

The japanese azalea

Azalea japonica.

Family: Ericaceae.

Origin: Native to japan, it is now cultivated in a lot of american and european countries.

The Azalea is a very typical japanese evergreen flowering shrub of the heath family. There are a big amount of species and varieties, but not all of them can be grown as pot plants. The japanese azaleas bloom in spring if held outside, inside it is possible to produce flowers during winter and very early spring. The flower color spectrum ranges from white through all shades of pink to purple.

Light: Position the azaleas outside during summer in the light shade better than in direct sun.

Temperature and exposure: Azaleas are very sensible against dry soil so they should be protected of hot winds. They are sun resistant but a humid soil must be assured in every moment.

Pruning and cleaning: You should not prune azaleas too rigorously, but green shoots may be pruned or entirely removed to keep the plant in form.

Fertilizer: I use a organic solid fertilizer which i apply during the growing and flowering season, that is from soon spring to late september.

Wiring: Wire from spring to summer. You will only be able to wire the young branches because the trunk and big branches are quite hard and the wood will break if you try to bend it too hard. Always be sure to use raffia to protect the dark brown bark.

Watering: The azaleas root growth must not be necessarily very vigorous, but anyway assure a good drainage. They need a lot of water during the hot season, so be sure to let never dry the soil out. Cut down the quantity of water in wintertime.

Diseases: The only plague i have suffered on this azalea were louses which I removed with a shower of water and appliance of highly dissolved Folithion.

Repotting / Soil: As the growth of the tree and in consequence of the roots is not necessarily vigorous i repot the tree every two years eliminating the third part of the root ball. For my azalea I prefer a glazed rectangular pot. The mixture I use is composed of 1/4 of peat moss, 1/4 humus or leaf mold, 1/4 of sand and 1/4 of loam.