

Rhododendron maximum



great laurel

Family	Ericaceae		
Origin	Native		
WIS Code	FAC	CoC	6

DESCRIPTION

As the largest of West Virginia's *Rhododendron* species, this shrub grows up to the size of a small tree (to 10 m tall). It can form dense thickets in the mountains. The leaves (8 to 25 cm) are evergreen, thick, leathery, simple, smooth on both surfaces and elliptic with pointed (acute) tip and base.

FLOWERS AND FRUITS

June to July, September to October. Flowers are clustered at branch tips and have bell-shaped corollas. Petals are united near the base, have five distinct rounded lobes and are white to rose-pink (3.5 to 5 cm wide) with gland-tipped hairs on the flower stalks and sepals. Fruits are capsules, green maturing to dark brown and also with gland-tipped hairs. Winter buds are prominent on branch tips and are covered with overlapping scales.

HABITAT

Acidic soils of mesic to dry forests, stream banks, and swamps.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Rhododendron catawbiense, Catawba rose bay, has pink to purple flowers (not white), rounded leaf tips and base and shorter leaves (5 to 15 cm). Sepals at the capsules' bases are smaller (0.5 to 1 mm) versus sepals of *R. maximum* (4 to 6 mm).



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R. catawbiense

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