



Cedar Rim Nursery

Class Information

Class # 47

October 27, 2001

Companion Planting for Rhododendrons

Planting Rhododendrons and Azaleas can be an exciting and colorful adventure in your garden. Bringing out the total beauty of these acidic soil loving plants need not be a chore. Gardens totally dependent on one season's display are often missing out on flower, foliage and bark colors offered by the other seasons of the year. There are many bulbs, perennials, shrubs and trees that will give you a visual effect of colour all year.

The Rhodos in your garden prefer a loose, moist, quick-draining, high organic matter soil with a low PH. Other things to take into consideration are the heights, colour and blooming time of your Rhodos. An example of this would be the **Cornus florida Rubra** planted with or next to white or near white Rhodos. The **Cornus** comes into leaf as the Rhodo is near the end of flowering and in the fall takes on rich orange and scarlett tints. A suitable ground cover under the Rhodo and **Cornus** would be **Pachysandra terminalis (Japanese Spurge)** with its evergreen foliage and low-maintenance growing habits. A crowning touch of some early blooming bulbs such as **Crocuses** or **Eranthis cilicica (Winter Aconite)** would complete this picture.

We have put together a list of suitable plants to incorporate into your Rhodo beds to compliment and enhance the beauty of your Rhodos.

Trees:

- ***Acer Palmatum Atropurpureum:** In a wind protected and light shade spot, this slow growing tree will be a good background specimen.
- ***Amelanchier Canadensis (Serviceberry):** Display against a dark background to show off the flowers, form and fall colour.
- ***Cercidiphyllum Japonicum Katsura:** In acid soil this tree will have the best foliage colour. Slow growing pyramidal shape when young with foliage changing color during growing season.
- ***Cercis Canadensis (Redbud):** Will take light shade and displays great fall colour. Height up to 25', good for the back of a bed.
- ***Nyssa Sylvatica (Sour Gum):** This slow growing shade tree loves all the same conditions as a Rhodo. Leaves turn yellow and orange then bright red.
- ***Prunus Subhirtella Autumnalis:** Height to 30', is an excellent choice for that shade tree to protect Rhodos from hot sun. Can flower in winter if the weather is mild enough.

Other trees to consider are: Cedars, Firs, Hawthorn, Hemlock, Junipers, Pine and Spruce.

Shrubs:

- ***Buddleia Davidii (Butterfly Bush):** This fast growing, lanky shrub will produce fragrant blooms in the summer.
- ***Camellias:** A must for any West Coast garden but does require a few extra special needs. Protection from hot sun and drying winds may be to your advantage with these shrubs. Place near a shade tree to fill those empty spots.
- ***Deutzia:** This is an excellent little shrub that blends well with evergreens and blooms in late spring.
- ***Escallonia (Newport Dwarf):** Grows to 2 1/2' tall and 4' wide, so is good for the front of some taller growing Rhodos. A pretty deep pink to red flower will compliment many of the paler shades of Rhodos.

***Kalmia Latifolia (Mountain Laurel):** Requiring the same conditions as a Rhodo make this shrub a must as a companion plant. There are many different varieties so there is one to compliment any Rhodo garden.

***Philadelphus (Mock Orange):** A large and vigorous grower, this shrub would do well with some of the dwarf Rhodos or Azaleas. The fragrant blooms usually appear in late spring or early summer.

A few other shrubs to take into consideration are: Pieris japonica, Holly, Hydrangea and Magnolias. Mahonia, Osmanthus, Sambucus and Viburnums

Perennials and Bulbs

The list of Perennials and Bulbs suitable for the Rhodo garden is extensive. Picking perennials and bulbs to compliment the height of the plant and the colour of the blooms will finish the look of any Rhodo garden. Here is a list of some of the wonderful perennials you could use to complete the picture.

Aconitum

Alchemilla mollis

Aquilegia alpina

Aronia

Astrantia major

Bergenia

Campanula (Varieties)

Centhranthus ruber

Cerastostigma willmottianum

Geranium (Varieties)

Iris germanica

Lamium maculatum

Ligularia

Myosotis sylvestris

Polygonatum

Vinca minor

Viola

A few bulbs to add to the list are:

Anemones

Crocus

Cyclamen

Chionodoxa

Erythronium

Iris reticulata

Leucojum

Lily

Montbretia

Muscari

Scilla

And Trollius

Pick your plants and have some fun making that evergreen Rhodo garden into a colorful piece of art.