### 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-druhn 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
- **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
Figure 1. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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.