

Rhododendron canescens Pink Pinxter Azalea, Florida Honeysuckle¹

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Introduction

Pink pinxter azalea is well-noted for its vivid display of pink or white, fragrant, clustered blooms appearing in spring, before the new leaves emerge (Fig. 1). Well-suited to mass plantings in natural woodland settings, pink pinxter azalea makes a traffic-stopping show whenever it is in full bloom.

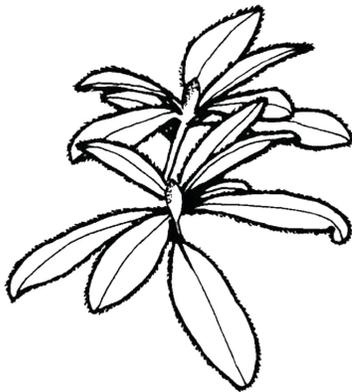


Figure 1. Pink pinxter azalea

General Information

Scientific name: *Rhododendron canescens*

Pronunciation: roe-duh-DEN-drun kuh-NESS-senz

Common name(s): pink pinxter azalea, Florida honeysuckle

Family: *Ericaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 10A (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: year round

Planting month for zone 8: year round

Planting month for zone 9: year round

Planting month for zone 10: year round

Origin: native to Florida

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

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 8 to 12 feet

Spread: 6 to 10 feet

Plant habit: oval; upright

Plant density: open

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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: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pink; white

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

These azaleas are rather straggly and upright when very young but will spread out, the large, dark green leaves causing the branches to gently cascade down to the ground. A single specimen should be allowed at least four to five feet of spread to develop into its natural form.

Rich, moist, acidic soil in light shade, receiving some direct sun, protected from harsh winds, is an ideal location for pink pinxter azaleas. Azaleas grow best in filtered shade from tall trees. Plants are very sensitive to dry soil, and the soil should drain freely. A thick mulch (3 inches deep) is recommended to help ensure adequate root growth. Roots are located in the top several inches, even in sandy, well-drained soil.

Pruning is seldom necessary except to control shoots that extend above the normally mounded shape. Since plants bloom on the previous year's growth, any desired pruning should be done in spring after flowering. Pinching new shoots when they are several inches long increases branching and flower display.

Propagation is by seed sown in late fall on moist peat moss or by softwood cuttings taken in late spring.

Pests and Diseases

No pests are of major concern other than mites.

Problems include iron deficiencies from too high a soil pH and mushroom root rot in poorly drained soil.