

RHODODENDRON MAXIMUM L.
Great Rhododendron

FAMILY: Ericaceae

HABIT: Evergreen shrub to 10 m.; flowering June-July; fruiting August- October.

SIMILAR SPECIES: This straggling shrub, with its thick evergreen leaves, is quite distinctive, but is frequently confused with Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). A folk name for *R. maximum* is "Laurel," and this may further confuse the situation.

TOTAL RANGE: N.S. to s. Ont. and se. OH, s., especially in the mountains, to GA and AL.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): There are post-1980 records from Fairfield, Hocking, Jackson, Jefferson, and Scioto counties. There is a pre-1960 record from Lawrence County.

HABITAT: This plant requires moderate shade, high humidity, and acidic soils. It is found in damp, deep woods of protected coves and north-facing exposures.

HAZARDS: Collection for horticultural uses. The hardiness and late blooming quality of this species in relation to other *Rhododendron* species give it special advantages in an outdoor garden, and it is often dug for this purpose. This species is known to decrease in vigor in extremely dense shade.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown if natural recovery is allowed, but probably good if planted in its native habitat. Populations declining under dense shade would benefit from the selective thinning of the canopy.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: This evergreen plant is identifiable year-round, however, it is most easily seen in the winter. Make an effort to determine if the population is of native origin.

COMMENTS: Many of the Ohio populations of this plant are well known as it is obvious, both in and out of flower, and is popular to collect. It should still be sought throughout southeastern Ohio.

Reports from beyond this range probably represent naturalized populations from plantings. Well-established naturalized populations are known from Adams and Lake counties.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

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