Thunder Rhododendron

Rhododendron 'Thunder'

Height: 4 feet

Spread: 4 feet

Sunlight: ◐

Hardiness Zone: 4

Description:

A beautiful broadleaf evergreen shrub featuring reddish-purple flowers in spring; very hardy, with interesting winter foliage coloration; absolutely must have well-drained, highly acidic and organic soil, use plenty of peat moss when planting



Thunder Rhododendron flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



Thunder Rhododendron foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

Thunder Rhododendron is smothered in stunning clusters of lightly-scented purple trumpet-shaped flowers with red overtones and dark red spots at the ends of the branches in mid spring. It has burgundy-variegated dark green foliage with hints of deep purple which emerges light green in spring. The glossy narrow leaves turn an outstanding deep purple in the fall, which persists throughout the winter.

Landscape Attributes

Thunder Rhododendron is an open multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with a more or less rounded form. Its relatively coarse texture can be used to stand it apart from other landscape plants with finer foliage.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and should only be pruned after flowering to avoid removing any of the current season's flowers. It has no significant negative characteristics.

Thunder Rhododendron is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Accent
- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Thunder Rhododendron will grow to be about 4 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 4 feet. It has a low canopy. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 40 years or more.

This shrub does best in a location that gets morning sunlight but is shaded from the hot afternoon sun, although it will also grow in partial shade. Keep it away from hot, dry locations that receive direct afternoon sun or which get reflected sunlight, such as against the south side of a white wall. It requires an evenly moist well-drained soil for optimal growth, but will die in standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is very fussy about its soil conditions and must have rich, acidic soils to ensure success, and is subject to chlorosis (yellowing) of the foliage in alkaline soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution, and will benefit from being planted in a relatively sheltered location. Consider applying a thick mulch around the root zone in winter to protect it in exposed locations or colder microclimates. This particular variety is an interspecific hybrid.

Thunder Rhododendron makes a fine choice for the outdoor landscape, but it is also well-suited for use in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.