

Orchid Lights

A new, hardy, compact azalea
for northern areas



Orchid Lights

A new, hardy, compact azalea
for northern areas

by Harold Pellett and Susan Moe

Orchid Lights is a new introduction of the Northern Lights azalea hybrids. It is a selection from a cross between *Rhododendron canadense* and *R. XKosteranum* made by the late Albert G. Johnson. The orchid-colored flowers are 1½ inches across, with the bloom period occurring in mid-May. The flower shape of Orchid Lights is unusual; it is intermediate between the flower shapes of the two parents. Flower buds can withstand -45 degrees Fahrenheit in mid-winter without injury. The plants are sterile, so seed capsules are not produced.

The compact plants of Orchid Lights will mature at an average height of 3 feet and a spread of 3 to 4 feet. Orchid Lights is an excellent choice for use in areas where a small-statured flowering shrub is needed to provide spring color.

Azaleas require an acid soil for best growth. However, they can be grown successfully in soil of neutral pH if an ample amount of acid peat is used for backfilling around the roots and if plants are fertilized once or twice annually with acid fertilizer. Since azaleas have a fibrous, shallow root system, they need water during dry periods. A mulch is recommended to help retain moisture. Avoid planting azaleas in poorly drained soils.

The University of Minnesota, including the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, handicap, age, veteran status, or sexual orientation.