'Southern Summer Rose' Azalea

W.L. Brown¹ and R.J. Constantin²

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, Hammond Research Station, 5925 Old Covington Highway, Hammond, LA 70403

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Rhododendron 'Southern Summer Rose' is an evergreen azalea that produces rose-colored flowers throughout the summer and into the fall on current season's growth. The word "southern" is included in the name to indicate that the cultivar is of questionable cold hardiness outside of the deep south of the United States. The cultivar is being registered with the American Rhododendron Society.

Origin

'Southern Summer Rose' resulted from a 1978 cross made at the Hammond Research Station between the Belgian Indian hybrid 'Ambrosiana' and a selection of *R. oldhamii* Maximowicz that flowers sporadically throughout the summer and fall. It was observed under the designation A01.

Description

The plant attained 1.4 m height and 2.1 m width in 10 years and has a moderately open growth habit. Leaves are elliptic, mucronate, cuneate, entire, 30 to 45 mm long, and 20 to 25 mm wide. The upper surface is sparsely pubescent and dark green. The lower surface has trichomes adpressed along the midrib and is dull green.

Flowers are deep pink (54 A on the 1986 Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart) with a slightly darker blotch on the standard and the top half of the upper wings. Inflorescences are composed of from three to seven flowers. Flower width is 65 to 75 mm, length 50 to 55 mm. Flowers are openly funnel-

shaped and single, with overlapping corolla segments giving a rounded appearance. The pistil is 40 to 50 mm long. Most flowers have 10 straight stamens that tend to be petaloid under greenhouse conditions. Stamens are from 20 to 25 mm long.

The selection's outstanding characteristic is its habit of flowering throughout the late spring, summer, and fall from flower buds developed during the current growing season. Some open flowers can be found on vigorously growing plants at almost all times from June to November at Hammond, La. (lat. 30.5°N). Spring flowering also occurs in years in which some flower buds remain dormant through the winter. Young plants of 'Southern Summer Rose' have been severely damaged by early freezes at temperatures above -10°C; however, a -13°C freeze in late Dec. 1989 caused little damage. Therefore, the release needs to be tested north of plant hardiness zone 8b.

This cultivar is expected to be used primarily in landscapes where summer color is desired. Light shade is necessary for acceptable longevity of flowers during summer.

Availability

Stock plants have been distributed to several area nurseries for propagation. Names of nurseries that have plants available for sale can be obtained from this station beginning in 1993.

Literature Cited

Royal Horticulture Society. 1986. RHS colour chart. Royal Horticulture Society, London.

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¹Associate Professor.

²Professor and Resident Director.