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The Birth of Encore® Azaleas

People who adore spring blooming azaleas can now enjoy an explosion of Encore® Azalea color season after season.

Encore® Azaleas are the only patented brand of azaleas to bloom in spring, summer and fall. Each of the **31 Encore varieties** (<http://www.encoreazalea.com/the-collection/>) begins their performance with the spring flowering season. Once this "first act" of blooming concludes, new shoots begin to grow and set buds. The Encore® Azalea's "second act" opens when these buds begin blooming into full flower mid-summer. This unique bloom season continues through the fall, the curtain dropping with the onset of cold weather. But, the show goes on. As an "encore," these exceptional azaleas flower again with traditional spring azaleas and the process starts over.

Invented by plant breeder Robert E. "Buddy" Lee of Independence, La., the evergreen Encore® Azaleas tolerate more sun than traditional azaleas, but offer the same easy care. Lee first envisioned a series of azaleas that would bloom in multiple seasons — now known as Encore Azaleas — in the early 1980's and began crossing traditional spring-blooming azaleas with rare Taiwanese summer-blooming azaleas.

To find a retailer near you, click [here](http://www.encoreazalea.com/where-to-buy) (<http://www.encoreazalea.com/where-to-buy>).

For more information on the Encore Azalea families, click [here](http://www.encoreazalea.com/garden-ideas/article/encore-azalea-101-a-crash-course-on-flower-families) (<http://www.encoreazalea.com/garden-ideas/article/encore-azalea-101-a-crash-course-on-flower-families>).

Who is Buddy?





Robert E. "Buddy" Lee is the Director of Plant Innovations at Plant Development Services, Inc. Buddy is one of the most respected plant breeders and horticulturists in North America, with over 30 years' experience in nursery management, breeding, propagation and new plant development.

Buddy is past president of The Azalea Society of America, past president of the Louisiana Nurseryman's Association Region III, and he is an active member of the International Plant Propagators Society and the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association.

In 2000, the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association recognized Buddy Lee's significant contribution to the industry by presenting him with a Professional Achievement Award; and in 2007, the Azalea Society of America awarded him the Society's Distinguished Service Award.



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Virtues: Encore azaleas bloom in spring, summer and fall, rather than only in spring. They also tolerate sun much better than most azaleas, taking up to six hours of direct sun in most areas. The series offers a wide variety of colors and shrub sizes (31 cultivars in all); this diversity helps Encore azaleas fit into a wide range of garden schemes.

Common name: Encore azalea. For all varietal names and descriptions, see [here](#).

Exposure: Part sun or filtered shade. Four to six hours of direct sun will promote the best growth and bloom. Hot afternoon sun should be avoided, however.

Season: Spring, summer and into fall, for flowers.

Flowers: Colors range from white through pinks and reds into purple, depending on variety. Some varieties show two-tone flowers. All Encore azalea varieties bloom in spring, then begin to grow, then form new flower buds that will open in midsummer and typically continue to open and last into fall.

Origins: Plant breeder Robert "Buddy" Lee began developing Encore azaleas in the 1980s, crossing traditional azaleas with summer-blooming *Rhododendron oldhamii*.

How to grow Encore azaleas: Site in an area that receives 4 to 6 hours of sun or consistent filtered shade. Plant in well-drained soil rich in organic matter. When planting, loosen the rootball and plant the azalea so that the top of the rootball sits even with the ground or even a little above it. Avoid afternoon sun, especially in hot regions. Water regularly the first year; azaleas and rhododendrons require consistent moisture while getting established. After the first year, provide supplemental water only in times of drought. Fertilize with azalea/camellia feed just after the spring bloom. If you wish to prune an Encore azalea, do so right after its spring bloom, to avoid removing the flower buds of its next bloom cycle. USDA Zones 6–9.

Images courtesy of Encore Azaleas

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