

# ARNOLD ARBORETUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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**Azaleas** are fast opening their blossoms in the Arboretum, forming drifts of brilliant colors here, there and everywhere; the finest display being on the western slope of Bussey Hill. Strictly speaking, Azaleas are referable to the genus *Rhododendron* and cannot be separated therefrom by any fixed characters of botanical value. For garden purposes, however, they are easily separable by their general appearance, their small, thin, and in case of the hardy sorts, deciduous foliage. The flowers of no other group of hardy shrubs present such a range of brilliant colors—white, pink, yellow, orange, salmon to flaming red and scarlet in tones of great purity and vividness. Many species are delightfully fragrant and all are abundantly floriferous. The first Azalea to flower in the Arboretum is *R. dauricum mucronulatum*, which opens its blossoms in April at the flush of early spring, the last is *R. viscosum*, blooming in July. In height of bush they average from 5 to 8 feet but with age may grow 10 or 15 feet tall; all are of shapely habit, branching freely and are usually broader than they are high. Some like *R. Vaseyi* are partial to moist places, others like *R. calendulaceum* flourish on dry banks. But they are all good-natured and easily adapt themselves to a variety of situations. They may be planted in full exposure or under the shade of trees. Most of them are ideal when associated with deciduous trees, especially Oaks, either on the fringe of woodlands or in glades. The flowers of Kaempfer's Azalea (*R. obtusum. Kaempferi*) are apt to bleach in full sun and this Azalea is seen to best advantage under the overhanging branches of Fir or Pine. So far as is known none of the really hardy species are subject to disease of any kind, nor are they attacked by insect pests. They demand, however, a lime-free soil. In the Arboretum Azaleas have been very extensively planted and from the end of April until mid-July produce a rich display of color. The collection proper occupies the western slope of Bussey Hill, but there are groups among the Oaks, and clumps by the roadside and by the edge of ponds. As arranged these Azaleas give arresting bits of color in all sorts of unexpected places. Here and there a flame of orange or red, a patch of yellow, a drift of pink or a sheet of the purest white stands forth. In some places, hidden among other bushes, the exhaled fragrance leads a visitor to their discovery.



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