

## ***Rhododendron chapmanii* Chapman's Rhododendron, Chapman's Azalea<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Introduction**

Chapman's rhododendron is listed as one of Florida's rare and endangered plants. This shrub or small tree is also the only native evergreen rhododendron in the entire state of Florida. It grows to a height and width of 3 to 6 feet and has a relatively open and stiffly ascending branching habit. The tiny leaves of this plant are dark green in color and have an elliptic shape. The leaf undersides, petioles and twigs of this charming plant are covered with rust-colored scales. Pink flowers appear on the tips of the branches in the spring before the new shoot growth commences, and small brown capsules appear shortly after flowering ceases.

### **General Information**

**Scientific name:** *Rhododendron chapmanii*

**Pronunciation:** roe-duh-DEN-drun  
chap-MAN-nee-eye

**Common name(s):** Chapman's rhododendron,  
Chapman's Azalea

**Family:** *Ericaceae*

**Plant type:** shrub

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8 through 9 (Fig. 1)

**Planting month for zone 7:** year round

**Planting month for zone 8:** year round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year round

**Origin:** native to Florida

**Uses:** mass planting; specimen; container or above-ground planter; trained as a standard; attracts butterflies

**Availability:** grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

### **Description**

**Height:** 3 to 6 feet

**Spread:** 3 to 6 feet

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Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Plant habit:** round

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** slow

**Texture:** fine

#### **Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** alternate

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** entire

**Leaf shape:** obovate

**Leaf venation:** pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

#### **Flower**

**Flower color:** pink

**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering

#### **Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** elongated

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit cover:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** brown

**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

#### **Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems; can be trained to grow with a short, single trunk

**Current year stem/twig color:** brown

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun

**Soil tolerances:** acidic; clay; loam; sand

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** usually not a problem

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Chapman's rhododendron is lovely when planted singly or in mass beneath canopy trees. The plant can go largely unnoticed for 50 weeks of the year until it flowers.

Place this plant in an area of the landscape that receives partial to full shade. It will be most successful if located on a well-drained, acid soil. This species is cold hardy throughout Florida.

Chapman's rhododendron may be propagated by seeds or cuttings.

## Pests and Diseases

Phytophthora root and stem rot can become a problem. Poorly drained soils, overwatering, and nutrient deficiencies will aid in the development of root rot.

This plant is also bothered by mites, mealy bugs, scale insects and various leaf and flower diseases. The best defense against these problems is to provide good growing conditions.