MIKE ROGERS
TIPS ON GROWING AZALEAS

- Azaleas are growth-oriented plants. They must be kept growing rapidly in order to remain healthy.
- A "slowed down" azalea may never speed up again. Without rapid growth, the slightest problem can overtake the plant very rapidly and the plant can be lost.
- Use a very well drained soil mix. NEVER USE DIRT. Use a gravel mix.
- Fertilize regularly and never allow to dry.
- Prune heavy branches while dormant.
- Grow for trunk and line first, can grow branches later.
- Best results in growing if prune heavily every third year.
- Use aluminum wire.
- Sanitize tools! Clean up wounds with a very sharp knife or razor blade.
- **SEAL ALL WOUNDS.**

AZALEA DISEASES

Phytophthora Root Rot - Phytophthora root rot is a fungus which attacks the roots. The first symptom is slow wilting and bronzing of the foliage, but is actually preceded by extensive rotting of the fibrous root system. Fungus can only grow in an anaerobic condition caused by poor drainage. Prevention is the key to this disease. Use a very well drained soil mix and repot before plant is completely pot bound.

Ovulinia Petal Blight - Ovulinia petal blight is not a serious disease with bonsai azaleas because the life cycle of this fungus requires that diseased flowers fall to the ground where the fungus incubates until flowering again. Diseased flowers dry and cling to the plants for some time, making them ugly, whereas healthy flowers fall from the plant while still displaying color and normal shape. Prevention includes keeping flowers swept up once they fall and periodic application of fungicide.

Powdery Mildew - This is an occasional problem during long periods of cloudy, wet weather. Young foliage is more susceptible than the old. Plants grown in green houses and under shade are more susceptible.

Ensure good air circulation and spray with liquid copper or any fungicide during long periods of wet weather.

Leaf Gall - Leaf gall is an occasional problem during very humid conditions, pick off and destroy infected leaves.

Phomopsis Die-back - When stressed, especially by drought, large azaleas in the landscape but also smaller nursery azaleas become susceptible to infection by the fungus phomopsis. The primary symptoms are dieback or death of leaves and stems on portions of the top and a reddish brown discoloration of the wound in diseased stems. Phomposis is chiefly a wound pathogen and stem tissue is most often affected. Pruning wounds are probably the most important cause of infection. *Seal all wounds and clean tools with alcohol or Lysol when moving from one plant to another.* Eliminate moisture stress.

Leaf Rot – Leaf rot occurs in very wet, humid weather which spreads from leaf to leaf very rapidly. Leaves turn dark brown to black and hand onto darkened stems. It can kill entire branches and plants in a very short time. Maintain good air circulation and use fungicide during very wet weather.

Insect Pests –

Lace bug	caterpillars	Leaf miner
Whitefly	Cottony azalea scale	Stem borer
Spider mites	Peony scale	

Use a systemic insecticide regularly such as Orthene

AZALEA CALENDAR –Adjust for the blooming time of your azalea

JANUARY
Do not fertilize. Ok to wire and bend, but larger branches will be brittle.
Thin out new growth and buds. Seal all wounds.
Remove all flower buds if plant is to be repotted. Reduce watering.

FEBRUARY
OK to fertilize with ¼ strength low nitrogen fertilizer.
OK to make large pruning cuts. Seal all cuts.

MARCH
Repot trees (three year cycle). Do not over water repotted trees.
Begin fertilizer schedule. (trees in training)

APRIL
Start regular watering schedule as temperature rises.
Make any thread grafts before growth starts.

MAY
Trim shoots extending beyond flowers or flower buds. Watch for pests.

JUNE
Remove all flowers, seed pods, and unopened buds.
Do hard prune after flowering, bring tree back to shape. *Fertilize.*

JULY
Do not trim after first week to avoid removing flower buds for next year.
For trees in training, flower buds can be removed as they appear.
Avoid drastic pruning as growth slows during summer heat. *Do not fertilize.*

AUGUST
Afternoon shade helpful. *Do not fertilize*. Do not wire or prune.

SEPTEMBER
Resume fertilizer after set of next year's flower buds. Do not wire or prune.

OCTOBER
Fertilize using *low nitrogen* fertilizer. Do not wire or prune.

NOVEMBER
Remove any wire not removed during summer and rewire if needed; move to full sun; first week, *give last of fertilizer for the year; reduce watering.*

DECEMBER
Do not fertilize; continue thinning summers growth and buds. *Wire and bend smaller branches, but wait until February or March to make large pruning cuts*.

BELGIAN INDIAN (INDICA) HYBRIDS

The major parents of the Belgian Indian Hybrids were tree forms of R. Simsii, collected by Robert Fortune of England in a Shanghai Nursery and sent to England in 1851. By 1854, these three varieties, all with red striped and flecked white flowers, reached Belgium, launching an enormous breeding and growing program. By 1864, all of Europe was flooded with Belgian Indian Hybrids which were bred for greenhouse growing and the florist trade. They were also bred for forcing.

In this enormous burst of activity emerged some of the most beautiful and spectacular evergreen Azaleas ever developed. The popularity of the Belgian Indian Azalea was not confined to greenhouse potted plants but extended to wide spread use in the florist trade as a cut flower. As a consequence, cultivars emphasizing flowers, semi to full doubles and many frilled petals, for forcing by the florist, were developed. The Belgian Indian Hybrids are considered tender (not hardy above zone 8). No varieties of the Belgian Indian Hybrids will be listed as they are not conducive to Bonsai culture, but only as background information leading up to the Southern Indian Hybrids.

KURUME HYBRIDS

Kurume, an industrial/agricultural inland city on the island of Kyushu, is the home of this large group of Azaleas. Mr. Motozo Sakamoto, a Samurai, is regarded as the originator of these hybrids in the 19th century. The parent stock was reportedly collected on the sacred Mt. Kirishima; whether collected, or given to Mr. Sakamoto is not certain. Four species grown in the mountains of Kyushu tat are believed to have been used in the Kurume Hybrids, R. Kaempferi, R. Kiusianum, R. Sataense, R. Obtusium, but primarily R. Kiusianaum, and R. Sataense. The Domoto Brothers, Nurserymen of California, imported thousands of plants between 1917 and 1920 and obtained exclusive rights to propagate and sell Kurume Hybrids in the United States. There have been as many as 700 Kurume Hybrids of which about 300 survive today.

A few of the most well-known in this country are as follows:

- Avalanche: white, hose-in0hose
- Hino Crimson: strong red
- Hinode Giri: vivid purplish red
- Snow: white, very light yellowish blotch
- Coral bells: strong pink, hose-in-hose
- Sherwood Red: vivid red

SOUTHERN INDIAN (INDICA) HYBRIDS

This hybrid line was developed in the deep south of the U.S. They were derived from plants purchased by Magnolia Gardens and by Prosper Julius Berckman. Mr. P.J. Berckman, a Belgian, established a nursery about 1856 in Augusta, Georgia, known as Fruitland. By 1870, Magnolia Gardens had obtained two groups of Belgian Indian Hybrids, totaling some 230 species and clones. The Southern Indian Hybrids reflect the parentage of the earlier Belgian Hybrids and the species included in the early acquisitions at Magnolia Gardens and Fruitland Nursery, such as the Indica Alba, Mucrronatum, R. Indicum and R. Simsii.

Thus, the Southern Indian Hybrids are a mixed group including forms of the Belgian Indians, R. Indicum, R. Simsii and Mucronatum. Based on habit of growth and blooming period, the Southern Indians can be divided into two groups. The first, and most common, include the tall, 8-10 feet, more open, faster growing, and earlier blooming plants.

The second group are dense, compact, slow growing, low to medium, 6-8 feet shrubs, usually late blooming and showing characteristics of R. Indicum. The flowers of the Southern Indian Azaleas are large from 2" to 3 ½", mostly single, no hose0in0hose, and a few doubles. Colors range from white through the pinks, reds, and dark purples. Some have stripes and flakes, and bordered flowers which often produce colored selfs, showing the influence of the various forms of R. Simsii.

As a group, the Southern Indian Hybrids are hardier than the Belgian Hybrids suitable for zones 8-10 and some hardier farther north. Very little breeding work has been done to improve or develop newer plants of this group. Instead, the Southern Indian Hybrids have been used in breeding programs with more cold hardy Azaleas to develop larger flowered plants for colder climates.

Some varieties of group one, the tall faster growing, more open type are as follows:

- Formosa: purple, blotch darker, 3"
- George Lindley Taber: White, flushed light to strong purplish pink, blotch darker 3 ½"
- Southern Charm: sport of Formosa, light pink, blotch darker, 2 ½".
- Fuchsia: sport of Formosa, deep purplish red, 2 ½"
- Pink Formosa: pink, tall

Some varieties of the second group, more dense, compact, lower, slower growing, are:

- Duc de Rohan: deep coral pink, blotch purplish red, 2 ¼"
- Duchess of Cypress: pink, blotch red, 2 ¼" sport of Duc de Rohan, occasional flowers of Duc de Rohan color; Introduced by Cypress Gardens.
- Duc de Rohan White: white, sport of Duc de Rohan, 2 ¼".

SATSUKI HYBRIDS

R. Indicum is native to southern Japan on Honshu and the southern islands of Shikoku, Kyushu, and Yakushima. R. Tamurae is found on the islands southy of Kyushu including Yakushima, Tanegashima, Kuchierabujoma, and Tokara. The native range of R. Indicum and R. Tamurae overlap on Yakushima Island, a small mountainous point of land 70 kilometers south of the island of Kyushu. The highest peak, Miyanouradke is 6,350 feet in elevation. Rainfall is very heavy, averaging 158 inches at sea level to 390 inches at high altitudes. The lowland is frost free, but the peaks are snow covered and frozen in winter.

R. Indicum inhabits rocky crevices on steep mountain slopes. The narrow-leafed R. Indicum is a mountainous plant with flowers of five stamens and colors ranging from pink to reddish and occasionally white.

R. Tamurae, called Maruba Satsuki, the Satsuki with round leaves, is generally found at sea level near Nagata on the northeastern coast of Yakushima. The plants grow in a harsh exposed habitat in shallow gravely or rocky soil and sand. The flowers with 8 to 10 stamens are typically red to purple with white to various shades or pink. The plants are generally low-growing, and form thick masses. Some seedlings have a vigouous upright growth habit.

R. Indicum and R. Tamurae are seldom found in the same habitat. However, at Isso and other locations near Anbo on Yakushima Island, natural hybrids do occur with the range of flower colors of Satsuki Hybrids.

Some of the more common Satsuki Hybrids:

- Osakazuki: vigorous, tall growing, pink, 2”-2½”.
- Chinsan: sport of Osakazuki, dwarf habit, very dense foliage, pink, 2”
- Chiyo no Homare: white w/vivid purplish pink stripes, many variations purplish, pink.
- Chojuho: deep red changing to strong reddish orange, small narrow strap-like lobes 1- 1½”
- Kaho: white with occasional deep pink stripes and some light to deep pink 3”.
- Korin: deep pink, star-shaped pointed lobes, 1½”-2”.
- Kozan: very pale pink to off-white, 1”-1½”.
- Wakaebisu: deep pink, hose-in-hose with rounded lobes, 2” – 2½”