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# ARNOLD ARBORETUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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## BULLETIN

OF

## POPULAR INFORMATION



JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.

JUNE 11, 1914

## BULLETIN NO. 58.

Six of the species of Rhododendrons with deciduous leaves (Azalea) of eastern North America are well established in the Arboretum, and no group of plants perfectly suited to our climate surpasses them in beauty. The first of these plants to bloom, *R. Vaseyi*, opens its small pink flowers early in May before the leaves appear. This Azalea is an inhabitant of a few of the high valleys of the Blue Ridge in North and South Carolina and had been entirely overlooked until some thirty years ago. It is a plant of loose irregular habit, sometimes growing to the height of fifteen or eighteen feet, although in cultivation it begins to flower when less than a foot high. It is perfectly hardy, and the pure perfect pink of its flowers is hardly equalled by that of the flowers of any other plant. There is a form of this Azalea with white flowers. It grows best in rather moist soil in the neighborhood of water, and single individuals generally look better than the large masses sometimes seen in public parks.

Not much later two other pink-flowered species are in bloom, *R. canescens* and *R. nudiflorum*; the former is a more northern and the latter a more southern species, although the two often grow in the same locality. Both produce pale rose or pink flowers of various shades which appear before the leaves or just as they begin to unfold, and their general appearance is very similar. These plants grow singly or in great masses on treeless hillsides or in open woods. *R. canescens* is very abundant in some parts of Worcester County, Massachusetts, and the bundles of branches covered with pink flowers which excursionists on the northern railroads bring into Boston in May are of this species. These two Azaleas take kindly to cultivation and thrive in good soil in either shady or open situations.

The next of these Azaleas to flower, the yellow Azalea of the Appalachian Mountain slopes, *R. calendulaceum*, is now in bloom. The beauty of the brilliant flowers is heightened by contrast with the dark green leaves which are well grown before the flowers open; these vary from bright yellow to orange or shades of red and are not surpassed in brilliancy by those of any other Azalea now in cultivation. *R. calendulaceum* is a slow-growing but long-lived plant, and in time will reach a height of eight or ten feet. There is a large mass of these plants showing the variations in the color of the flowers on the lower side of Azalea Path, and a number of individuals are scattered in border-plantations along the different roads. The flowers of the yellow Azalea will soon be followed by those of another inhabitant of the glades of the Appalachian Mountains from Pennsylvania to Georgia, *R. arborescens*. This is a tall shrub with large, pure white, very fragrant flowers, the beauty of which is increased by the bright scarlet color of the long filaments of the stamens and of the style. The pale leaves of this plant are fully grown before the flowers open. There are many small plants of this species on the lower side of Azalea Path, and there is a mass of it on the Valley Road in front of the Hickories. The last of these Azaleas to bloom (*R. viscosum*) will not be in flower for several weeks. It is a common inhabitant of low wet ground in the eastern part of the country, and is popularly known as the Swamp Honeysuckle. The small white flowers continue to open during many weeks and their fragrance, which is greater than that of the other Azaleas, makes known their presence especially in the evening, from a long distance.

Seedlings of two other American species have been raised at the Arboretum, but it is too soon to judge of their value as garden plants. They are *R. austrinum*, with slender pale yellow flowers appearing before the leaves, a native of the valley of the Apalachicola River in western Florida, and *R. candidum* from southern Georgia, with white or pale pink flowers appearing after the leaves. There is another Azalea to introduce into the gardens. This a native of central Georgia where, in some localities, it is very abundant in open woods. Discovered by Michaux, the French botanist, more than a century ago and confounded by him and all later authors with *R. calendulaceum*, it has been called the variety *flammeum* of that species. From *R. calendulaceum*, however, this plant, which should be called *R. flammeum*, differs in its winter-buds, in the size and shape of the flowers and in the fact that the flowers open before the leaves. The flowers on different plants vary from yellow to deep orange and to scarlet; and the flowers of no other Azalea compare in brilliancy with some of the deep-colored forms of this Georgia plant, which it is reasonable to hope may prove hardy here as several plants from the same general region are well established in the Arboretum. The beautiful, white-flowered Azalea (*R. occidentale*) from the borders of streams on the western slopes of the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Mountains of the west has not yet proved hardy here probably because just the right place has not been found for it.

These native Azaleas are handsomer, hardier, and in every way more satisfactory than the so-called Ghent Azaleas which are hybrids of some of our species with the Caucasian yellow-flowered Azalea (*R. flavum* or *Azalea pontica*). This plant is not hardy here, and its influence on the Ghent hybrids has been unfortunate so far as this country is concerned. Many of these hybrids are beautiful flowering plants; some are quite hardy but most of them show evidence of a poor constitution; they grow slowly and suffer in severe winters, and none of them have the vigor of their American parents. These Ghent hybrids are raised by grafting in great quantities in European nurseries and many of them come to this country. It is impossible, however, to obtain the native plants in large quantities. Occasionally plants collected from the woods are offered for sale, but these collected plants are always less desirable than nursery-raised seedlings which are rarely to be found; and the American nurseryman who will take up the raising of seedling American Azaleas on a large scale will confer a benefit on American gardens.

*Magnolia glauca* of the Atlantic coast region from Massachusetts to Florida is in bloom. No small tree is a more delightful inhabitant of the garden, where it is an object of beauty throughout the year with its bright green branches in winter and its beautiful leaves which are dark green and very lustrous above and silvery white below, and which remain on the branches at the north without change of color until the beginning of winter and in the south till early spring. The small, creamy white, cup-shaped flowers continue to open during many weeks, and especially in the evening fill the air with their delicate pungent odor; they are followed by the cone-shaped fruits which are common to all Magnolias and are showy when the scarlet seeds hang from them on slender threads. Every one with a garden who makes the acquaintance of this plant wants to grow it; it is easily raised from seed, and at the end of three or four years seedling plants are of saleable size. In spite of the demand for it, which would increase if plants could be had, it is almost impossible to find this Magnolia in American nurseries. *Magnolia Thompsoniana* is also in good bloom. This is a hybrid raised in

England many years ago between *M. glauca* and the American Umbrella-tree, *M. tripetala*. It has leaves like the leaves of *M. glauca*, which it also resembles in the perfume of the cup-shaped pure white flowers intermediate in size between those of its parents. Unlike many hybrids which are usually hardier and more vigorous than their parents, *M. Thompsoniana* is less hardy than either *M. glauca* or *M. tripetala*, and sometimes has been killed to the ground in severe winters. The latest of the Magnolias, *M. macrophylla*, now covered with buds, is still to flower. This handsome tree is interesting for it has larger leaves and larger flowers than any other plant of the northern hemisphere beyond the tropics. A native of the south from North Carolina to Louisiana, it is perfectly hardy here; it is best planted, however, in sheltered positions as the leaves are easily torn and disfigured by the wind. These Magnolias are on the right-hand side of the Jamaica Plain entrance east of the Administration Building.

On the Administration Building a plant of the Japanese climbing Hydrangea (*H. petiolaris*) is now in flower. In the country this plant is usually seen climbing up the trunks and spreading over the branches of trees, but it has been found capable of attaching its stems firmly to brick-work and therefore to be useful in covering walls and buildings. The bright green foliage makes a handsome contrast with the broad heads of flowers which are surrounded by a row of neutral ray flowers of medium size. Two shrubby Hydrangeas will soon be in flower in the Shrub Collection, *H. Bretschneideri* from northern China and its variety *setchuenensis* from western China. The former is an old inhabitant of the Arboretum and is a tall, free-flowering shrub well worth a place in all collections. The variety which is less well known appears to be perfectly hardy and equally free-flowering.

Some of the earliest of the large collection of Mock Oranges (*Philadelphus*) are already in bloom. The earliest this year is *Philadelphus hirsutus* of the southern Appalachian region, a tall shrub of rather open habit, with small flowers and of no great ornamental value. The Korean form of *P. Schrenkii* (var. *Jackii*), a plant of columnar habit and the European *P. coronarius*, the Mock Orange of all old-fashioned gardens, are also in bloom. Of the latter there are in the collection a dwarf form which does not often bloom, a form with yellow leaves and one with very narrow leaves (var. *salicifolia*), a distinct and interesting plant.

Other interesting plants now in flower in the Shrub Collection are the Chinese *Cotoneaster hupehensis*, with white flowers which are showier than those of the other species of the genus, and make the plant look like a Spiraea, *Indigofera Kirilowii* from Korea, with pink flowers, *Genista germanica*, and *Spiraea bracteata* from Japan, a large shrub with long arching branches and one of the handsomest of the still little known Spiraeas, *Lonicera Ledebourii* is still in good condition, and *L. Kirilowii amoena* is only just now dropping its lovely pink flowers.

This bulletin will reach its Massachusetts readers at a time when a visit to the Arboretum will repay all lovers of flowers for the Laurels (*Kalmias*) will be in bloom at the base of Hemlock Hill.

**The Arboretum will be grateful for any publicity given these Bulletins.**



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