Pacific Rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*)
Heather Family

**Why Choose It?**

The large clusters of eye-catching spring blooms are the main attraction of this native Rhododendron. It is one of the showiest of our wild shrubs and adapts well to garden settings.

*Photo: Clayton Antieau*

**In the Garden**

These plants belong in the understory. If you have been wondering what to grow under the tall conifers that you inherited when you moved into your house, these large, native rhododendrons will be quite at home there, adding glorious color when they bloom in the spring. Because they tend to be tall, they can be underplanted with ferns, salal, Oregon grape, or other low growing natives. They grow well in natural woodland settings, and because they are adapted to our dry summers, are one of the most drought tolerant rhododendrons.

**The Facts**

Pacific Rhododendron is a medium to large, evergreen shrub with beautiful trusses of rose pink to purplish and sometimes even white flowers. It tends to grow tall with an open habit when in the shade of large conifers, but will stay smaller and more compact in areas where it gets more sun. It will not thrive in wide open sunny spots however. It likes a moist, acidic soil, and needs some protection from winter wind. Because it grows slowly in the garden, it does not require much in the way of pruning.

**Where to See It**

Pacific Rhododendron can be found in western Washington in moist woods from sea level to moderate elevations in the mountains.
And it’s the State Flower!

In 1893, each state chose a flower to represent it at the World’s Fair in Chicago. In Washington, several flowers were nominated, but in the end it was a competition between the Rhododendron and a clover. Ironically, only women were allowed to vote in this election, at a time when there was no universal suffrage. The Rhododendron won, not by a large margin, and was then adopted by the state Senate in time for the exposition in Chicago.

You can find out more information about native plants, including where to buy them, from the Washington Native Plant Society.

www.wnps.org

Photo: Clayton Antieau

Native Plant Spotlights

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