

Rhododendron Care

Rhododendrons prefer a well-drained, organically rich, acidic soil. The ideal exposure is morning sun and afternoon shade in an area protected from winter winds. Beside houses or fences with the open sky above are good locations. But, wherever they are planted, they need partial shade.

When planting rhododendrons, keep them at the same depth or higher than they were growing in the nursery to ensure proper drainage. Spacing will depend on the mature spread of the plants. Add organic material, such as Bumper Crop or Leaf Gro, to the soil. Add a 2 to 3 inch layer of organic mulch around the plant, keeping it 3 to 6 inches away from the trunk. This will conserve moisture, maintain soil temperature, and discourage weeds. As the mulch breaks down, it will add nutrients to the soil and feed your rhododendron. Water thoroughly when planting; afterwards, water deeply once or twice a week.

Rhododendrons are shallow rooted plants and are very sensitive to drought and excess fertilizer. Usually, the decomposing mulch will provide enough nutrients to feed the plant. If you do fertilize, use a fertilizer especially for acid-loving plants and use only the amounts recommended. A slow-release fertilizer is also effective for rhododendrons. Fertilizer should be applied in late winter or early spring.

Removing the spent flowers is important so that energy is not wasted on seed production. At the same time, pinching out the largest terminal growth buds as they start to grow will produce a bushier, compact plant. Normally, very little pruning is needed other than light maintenance and shaping. Old, leggy plants are better replaced with smaller, newer varieties, but they can be cut back severely and still recover.

Johnson's carries a variety of rhododendrons that grow well in our area. Some of them are:

- Chinoides** - white - April/May
- Cunningham's White** - white - June
- Elegant Rose** - rosey-lilac - May
- English Rose** - light rose - April/May
- Lee's Dark Purple** - violet purple - May
- Nova Zembla** - lavender-red - May
- Olga Mezitt** - peachy-pink - May
- P.J.M.** - light lavender - April
- Roseum Pink** - true pink - May
- Scintillation** - bright pink - May
- Yaku Princess** - pink-tinged white - June

WASHINGTON, DC
4200 Wisconsin Ave, NW
at Van Ness St

www.johnsonsfloorists.com
KENSINGTON, MD
10313 Kensington Pkwy
next to the Post Office

OLNEY, MD
5011 Olney-Laytonsville Rd
Rt 108 and Zion Rd

