

Kalmia latifolia



mountain laurel

Family	Ericaceae		
Origin	Native		
WIS Code	FACU	CoC	5

DESCRIPTION

Evergreen perennial shrub forming dense thickets (usually 2 to 3 m, but to 10 m tall) with ridged or furrowed stems, becoming gnarly with age. The bark often sloughs off in narrow strips. Leaves (5 to 12 cm long; 2 to 4 cm wide) are leathery, mostly alternate, oval to elliptic and smooth.



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FLOWERS AND FRUITS

May to July, September to October. Flowers appear in large clusters at the branch tips. Each pink to white flower (15 to 30 mm across) is cup-shaped with five petals fused together, and has purple spots in small pockets that hold the male anthers (pollen structures) that arch backwards. When pressure is applied to the flower cup the anthers pop out of the pockets. Fruits are brown capsules 4 to 7 mm wide that persist through the winter.



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HABITAT

Mesic to dry acidic forests, less frequently in bogs and seeps.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Rhododendron prinophyllum, early azalea, appears similar before flowering in growth habit and stems. However, *R. prinophyllum* leaves are hairy (not smooth) and not leathery; the flowers (also pink and in branch-tip clusters) are instead tubular with distinct separations from mid-point out to the "petal" tips, and gland-tipped hairs are present on flower parts and buds.



Kalmia latifolia

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"*Rhododendron prinophyllum*, flowers and leaves