

## 2022 October *Guess that Plant*



*Rhododendron viscosum* (L.) Torr., Swamp Honeysuckle, Swamp or Clammy Azalea

October' *Guess that Plant* was a native shrub found throughout New Jersey. Swamp azalea is a wetland species, designated as either OBL or FACW+. It is found in acidic forested wetlands as an understory shrub. Our monthly species has two clearly recognizable forms or varieties, once recognized as separate taxa. Modern nomenclature seems to lump these obviously distinct plants, without providing a modern synonymy.

Fernald (1950) recognized forma *glaucum* and forma *roseum* as distinctions within the species. Both exist with the typical form. The glaucous plant is commonly intermingled with the typical form. It has a strongly whitened underside of the leaf, and the top of the leaf is not as shiny as the typical species. The second form is infrequent. The foliage is similar to the typical variety with rose colored corolla.

Swamp azalea is Southern New Jersey's only obligate wetland azalea species. It has whorled leaves clustered at the end of the mature branches. The winter buds are imbricate with brown tips, giving the impression of a checkered patterned bud. The seeds are found in dark brown, hard, dehiscent capsules that are visible throughout the winter that often hang on the plant for a full season. This species is identifiable throughout the year, but the flowering is limited to mid summer, when its fragrant flowers scent the lowlands with a sweet honeysuckle odor.

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