twice the number of chromosomes of most rhododendrons and as a result will not hybridize with them.

R. austrinum, the Florida Azalea – 5 ft.(1.5 m), -5°F (-21°C). It is a deciduous azalea found from northwest Florida to Georgia, Alabama and southeast Mississippi. This plant blooms in early spring as the leaves are beginning to expand. The fragrant, sometimes lemony, blossoms come in shades of orange through gold and yellow with a reddish tube, and measure approximately 1 to 1.5 inches across. This species has very long stamens and the tube of the flower is often flushed with red but there is no blotch. *R. austrinum* is similar in many respects to *R. canescens* including the sticky glandular hairs on the flower tube, but differs in the color variations which are orange to yellow rather than pink to white. *R. austrinum* makes an excellent landscape plant as well as a valuable hybridizing resource, especially in southern gardens where heat tolerance is important. It is a tetraploid as are *R. atlanticum*, *R. calendulaceum*, and *R. colmanii*. Natural hybrids between *R. austrinum* and *R.*



canescens do occur but aren't common since *R. austrinum* is found in upland woods and *R. canescens* is found in low areas near streams. Although *R. austrinum* resembles *R. canescens*, it is more closely related to *R. luteum* and *R. occidentale*.

R. calendulaceum, the Flame Azalea – 6 ft.(1.8 m), -10°F (-23°C). It is a tall deciduous azalea found from southwest Pennsylvania south through the Appalachian Mountains to Georgia and Alabama and west to West Virginia and southeastern Ohio. It is surely one of the most spectacular native shrubs of the Appalachian Mountains. The flowers

are larger than most of the natives, measuring from 1.5 to 2.5 inches across, and come in a wide range of colors from brilliant shades of yellow to orange or red, with a large prominent yellow to orange blotch on the upper lobe (petal). This species is difficult to propagate by cuttings, but is easily raised from seed. *R. calendulaceum* is a naturally occurring tetraploid. Because of this fact, it does not hybridize easily with most of the other natives and even if a first generation cross is made, the resulting hybrids are often sterile. *R. cumberlandense* is often very similar to *R. calendulaceum*, but is separated by the fact it is a diploid while *R. calendulaceum* is tetraploid.

R. camtschaticum, formerly called *Therorhodion camtschaticum* – 1 ft.(0.3 m), -25°F (-32°C). It is a deciduous elepidote rhododendron found in northeast Asia to Japan, coastal Alaska, British Columbia and also abundant in West Greenland, . This low growing rhododendron has the unusual trait that the one to three flowers appear at the end of young leafy shoots of the current year, and not from special buds. It does well in cultivation in alpine regions of Northern Germany and Eastern Scotland. It is difficult to grow in warmer climates.



R. canadense, the Rhodora Azalea – 2 ft.(0.6 m), -25°F (-32°C). It is a low deciduous azalea found from Eastern Quebec to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and south the northern parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. It has showy lavender flowers. It has a white form that comes true from seed. It does well in moist acidic soils. *Rhododendron canadense* is a very unusual native azalea species and was originally considered an entirely separate genus, Rhodora . The top three petals of the flower are fused together almost to the end to form a single lobe, whereas the bottom two are completely separate lips. The purplish pink blossoms are

approximately 1.5 inches across and have 10 stamens, twice the number of most east coast natives. *R. canadense* is a low stoloniferous shrub that is the most northern of the east coast native azaleas, the species is very cold hardy but a difficult plant where summers are hot and dry. Although *R. canadense*, a tetraploid, is very distinctive, it is most closely related to the diploid, *R. vaseyi*.

R. canescens, the Florida Pinxter or Piedmont Azalea – 5 ft.(1.5 m), -5°F (-21°C). It has white to pinkish tubular flowers with stamens two to three times longer than the petals. It is often confused with *R. periclymenoides*. Both are deciduous azaleas that are found in the Carolinas but can be separated by the flower tubes, which in *R. periclymenoides* are fuzzy. *R. canescens* also has tiny hairs, but they are sticky and glandular. Another difference is that when a flower of *R. periclymenoides* dies, a ridge on the corolla tube tends to catch on the end of the pistil so that a flower cluster past its prime consists of several dangling blossoms. Although widespread in the eastern half of the U.S., these two wild azaleas differ in distribution. In South Carolina *R. periclymenoides* is a Piedmont plant, with almost no specimens reported from the Sandhills or Coastal plain, while *R. canescens* is predominantly a Low Country plant absent from the Piedmont, except in counties that border the Savannah River. In general, if it grows wild north of South Carolina, it's likely *R. periclymenoides*; south of the Palmetto State and it's probably *R. canescens*. Both species prefer moist, humus-laden, acidic soil and do equally well in shade or sun. Old specimens can reach heights of 12-15 feet and have multiple stems or trunks up to 5" in diameter.



R. canescens forms natural hybrids with several species that occur within its geographic range.



R. catawbiense, the Mountain Rosebay – 5 ft.(1.5 m), -25°F (-32°C). It is a medium to tall lepidote rhododendron native from Virginia south to Georgia and west to Alabama, Kentucky and West Virginia. It is quite hardy and has a good plant habit. It has large rose to purple-lilac colored flowers. Through selection and hybridization this species was parent to a very valuable group of May flowering garden rhododendrons from the white 'Catawbiense Album' to the violet 'Catawbiense Boursault' including 'Everestianum' and 'Fastuosum Floro Plenum'. It is very similar to *R. ponticum*, which is native to Southern Europe from Portugal and Spain to Turkey and Lebanon.

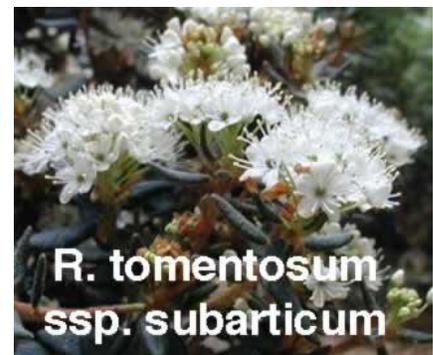
R. colemanii, the Red Hills azalea – 6 ft.(1.8 m), -5°F (-21°C). From the upper Coastal Plain of Alabama and Western Georgia, it was named in 2008. It was initially collected and propagated by S. D. Coleman, Sr. It is one of the tallest, most fragrant and most richly colored of all the native azaleas. Different plants may show flower colors ranging from pure white to deep pink, and even yellow or nearly orange. It's also late-blooming, typically flowering in early May. In the field, the azalea can be distinguished from *R. alabamense* and other coastal azaleas by its late spring (early to mid-May) flowering time, its wide range of flower color (white, pink or yellow), longer flower buds, its often warty seed capsules with glandular hairs, and its taller stature (3-7 m). Its natural distribution extends from southwestern Alabama to the Chattahoochee Valley in Georgia. It is a tetraploid.



R. cumberlandense, the Cumberland Azalea – 4 ft.(1.2 m), -15°F (-26°C). It is a low deciduous azalea found in Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. It has long been grown under the name, *R. bakeri*. It is an excellent, low-growing, late blooming orange to red-flowered azalea suitable for small gardens. The flowers are not large, about 1.5 to 1.75 inches across, and typically range from yellowish-orange to deep red. This species is sometimes difficult to distinguish from the larger flowered *R. calendulaceum*, but the blossoms generally appear several

weeks later after the leaves have fully expanded and the undersides of the leaves are usually waxy white or bluish in color. This native azalea makes an excellent landscape plant in its own right, but it also hybridizes easily with many of the other species, producing beautiful hybrids in a broad range of colors. It is a slow-growing evergreen. Its 1 1/2-inch-long oval leaves grow on finely twigged branches. In the species, the flowers are red tinged with purple, about 2 to 3 inches wide, but it has been bred in many other colors. For a while it was called *R. bakeri* but this was found to be in error on two counts. First, it was very different than *R. bakeri*, and second, *R. bakeri* was found to be a natural hybrid of *R. flammum* and *R. canescens*. In the southern Blue Ridge, *R. cumberlandense* can hybridize with *R. arborescens* or *R. viscosum*.

R. diversipilosum* ssp. *subarticum, Formerly *R. tomentosum* ssp. *subarticum* and *Ledum subarticum* – 1 ft.(0.3 m), -20°F (-29°C). It is an upright lepidote rhododendron that is found in the



arctic regions of North America, Europe and Asia. It blooms heavily with white trusses. It does well in alpine gardens. A circumboreal subspecies with an extensive range throughout the boreal portions of the northern hemisphere, it occurs in a wide variety of habitats.



R. eastmanii, the May white azalea – 3 ft.(0.9 m), -15°F (-26°C). It is a deciduous azalea found in South Carolina in 13 counties of the piedmont and coastal plain to date. It was officially named, described and proposed as a new species in 1999. It has snowy white flowers with a prominent yellow blotch. Blooming in mid-May, the flowers have a distinct, strong, fresh fragrance and measure .8 to 1.5 inches across. *R. eastmanii* is low to medium in height, and has a clump habit but does not spread by underground stems. It propagates with relative ease from woody cuttings and makes a delightful landscape plant.

R. flammeum, the Oconee Azalea – 3 ft.(0.9 m), -5°F (-21°C). Formerly *R. speciosum*, it is a deciduous azalea found in the lower Piedmont from central Georgia to South Carolina. It is seldom cultivated in cooler climates but does well in the southeast. Its blossoms are approximately 1.2 to 1.8 inches across and come in shades of yellow, yellow-orange or red. This species can be distinguished from the earlier blooming *R. austrinum* in that the flowers usually have a large yellow blotch on the top lobe (petal), they are not fragrant, nor do they have sticky glandular hairs on the corolla tube. This species is a heat tolerant shrub and holds much breeding potential where hot summer stress is a problem. It differs from *R. calendulaceum* by being diploid while *R. calendulaceum* is tetraploid.



R. groenlandicum, Bog Labrador Tea – 2 ft.(0.6 m), -25°F (-32°C). It is an upright lepidote rhododendron that is found from the northern USA, through Canada and into Greenland. It blooms heavily with white trusses. It forms small erect to rounded evergreen shrubs. The stems and lower surface of the leaves are covered with a thick reddish-brown indumentum. The leaves are dark smooth green above with a fairly distinct reticulation. This was formerly known as *Ledum groenlandicum* before that genus was merged into the genus *Rhododendron*. In northern North America this species is often abundant in bogs, wet marshes, moist forests etc. from sea-level to around 6,000 ft. It was introduced in 1763.

R. lapponicum, the Lapland Rosebay – 2 ft.(0.6 m), -25°F (-32°C). It is a very low lepidote rhododendron found in Russia, Scandinavia, Canada and Alaska. It is also found in mountains from Maine to



Wisconsin. It has clusters of pink to lavender flowers. It is found on mountain tops and in sub arctic areas.

R. macrophyllum, the Pacific Rhododendron – 5 ft.(1.5 m), -5°F (-21°C). It is a vigorous, upright, lepidote rhododendron that is found from Northern California to British Columbia. It has pink to rose colored flowers. It is seldom found in cultivation. It is closely related to *R. maximum*.

R. maximum, the Great Laurel – 5 ft.(1.5 m), -25°F (-32°C). It is a

large lepidote rhododendron found from Nova Scotia to Georgia and west to Alabama and Ohio in dense forests. Since deer were introduced in Nova Scotia around 1887, *R. maximum* has apparently disappeared from Nova Scotia according to John Weagle of Halifax. This tall straggly plant has pinkish-white flowers. Its long slightly narrow leaves have a thin indumentum on the underside. It is a large hardy plant with small trusses. This species was one of the chief progenitors of a hardy group of English garden hybrids.



R. minus, Carolina rhododendron – 4 ft.(1.2 m), -15°F (-26°C). It is a low growing rhododendron found from Florida and Alabama up to Tennessee and North Carolina in mountains and plains. *R. minus*, is actually a composite of two distinct plants:



R. minus var. minus grows on the exposed cliffs of mountains, in the piedmont, and along streams of North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. It is typically a straggly tall shrub but good horticultural selections for habit, late bloom time and color have been made. The form growing in the Chattahoochee region of Georgia and Alabama is distinct horticulturally and more attractive in flower than the type from North Carolina. It is shorter and earlier blooming by two weeks than those from North Carolina. Flowers of the Chattahoochee *R. minus* often have yellow- orange flares. The Carolina form is later blooming by two weeks. This form is very heat tolerant and has been used as a parent for very hardy hybrids such as P.J.M. It historically was called

R. carolinianum. This is one of the most satisfactory species for northern gardens, becoming a thickly branched, rounded. In mid-spring it is smothered with 3-inch clusters of small rosy pink flowers. The 1 1/2- to 3-inch dark green leaves are brown underneath. There is also a variety with pure white flowers and lighter green leaves.

R. minus var. chapmanii is an endangered variety often given species status as *R. chapmanii*. There are only 3 known populations in the hot coastal plains of northern Florida. Geographically isolated from *R. minus var. minus* it grows on sands that have abundant organic matter and are well drained at the surface but with permanently saturated acid water just below the surface. It prefers light shade and can be found between the drier pine-turkey oak vegetation and the moister titi (*Cliftonia*) bogs. *R. minus var. chapmanii* grows to 6 feet (2 m) tall, and is stoloniferous, resprouting easily when cut back. The leaves are smaller than var. minus, with a rounded leaf tip and more oval shape. The leaves are



aromatic when crushed and the upper surface is distinctly rugose. There are reports of some variability in color forms in the wild. Breeding with *R. minus var. chapmanii* is thought to increase the heat tolerance of its offspring.



R. neoglandulosum, Trapper's Tea or Glandular Labrador Tea – 1 ft.(0.3 m), -10°F (-23°C). It is an upright lepidote rhododendron that is found in more sunny locations from California through various mountainous habitats north to British Columbia, west to Montana, and south to Wyoming. It is native to well-drained but not too dry soil. Quite distinct in appearance, it blooms heavily with small round balls of white

trusses. Small and rounded to upright evergreen shrubs with ovate-elliptic leaves. These are smooth and bright green on the lower surface (unlike most species formerly included in the genus *Ledum*). It was long grown as *Ledum glandulosum*.

R. occidentale, the Pacific or Western Azalea – 5 ft.(1.5 m), -5°F (-21°C). It is a tall deciduous azalea found in Oregon and California.

The flower color is usually white or pale pink with a strong yellow flare, but may be red, yellow or orange-pink and occasionally the flare is maroon. The foliage turns red and copper shades in the fall. It is among the showiest of all species with bright colors on impressive flowers. However it is difficult to propagate and grow. It is considered nearly impossible to grow on the East Coast of the US.

Rhododendron occidentale grows naturally west of the Rocky Mountains in the United States. *R. austrinum* and *R. luteum* are most closely related to *R. occidentale* but don't have *occidentale's* white corolla.



R. periclymenoides, formerly *R. nudiflorum*, the Pinxterbloom Azalea – 5 ft.(1.5 m), -15°F (-26°C). It is a medium deciduous azalea found widespread from Vermont and Massachusetts south to South Carolina and north Georgia and Alabama and west to Tennessee and Ohio. It has showy flowers that are either white, pale pink or deep pink. Pinxter-flower, with lightly fragrant inch-wide blooms, is perhaps the most common and most familiar wild azalea in the eastern U.S. The name "pinxter" comes not from its coloration but from the Dutch words Pinxter blomachee, which relate to the fact that this is supposedly the azalea that blossoms on Pentecost, 50 days past Easter. We suspect this

name was given by folks in northern parts of the plant's range, since in the Carolinas it is more likely to be in bloom for Easter Sunday. *R. periclymenoides* is often mistaken for *R. canescens*. In general, if it grows wild north of South Carolina, it's likely *R. periclymenoides*; south of the Palmetto State and it's probably *R. canescens*.

R. prinophyllum, formerly *R. roseum* - 5 ft.(1.5 m), -25°F (-32°C). It is a medium deciduous azalea found from southwestern Quebec, through New England, to Appalachian Mountains in Oklahoma and Arkansas at the higher elevations. The flowers are typically rose pink measuring 1.2 to 1.8 inches across and are very fragrant. *R. prinophyllum* can be distinguished from *R. periclymenoides* by a number of characteristics including the fact that it is usually deeper pink in color and with a strong cinnamon to clove fragrance. *R. prinophyllum* is a good landscape plant for northeastern gardens, but may be more difficult in the south because of summer heat.



R. prunifolium, the Plumleaf Azalea – 4 ft.(1.2 m), -10°F (-23°C). It is a deciduous azalea found on the Georgia-Alabama border. The color ranges from orange-red to red, and occasionally orange or yellow. The petals have a deep red blotch. This species blooms very late, usually in late June or in July. Plants are usually 5 to 8 feet tall, although some mature plants may attain a height of 20 feet. *R. prunifolium* prefers more shade than most deciduous azaleas to prolong the flowers during hot summer months. It is the signature plant of Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Georgia. It is closely related to *R. flammeum*, *R. cumberlandense*, and *R. calendulaceum*, but its native range is unique.

R. smokianum, Smokianum – 1 ft.(0.3 m), -10°F (-23°C). It is a dwarf lepidote rhododendron, rarely over 0.5 meters high. It has small purple flowers. The foliage looks more like *R. keiskei* than *R. carolinianum* or *R. minus*. It grows basically on cliffs and very well drained. It has a very small natural area of distribution. Its flowers are small, rarely over 2 cm across, and the color range is primarily in the purple range with some forms that are lavender and other deep rose pink. It blooms much later than any of the other lepidotes in the Great Smoky Mountains and at the same time as *Kalmia* and at the beginning of *R. maximum's* bloom time. Ron Miller has given it the name *R.*



smokianum since it seems to reside just at high elevations (1800 to 1900 m) in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park on the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. Some taxonomists think it is just *R. minus* and they don't give a varietal distinction. However, the fact that it grows happiest on 90 degree rock faces (so it obviously needs good drainage), the time of bloom is in late June or July which is at least 6 weeks after *R. minus var. carolinianum* at the same altitude, and the color ranges from rose to purple instead of white to lavender pink, distinguish it. Albach & Bauer (reference below) have published DNA studies of Smokianum's evolutionary history and concluded that it is indeed a new species.



R. vaseyi, the Pink Shell Azalea – 4 ft.(1.2 m), -15°F (-26°C). It is a medium to tall deciduous azalea found in North and South Carolina. It grows best in the moist soil bordering ponds in Zones 5-8 where they grow 6 to 8 feet tall and bear 1 1/2-inch pink flowers in late spring to early summer. It also has a white variation. It has showy fall foliage when the willow-like leaves turn yellow and red. This native azalea has a relatively restricted natural habitat in four mountainous counties of North Carolina. Growing at elevations of 3000 to 5500 feet, the rare Pinkshell azalea can be seen in bloom along the Blue Ridge Parkway in early spring. It is quite adaptable and makes a good landscape plant.

It is a diploid, but is considered to be closely related to the more northerly tetraploid, *R. canadense*.

R. viscosum, Swamp Honeysuckle or Swamp Azalea – 6 ft.(1.8 m), -20°F (-29°C). It is a medium deciduous azalea found in low areas along stream banks from Maine to Georgia and west to Texas. *R. viscosum* now includes two closely related forms that were previously considered separate species, *R. serrulatum* and *R. oblongifolium*. The fragrant flowers with a clover-like fragrance are generally white to pale pink, and bloom after the leaves have fully expanded. Flowers vary in size from 0.75 to 1.5 inches across depending upon the form, but have a long narrow tube covered with sticky glandular hairs. It grows up to 9 feet tall. The leaves turn orange or bronze red in the fall. The species



has a wide distribution from Maine to Florida, and westward to Texas. *R. viscosum* was the first North American azalea grown in England. It can be distinguished from the other late blooming white, *R. arborescens* in that the stamens are greenish white rather than red, and the stems are not smooth but contain hairs. *R. viscosum* is a variable species closely related to *R. arborescens* and *R. atlanticum*. These species are sometimes not easily distinguished from each other and have been frequently confused. The species was an important parent in early hybridizing efforts with deciduous azaleas. In the southern Blue Ridge, *R. viscosum* can hybridize with *R. cumberlandense* and occasionally with *R. arborescens*.

Steve Henning, editor
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NEWSLETTER
December 2021

Where every purchase benefits the
American Rhododendron Society



R. occidentale at Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden in Portland, OR, which will be on the ARS 2022 convention tours. See ARS2022.org

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Please contact us with email changes or if you receive this newsletter by letter carrier rather than email, even though you have e-mail. Please inform Steve Henning of any changes (rhodyman@earthlink.net).