



Satsuki Azalea Notes, September:

We will soon be starting the fall tasks on our azaleas.

If you have been following this column's 3 year cycle plan, you will be in tune with the seasons.

For 1st and 2nd year cycle trees, those that were repotted this past spring and those that were not allowed to flower this year, remove all unnecessary branches in mid October. The goal is to remove all weak and undesirable branches. Cut foliage, including small branches, to allow light into the interior of the plant. Cut ends where there are multiple branches down to one or two. Begin by trimming the main branch first. Use the weight and foliage from this branch as a means to establish balance for all the other branches. Azaleas go dormant at 50 degrees. We want to time the fall pruning so it is done just prior to this. Downward growing branches are stronger and should be removed. In order to generate new growth, we must remove old growth.

On 3rd year cycle trees, those that will be allowed to bloom next year, should receive a light pruning before temperatures drop to 50 degrees. This should only be done to keep the shape that you have established in the two previous seasons. Remove any wire not removed during the summer. Azaleas set flower buds when temperatures fall to 40 degrees. Do not do any trimming after that time unless you don't mind sacrificing flowers next spring.

I switch to a 0-10-10 fertilizer on or about Labor Day. This not only prepares the trees for the cold weather ahead, but will enhance the blooms next spring. During this time of changeable weather be especially alert to your watering requirements. It is very easy to over water during this kind of weather.

Soon we will be concerned with cleaning up leaves and fall debris. The days will begin to get brisk and we all know what comes next. Begin planning where your azaleas will spend the winter. More on winter storage in the October section.