


Kalmia latifolia

Mountain Laurel

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

This handsome, native, eastern North American* evergreen is the State Flower of Pennsylvania and Connecticut. Its glossy, leathery leaves make lovely winter-season decorations—so popular in the early twentieth century that Connecticut passed a law in 1917 to protect Mountain Laurels from being stolen from private property to sell.** The Virginia Native Plant Society named Mountain Laurel as Wildflower of the Year in 1994.



Shrub	Shrub, Foliage, Bark, Flowers w/ Insect,*** Fruit
Height: 5–20 feet	
Spread: 5–15 feet	
Bloom Color: White to pink w/ purple-red markings	
Characteristics	
Tall, dense, rounded evergreen shrub	
Mostly alternate , shiny, leathery, lanceolate leaves	
Terminal corymbs of cup-shaped flowers with ten pocketed anthers on recurved filaments May–July followed by persistent brown capsules Sep–Oct	
Red-tinged brown bark ; trunks gnarl with age	
Attributes	
Tolerates rocky soil, sandy soil , full sun, shade, severe pruning; intolerant of heavy clay and wet soils; susceptible to lace bugs and to leaf spot	
All parts of plant are toxic to humans**** if eaten; poisonous to pets and hooved browsers except deer that occasionally severely damage foliage	
Attracts pollinators, hummers, small mammals; larval host to ~26 lepidopterans incl. Prometheus silkworm	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements : Well-drained, acidic	<i>Camellia japonica</i> - Camellia
Light Requirements : Partial Shade	<i>Ligustrum japonicum</i> - Japanese Privet
Water Requirements : Dry (occasionally), Moist	<i>Rhododendron</i> 'P.J.M.' - P.J.M. Rhododendron
Does best in morning or dappled sun in open woods	<i>Spiraea japonica</i> - Japanese Spiraea
Use pine bark to amend soil and to mulch	<p>*It is native to DC and common in DE and MD. It is present in most of PA except for two northwest counties. In VA, it is more or less common throughout except it is infrequent in the outer and far southeastern Coastal Plain.</p> <p>**As part of its criminal law reform, CT repealed the Laurel Law in 1969.</p> <p>*** <i>Toxomerus geminatus</i> syrphid fly.</p> <p>****Toxic compounds may be present in honey produced by bees that feed mostly on this plant.</p>
Flowers on old growth; deadhead directly after bloom and prune lightly to encourage bushiness	
Use as accent, hedge, or in pollinator or woodland gardens; compliments rhododendrons & azaleas	
Hardiness : USDA Zones 4a-9b	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Elaine Mills, U.S. National Arboretum and Mary Free (middle), Fort Shantok, CT