

AZALEA HOUSEPLANTS

Single and semi-double flowering potted azaleas are available in winter and spring in shades and tints of red, orange, pink and white. If purchasing an azalea, select well shaped plants with a few open flowers. Room temperatures of 60 degrees at night and full sunlight during the day are necessary for extended flowering. Regular watering and misting the leaves with water will help prevent leaf drop after you bring the plant home. It is very difficult to re-flower azaleas. After bloom, keep the plants cool and in a sunny location. During active growth, fertilize with an acidic fertilizer to prevent yellowing foliage.

During the frost free months, move the plant outdoors into a protected, semi-shaded location. Re-pot into a slightly larger pot, removing a quarter of the original growing medium from around the root ball. Use sphagnum peat moss for filling the container back in. While the plant is outdoors, provide ample water and monthly applications of an acidic fertilizer. An indoor storage period of 4-6 weeks at cool temperatures of about 40 degrees F. is required to develop flower buds in the autumn. Light is necessary during this cold storage to avoid leaf drop. After cold storage, a temperature of 60 degrees F. and full sunlight will force the plant into flower. Insufficient water at this time will cause the buds to drop without opening.