

## ALABAMA RHODODENDRON

*Rhododendron alabamense* Rehd.

**Synonyms:** *Azalea alabamensis* (Rehder) Ashe

**Family:** Ericaceae (heath)

**FNAI Ranks:** G4/S2

**Legal Status:** US-none FL-Endangered

**Wetland Status:** US-none+ FL-UPL



*Rhododendron alabamense*



*Rhododendron austrinum*

Gil Nelson

**Field Description:** **Shrub**, 6 - 12 feet tall with hairy young **twigs** that become hairless in summer. **Leaves** 1 - 3 inches long, simple, alternate, deciduous; hairs on both surfaces scattered except dense on midveins; leaf margins entire with short straight hairs. **Flowers** fragrant, appearing before or with new twig growth, white with yellow blotch on the upper lobe. **Winter buds** hairless except for short straight hairs on the margins of the bud scales.

**Similar Species:** Pinxter flower (*Rhododendron canescens*) has densely hairy twigs, leaf stalks, and flower parts; its flowers are pale pink. Hybrids with Alabama rhododendron have pink flowers with yellow blotch on the upper lobe.

**Related Rare Species:** Orange azalea (*Rhododendron austrinum*), state-endangered, is the only orange- or yellow-flowered azalea in FL; it flowers March - April. Winter buds are hairy, and leaf margins have tiny teeth with short, spiky,

## Alabama rhododendron

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transparent hairs that point toward the leaf tip. Also see Chapman's rhododendron (*Rhododendron chapmanii*) in this guide.

**Habitat:** Upland hardwood forests and on bluffs and banks of streams in the FL Panhandle.

**Best Survey Season:** Spring; March - April, otherwise difficult to identify.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Alabama rhododendron: FL, AL, GA, TN. Orange azalea: FL, GA, AL.

**Conservation Status:** Only a few populations of Alabama rhododendron are known in FL and only one occurs in a conservation area. More than 50 populations, in 13 counties, of orange azalea are known; most of these are protected.

**Protection and Management:** Avoid logging, fire, or other disturbance in upland hardwood forests. Do not remove wild azaleas from their habitats.

**References:** Coile 2000, Foote and Jones 1989, Godfrey 1988, Nelson 1996, Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1998, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.