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Rhododendrons. The flowering of the principal Rhododendrons in the collection is very late this year but the plants are in an unusually good condition and many varieties will be in bloom this week. Persons who desire to cultivate these plants must remember that Rhododendrons, including all Azaleas, cannot live in soil impregnated with lime. Rhododendrons are not hardy north of Massachusetts, and south of Pennsylvania the summer sun is too hot for them. The range therefore in eastern North America where these plants can be successfully cultivated is comparatively small, but probably the northwest coast of North America from southern British Columbia to northern California is as well suited for these plants as any part of the world, and there can be grown in addition to all the varieties common in European gardens the Himalayan and Chinese species which here in the east can only be kept alive in glass houses, and in Europe thrive only in a few exceptionally favorable places like Cornwall or in the neighborhood of the Italian lakes.

Rhododendrons, although they are moisture-loving plants, do not thrive in undrained positions; they do best in soil in which loam and peat have been equally mixed, although peat is not always essential to the successful cultivation of these plants. They should be planted where the roots of trees cannot take away moisture from them, and the best position for these plants is on the north side but not too near coniferous trees, as they are planted in the Arboretum. In such positions they are protected from the direct rays of the sun in March and April, for in this climate where the roots are in frozen ground in winter and therefore cannot take up moisture, it is important to reduce as much as possible winter and early spring evaporation from the leaves. It is this evaporation from the leaves of evergreens growing

in frozen soil which makes it impossible to keep alive many of them in this country; and this is the reason why it is desirable here to water thoroughly Rhododendrons just before the ground freezes in the autumn. Rhododendrons imported from Europe suffer here from the stock on which they have been grafted. The almost universal custom among European nurserymen is to use *Rhododendron ponticum* as the stock for these plants because it is easily and quickly raised and readily grafted. *R. ponticum* is not at all hardy here, and there is little doubt that our want of success with Rhododendrons imported from Europe is due, in part at least, to the stock on which they have been grafted and that the gradual or sudden death here of large plants which have been uninjured by cold or drought for twenty or thirty years is due to this cause.

The familiar Rhododendrons of New England gardens are so-called Catawbiense Hybrids and were raised in Europe many years ago by crossing *R. catawbiense*, a native of the highest summits of the Appalachian Mountains, with Himalayan species, notably the scarlet-flowered *R. arboreum*. It might be expected that plants obtained from these crosses would be hardy in proportion to the predominance of the American plant but, judging by the color of the flowers, this is not always true. Varieties like Atrosanguineum, Charles Dickens and H. W. Sargent, which have flowers as bright red as those of *R. arboreum*, are among the hardiest of all garden Rhododendrons; but varieties with white or pale flowers are more tender than those with rose pink or purple flowers which most closely show the influence of the Catawbiense parent; and unfortunately the varieties with light-colored flowers marked at the base with large brown or chocolate-colored blotches, like Sapho, are not at all hardy here.

The hardiness of these hybrid Rhododendrons can only be determined by trial, although in selecting varieties for trial it is safe to assume that plants with broad leaves resembling those of *R. catawbiense*, like Everestianum, Mrs. C. S. Sargent, Roseum elegans, Henrietta Sargent, Catawbiense album, and all the varieties with light or dark purple flowers are likely to prove hardier than the plants with narrow leaves like Mrs. John Chitton. There are, of course, exceptions to such a rule. For example, Pink Pearl has broad leaves and is very tender; and Gomer Waterer, although it has leaves as broad as those of any of these hybrids, usually suffers in winter and almost invariably loses its flower-buds.

Persons who want to plant Catawbiense Hybrid Rhododendrons should take advantage of the knowledge which has been laboriously and expensively obtained about these plants at Wellesley on Mr. Hunnewell's estate, where Rhododendrons have been tested on a large scale for sixty years, and here at the Arboretum where many of the hardiest kinds raised in England, Germany, and the United States will now soon be in flower.

There are other evergreen Rhododendrons which are not as often cultivated here in Massachusetts as they might be. *R. catawbiense* itself is perfectly hardy and none of its hybrids have handsomer foliage. It grows slowly, however, and never to a very large size, and the flowers are of a disagreeable purple rose color.

Rhododendron maximum, which grows naturally as far north as southern New Hampshire, is a large plant sometimes treelike in habit,



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