

How do I care for my rhododendrons?

FunFact . . . bees use the lines, spots, or blotches in rhododendron flowers, known as nectar guides, to direct them toward the nectar and pollen. These markings function like "runway lights" that guide pollinators to the reproductive parts of the flower.

What are the best growing conditions?

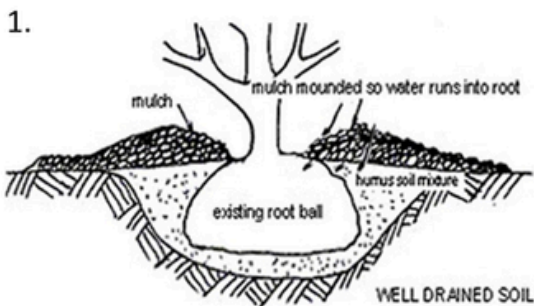
- Need both some shade and some sun
- Plants with smaller leaves can take more sun (but not more heat) than those with larger leaves
- Because roots are shallow, they need good soil drainage with routine watering
- Need porous soil to allow air to penetrate to the root zone
- Protection from consistent wind

What are the planting considerations specific to rhododendrons?

- In heavy or clay soil, plant in a mound on top of the existing soil
- In light soil, dig a hole 3 x as wide as and about an inch deeper than the root ball. Backfill with a mixture of ½ native soil, ¼ fish compost and ¼ medium or coarse bark mulch
- In dry soil, water the hole well before planting
- Apply 2-3" of medium or bigger mulch (arborist wood chips highly recommended)

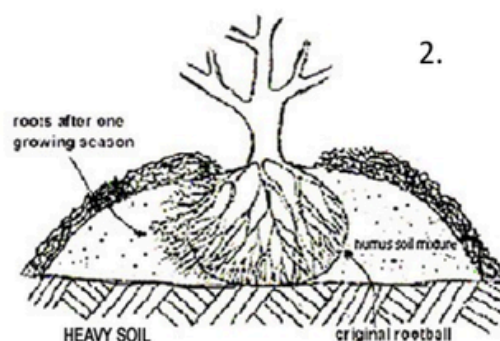


R. sutuense - big leaves



From: rhododendron.org

Planting Rhododendrons



Can I move my rhododendron?

- Rhodos have shallow roots, making them easy to move
- Dig around the root ball out at the drip line, pry plant up and slide onto a tarp to move to a new location
- Best time to move them is the fall but they can be moved any time in our climate as long as enough of the root ball is included, they are planted according to the above instructions, and kept watered through the dry season.

Can I grow my small rhododendron in a pot?

- Rhodos that will grow slowly and have smaller leaves are better suited to growing in pots
- Rhodos in pots will dry out more quickly and are less protected from the elements in the winter
- Upside is pots can be moved out of the afternoon sun and closer to where they will be watered.



R. 'James Gable'



R. *Fragrantissimum* - highly fragrant, needs protection from frost in the winter



R. 'Len Living' - blooms in March

Do I need to prune my rhododendron?

- Pruning should not be necessary if the plant is properly located and has enough space
- Prune out dead wood any time you notice it
- Tip prune larger plants when there is only one new leaf truss after blooming
- Taking off spent flower trusses is not necessary but will make the plant look tidier and can promote flower production for the next year.

My rhodo sometimes blooms in the fall or winter. Is there something wrong with it?

Rhododendrons set their flower buds prior to winter. With our increasingly warm falls and winters, sometimes plants get confused and start opening their flower buds early. Those flowers that do open will likely be frozen in the cold spells. Unfortunately, they will not re-bloom in the spring when they should. This problem is seen more frequently with climate change.

RESOURCES

- Greer, H.E. 1996. 3rd Ed. *Greer's Guide to Available Rhododendrons*. Offshoot Publishing. (available through Rhododendron Society Chapters on Vancouver Island or in the gardening section in used bookstores)
- Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden. www.rhodygarden.org
- American Rhododendron Society. www.rhododendron.org
- Questions about growing or choosing rhododendrons, email: GardeningAdvice.MilnerGardens@shaw.ca. Vancouver Island Master Gardeners will reply to your queries. Sending a photo would be helpful if your plant has issues.

PHOTO Credits: Chris Southwick, from her garden of over 300 rhododendrons

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