

# *How to Care for a* CONVERSATION PIECE AZALEA Shrub Rhododendron ‘Conversation Piece’

## **SELECT SITE:**

Light Requirements: Morning sun with dappled or afternoon shade is ideal.

This evergreen will grow larger, to 3-4 ft. tall; space 3-5 ft. away from other plants or structures to accommodate mature width. For hedges, space 3 ft. on furniture.

Easy to grow when planted in the right spot: Prefers a moist yet well drained & acidic soil that is organically rich. Constantly soggy or wet soil is problematic.

Versatile Plant for:

Borders, around patios, near the home foundation,

Ideal USDA Plant Hardiness Zones: 6,7,8,9

\*\* (cannot be overwintered outdoors in Zones 1-5) \*\*

## **PLANT PREP:**

Open box upon arrival, remove packing materials to let the plant “breathe”. Remove plastic bag, tape, and newspaper. Water well. There are drainage holes in the bottom of the pot so do this outside where the extra water will drain away.

## **HOLE PREP:**

Dig saucer shaped hole. The depth is determined by measuring the height of the roots from root flare to bottom. The width is 2-3 times the root ball diameter. Using these calculations, the ideal hole for the new bush will be approximately 10” tall by 24-30” wide.

## **PLANTING:**

Place plant in hole and adjust for aesthetics. Hold in place while adding more soil, until the hole is completely filled. Push soil down until firm. Do not plant the shrub deeper than it has already been growing. Water well immediately after planting. Mulch with pine straw, leaves or pine bark evenly to a depth of 2-3 inches being sure to stay at least 4” away from its trunk.

## **FUTURE MAINTENANCE:**

Frequent and light fertilizer applications with an acid-forming fertilizer containing iron and other micronutrients, often labeled “Azalea Special Fertilizer” should be applied as needed.

Several light prunings just after flowering and continuing through the growing season result in a compact, denser plant. Flower buds are initiated in late spring and early summer, long before they can be seen, so pruning should cease before midsummer to prevent removing the spring blooms.