



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Rhododendron chapmanii*¹

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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

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

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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.