Hints on Growing Potted Azaleas – Care of House and Garden Plants
Michigan State University
Cooperative Extension Service
Home and Family Series
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Care of House and Garden Plants

Hints on Growing Potted Azaleas

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The azalea is one of the longest lasting, flowering potted plants obtainable from a florist provided it is given proper care. It is also one of only a few plants that may be successfully flowered in the home for several years in succession.

Light

Place in bright, sunny window. If light is inadequate, leaves will fall.

Water

Apply water to soil until it runs out the drainage hole. Leaves will fall if it is not properly watered. If the soil feels warm and dry, the plant should be thoroughly watered immediately.

If the soil is cool and moist no water is needed. Too frequent watering may kill plant by lack of air in soil.

After Flowering

Keep in a sunny place. Water properly. Fertilize regularly.

Fertilizer

A liquid fertilizer, obtainable at your florist, is satisfactory provided you follow instructions on the container. Fertilize monthly in the winter, every two weeks in summer.

Add ferrous sulfate once a month at the rate of ¼ tablespoon per pot. The foliage may turn yellow and plant will stop growing if this is not done. Don't allow fertilizer to come in contact with foliage.

Pruning

After the plant is through flowering, shoots will begin to grow on the ends of the stem. Pinch them to shape up the plant. The tip of the shoot may be pinched whenever two or three strong, vigorous leaves have grown on the shoot. Don't pinch after June 15.

Summer Care

About June 1 an azalea plant may be placed outdoors under partial shade. The pot may be plunged so that only the rim is above the soil line. Continue fertilization and watering while the plant is outdoors.

Autumn Care

About Sept. 1 bring the plant indoors and put in a partially shaded place in a cool room. If possible temperature should be 50°F.

Fertilization may be decreased during this period (once a month). However, the plants should be properly watered.

Flowering

In February, the flower buds should be developed to the point where the plant may be forced into bloom. In order to force the plant, place it in a position of abundant light. Temperature should be 65° to 75°F.

Frequent spraying or lightly wetting down the top of the plant will help cause all the flower buds to open at about the same time.

After flowering, handle the plants in the same manner as the previous year.

Repotting

If the plant becomes so large that the soil dries out quickly, shift into a larger pot. Use a soil mix of ½ good loam soil and ½ peat. Do not remove any soil of the original soil ball when making the shift.

Make sure the drainage hole is kept clear with a piece of broken pot or small curved stone so the water can run out freely.

The soil should be firmed, but not packed around the original soil ball. Also, leave space at the top of the pot to hold water when the plant is watered.

Pests

Lace Bugs These gray-white insects, 3/16 inch long, have lacy wings with brown and black markings. They frequent the undersides of the leaves where they suck plant juices. This reduces plant vigor and causes the upper leaf surfaces to become stippled, blanched, or yellowed.

Control: Spray plants, make sure to cover the lower leaf surfaces with either:

	100 Gal. of Water	1 Gal. of Water
57% Malathion emulsion, or	1½ pts.	1½ tsp
20% Lindane emulsion, or	1½ pts.	1½ tsp.
50% Sevin wettable powder, or	2 lbs.	2 tbs.
50% DDT wettable powder	2 lbs.	2 tbs.

Repeat spray in 2 weeks.

Thrips Alligator-shaped insects about 1/16 inch long, yellow to brownish-black in color infest the lower surface of the leaves. They rasp the leaf tissues, liberating the plants juices which they suck up. Plants are weakened and the foliage becomes silvered or whitened.

Control — *Spray* plants every 10 days with either:

	100 Gal. of Water	1 Gal. of Water
57% Malathion emulsion, or	1½ pts.	1½ tsp
20% Lindane emulsion, or	1½ pts.	1½ tsp.
50% DDT wettable powder	2 lbs.	2 tbs.

Or *dust* plants every 10 days with either: 1% Lindane dust, or 4% Malathion dust, or 5% DDT dust.

Whether using sprays or dusts, coverage of lower leaf surfaces is essential for effective control.

Aphids Soft bodied, pale green to black, insects about 1/8 inch long, suck juices from new growth or bases of buds. Both the adults and immature nymphs are pear-shaped but only the adults possess wings. Their feeding reduces the vigor of the plants and causes leaves to curl and flowers to become distorted. Honeydew liberated by the aphids adheres to the foliage and serves as a medium for, and is turned black by, a sooty mold fungus. This adds further to the disfigurement of the plant.

Control — *Spray* plants with either:

	100 Gal. of Water	1 Gal. of Water
20% Lindane emulsion, or	1½ pts.	1½ tsp.
57% Malathion emulsion, or	1½ pts.	1½ tsp
25% Diazinon emulsion	1½ pts	1½ tsp.

Or *dust* plants with 2% Lindane dust, 5% Malathion dust or 2% Diazinon dust.

Red Spider Mites Not insects, but red or greenish red creatures about 1/50 inch long, that are closely allied to spiders. They pierce tissues and suck up the plant juices thus reducing the vigor of the plant. Infested foliage becomes stippled, yellow, and then dies. Mites can be detected by forcibly jarring a portion of the foliage over a white piece of paper; mites will appear as tiny moving specks.

Control — *Spray* plants with either:

	100 Gal. of Water	1 Gal. of Water
18.5% Kelthane emulsion, or	1 pt	1 tsp.
25% Aramite emulsion, or	1 pt.	1 tsp.
57% Malathion emulsion	1½ pts.	1½ tsp.

A second spray in 7 to 10 days may be necessary.

Leaf Roller Yellow Caterpillars about ½ inch long first mine between the upper and lower leaf surfaces, then roll and tie several leaves together. The adult, a moth with purple and yellow wings about 3/8 inch across, lays eggs on the leaves. Best control is obtained by spraying when the larvae first begin to form mines.

Control — Spray when the leaf mining stage is first noticed with either:

	100 Gal. of Water	1 Gal. of Water
57% Malathion emulsion, or	1½ pts.	1½ tsp
20% Lindane emulsion	1½ pts.	1½ tsp.

Azalea Whitefly Adult whiteflies, winged, wedge shaped insects 1/16 inch long, and wingless immature nymphs frequent the underside of new tender leaves. When disturbed, the adults fly in all directions. They suck sap from the leaves causing them to become pale, stippled and then drop. Honeydew secreted by the whiteflies accumulates and turns black with sooty mold adding to the disfigurement of the plant.

Control — Spray or dip plants, making sure to cover lower leaf surfaces, with either:

	100 Gal. of Water	1 Gal. of Water
57% Malathion emulsion, or	1½ pts.	1½ tsp
25% DDT emulsion	3 pts.	1 tbs.

Or *dust* plants paying particular attention to covering lower leaf surfaces with either 5% DDT dust, 2% lindane dust or 5% Malathion dust.

Disease

Petal Blight first appears on petals of opened flowers as translucent, whitish spots that feel slimy; in one or two days the petal collapses.

Control — *Spray* with Zineb 75% wettable powder, 1 to 1½ tablespoons per gal.

Leaf Gall deforms flowers and shoots.

Control — Spray with Zineb 75% wettable powder or Captan 50% wettable powder 1½ tablespoon/gal. Pick off galls and destroy.

CAUTION: — *Do not spray* plants with pesticides *in the house.* Remove to a garage or outside if weather permits. Always keep pesticides away from children.

For further information on insects and disease control contact the Department of Entomology or Botany and Plant Pathology of Michigan State University.

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