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**Mission:** Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

**Photo Journal: Azalea & Rhododendron**

**June 8, 2020**

Imagine spring in the mountainous regions of the United States, where the understory of the forests is a blanket of pink and purple azaleas and rhododendrons growing wild. Raven Hill’s rhododendron blooms after the Center’s azalea. Both can be found in front of the Fiber Studio. They were relocated from the front of Raven Hill, where snow sliding off the roof caused too much damage to them. Rhododendrons are a woody bush in the [heath family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ericaceae) and can be [evergreen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evergreen) or [deciduous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deciduous). Raven Hill’s is evergreen. Rhododendrons are found in Europe, Russian and [Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia), as well as the [Pacific Northwest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Northwest), [California](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California), and the highlands of the [Appalachian Mountains](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appalachian_Mountains) of [North America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_America). It is the [national flower](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_flower) of [Nepal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nepal), as well as the [state flower](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._state_and_territory_flowers) of [Washington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_(state)) and [West Virginia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Virginia) in [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States). Most cultivated species have brightly colored flowers. In the Appalachians, the flowers are usually pink or purple. Azaleas are a subgenus of rhododendron. [Rhododendrons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhododendron_ponticum) are invasive in [Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republic_of_Ireland) and the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom). They were introduced and have spread in woodland areas, replacing the natural understory. Rhododendrons were first described in the sixteenth century and at that point were called Chamaerhododendron (low-growing rose tree). [Linnaeus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Linnaeus) included them in his [Species Plantarum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Species_Plantarum) in 1753.He considered [azalea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azalea)a separate genus.

 

Raven Hill’s azalea in May 2020 (left) and rhododendron in June 2020 (right)