

# Florida flame azalea

(*Rhododendron austrinum*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_botanical\\_terms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms).

Florida flame azalea is a deciduous flowering shrub found in hardwood, floodplain and slope forests, bluffs and ravines in North Florida. Although easily overlooked most of the year, it puts on a stunning spring display of fragrant fiery flowers. The blooms appear before (or as) the plant leafs out, and attract hummingbirds, butterflies and bees. The plant is a state-listed endangered species.

Flowers are yellow to orange with long, trumpet-shaped corollas that are covered in sticky, gland-tipped hairs. The corolla opens into five lobes. Pistil and stamens are elongated and conspicuously extend beyond the floral tube. Calyx is five-lobed. Flowers are born in clusters. Leaves are simple, elliptic to ovate and pubescent with entire or minutely toothed margins. Apices are pointed. Leaf arrangement is alternate. Branches are loose. Fruit is an inconspicuous cylindrical capsule.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

The genus *Rhododendron* is from the Greek *rhodon*, or “rose,” and *dendron*, or “tree.”

**Family:** Ericaceae (Heath, azalea or blueberry family)

**Native range:** Panhandle east to Leon and Wakulla counties; Baker County

To see where natural populations of Florida flame azalea have been vouchered, visit [www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu](http://www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu).

**Hardiness:** Zones 8A–9B

**Lifespan:** Perennial

**Soil:** Moist, acidic, sandy, clay or loamy soils

**Exposure:** Filtered shade

**Growth habit:** 5–10' tall, 3–5' wide

**Propagation:** Seed

**Garden tips:** Florida flame azalea is our showiest native azalea. It is an excellent ornamental plant that works well as a specimen or in a mass planting. It is easy to grow and requires little maintenance once established, but does not tolerate salt exposure.

Plants are occasionally available from nurseries that specialize in Florida native plants. Visit [www.PlantRealFlorida.org](http://www.PlantRealFlorida.org) to find a nursery in your area.