

Florida flame azalea

(*Rhododendron austrinum*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Florida flame azalea is a deciduous flowering shrub found in hardwood, floodplain and slope forests, bluffs and ravines in North Florida. Although easily overlooked most of the year, it puts on a stunning spring display of fragrant fiery flowers. The blooms appear before (or as) the plant leafs out, and attract hummingbirds, butterflies and bees. The plant is a state-listed endangered species.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

Flowers are yellow to orange with long, trumpet-shaped corolla that are covered in sticky, gland-tipped hairs. The corolla opens into five lobes. Pistil and stamens are elongated and conspicuously extend beyond the floral tube. Calyx is five-lobed. Flowers are born in clusters. Leaves are simple, elliptic to ovate and pubescent with entire or minutely toothed margins. Apices are pointed. Leaf arrangement is alternate. Branches are loose. Seeds are born in inconspicuous cylindrical capsules.

The genus *Rhododendron* comes from the Greek *rhodon*, or "rose," and *dendron*, or "tree."

Family: Ericaceae (Heath family)

Native range: Panhandle east to Leon and Wakulla counties; Baker County

To see where natural populations of Florida flame azalea have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Lifespan: Perennial

Soil: Moist, acidic sandy, clay or loamy soils

Exposure: Filtered shade

Growth habit: 5–10' tall, 3–5' wide

Propagation: Seed

Florida regions of landscape suitability: North

Garden tips: Florida flame azalea is our showiest native azalea. It is an excellent ornamental plant that works well as a specimen or in a mass planting. It is easy to grow and requires little maintenance once established, but does not tolerate salt exposure.

Florida flames azaleas are often available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit www.PlantRealFlorida.org to find a nursery in your area.



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