

What should I consider when choosing a rhododendron?

Rhododendrons are loved by gardeners for their outstanding and varied flower colours, and their usually evergreen leaves. Sizes range from very dwarf to tree-like. They have few pests or diseases, are deer resistant, and are perfect plants for the Vancouver Island climate and soil type.



R. 'Dreamland'

R. 'Senator Henry Jackson' (white) and R. 'Colonel Coen' (purple)



Do I have an appropriate growing site?

- Dappled shade is best but need some sun to bloom well
- If no shade then morning sun is best
- Well-drained, porous, fertile, acid soil
- Choose a non-windy location

What type of rhodo am I looking for?



R. 'Etta Burrows' - tall

- Size - to fit the intended space with room to grow
- Fragrance - some are but many are not
- Color - everything from white to yellow to pink to peach to orange to purple to deep red
- Leaves - many shapes and sizes; some variegated; some with beautiful indumentum on the underside

How do I choose a healthy rhodo?

- Healthy green leaves with no spots or yellow veining
- Roots NOT growing out the bottom of the pot
- Root ball NOT a solid, rock-hard mass of roots



R Popocatepetl - small leaves, low growing

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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