

spindly, take a sharp knife or razor blade and remove the center growth bud before the new growth begins. Too much low shade causes this. With a little sunlight the plants will nearly shape themselves and you get more blooms. Plant in a well drained, sandy, heavy humus soil, or top with a few inches of forest humus, a little peat moss, or "perlite." I have used both or all three for better results.

I am not a taxonomist, but have studied the living plants and have separated our native species of the eastern rhododendrons and azaleas. There is still much to be done, and there are yet some to be separated. Each species has many variations, and I think Linnaeus gave us the best system yet worked out, and a beautiful conversation subject. I still think Michaux, Gray, and Rehder were right in separating into three separate species, these three lepidote rhododendrons.

Torch was picked up and kept flaming

In the late 1980s and early 1990s **John T. Thornton**, **Lloyd Cotton**, and **Robert E. "Buddy" Lee** picked up the torch from Coleman. While studying and researching American native rhododendrons, the group reported:

"We found a large population of *R. alabamense* Rehder growing along the Big Flat Creek in Monroe County. These plants seemed to be much taller growing than the type form of *R. alabamense* from Northern Alabama. Many plants were more than 15 feet tall with five inch diameter trunks. Flowering occurs after new growth. Flower or petal colors were white to pink with yellow-orange blotch. The blotches seemed to be more pronounced than in the type form. The flowers were extremely fragrant. We often could smell the flowers before we could find them. Some plants had flowers with heavy substance and may be polyploid."

'Maypink'

In the early 50s, Coleman had found and propagated a late blooming native azalea thought to be a variant of *R. alabamense*. He named it 'Maypink'. In the 1990s, **Steve Yeatts** with **Bob Stevens** began searching for colonies of the late blooming *R. alabamense* in the coastal plain of Alabama. They found a big colony near Owassa. Yeatts, along with other fellow searchers, collected samples of those plants and had their DNA analyzed by the University of Washington. 'Maypink' proved to be a tetraploid, whereas *R. alabamense* is a diploid. To honor the man who first publicized its unique qualities this rhododendron was named *R. colemanii*.

As Coleman said: "In closing, I may ask what are the rewards of such an undertaking. I suppose they vary with the individual. I doubt that fame or money would ever be the aim."

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The Azalean needs articles about azaleas, their care, and their use in the landscape. Articles should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents. Illustrations are highly encouraged.

Submit articles to: Pam Fitch; Editor, *The Azalean*; P.O. Box 632537; Nacogdoches, TX 75963 or e-mail: theazalean@gmail.com.