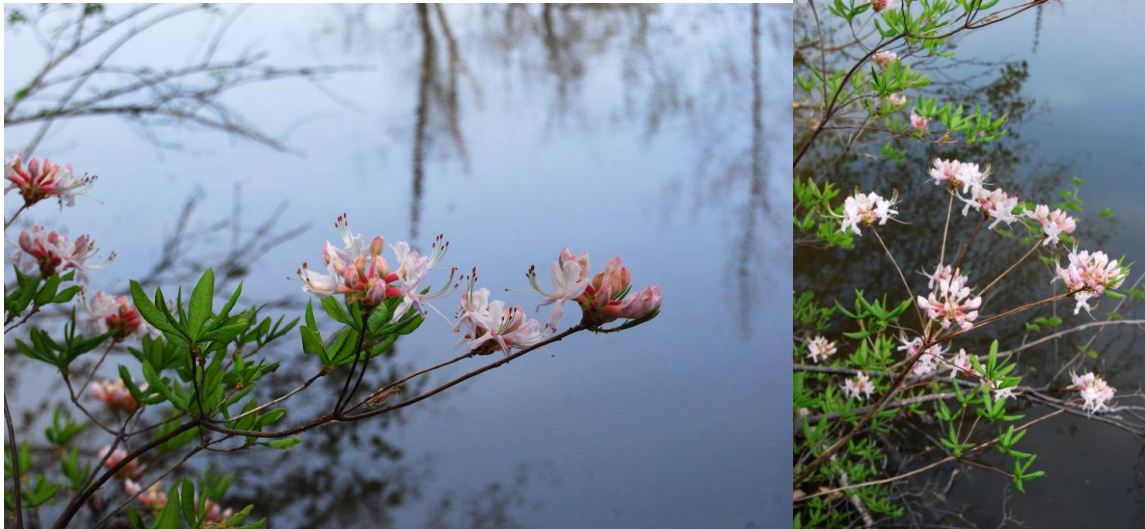


May 2023 Plant of the Month



Rhododendron periclymenoides Michx., Pinxter flower, Pinxter Azalea

May's *Plant of the Month* is a native deciduous shrub named pinxter azalea or pinxter flower, *Rhododendron periclymenoides*. Pinxter is a member of the Heath family, the Ericaceae. It prefers the shade of well drained forests as well as the margins of wetlands. Mary Hough (1983) identified vouchers specimens for all New Jersey counties indicating its rare in the Pine Barrens.

Pinxter flower is a May blooming azalea, and is a highly visible species where it grows. It is distinguished from other members of the genus by its pink flower with exerted and curled stamens. Only one other New Jersey native azaleas has similar pink colored flowers, *Rhododendron canescens*. The later species is a rare shrub restricted to the northern counties. It also prefers wetland soils as opposed to our Plant of the Month that is better suited for dry or at best moist soils.

All *Rhododendrons* are poisonous to some degree. Honey made from blooming azaleas and *Rhododendrons* contain a neurotoxin that is harmful to humans. Native Americans used similar azalea species as medicine, but no mention is made for our Plant of the Month (Moerman, 1998). Pinxter will be in flower throughout the month of May.

JRA, 5/2023