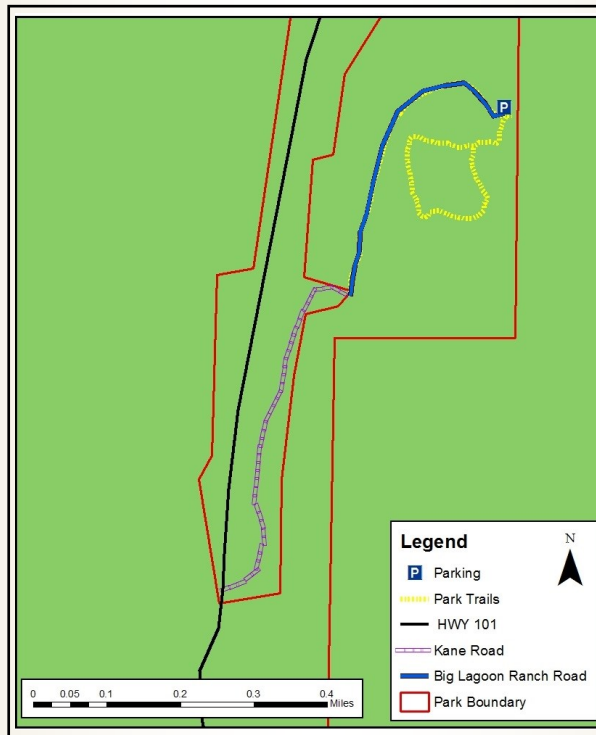


## Western Azalea Basics

Western azalea (*Rhododendron occidentale*) are the only species of native azaleas growing west of the Rocky Mountains. Azaleas are deciduous shrubs that require plenty of sunlight and can be shaded out by taller vegetation.

Between April and July, azaleas produce aromatic and beautiful white blooms edged in shades of pink, yellow and orange. Azaleas are closely related to California rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*), another native showy shrub.



Located just north of Big Lagoon, off of Kane Road, east of HWY 101, the 40-acre management area was acquired 1982 and is said to be one of the most extensive stands of western azaleas on the north coast.



*For more information about volunteering for California State Parks and western azalea management please contact: Michelle Forys at (707) 677-3109 or [Michelle.Forys@parks.ca.gov](mailto:Michelle.Forys@parks.ca.gov).*



## Stagecoach Hill Azalea Management Area



## Reserve History

In 1977, the California Garden Clubs, Inc. began raising funds to help purchase the 40-acre Stagecoach Hill western azalea area. In 1983, the California State Parks Foundation, with donations from the California Garden Clubs, Inc., the Humboldt Area Foundation and the California Coastal Conservancy, raised \$60,000 to acquire this property. On June 4, 1984 the Stagecoach Hill Azalea Management Area was established and incorporated into Harry A. Merlo State Recreation Area.



## Management Strategies

Azaleas occur in a transitional vegetation zone within the successional series between open grassland to shrub land to a closed canopy forest. If left unmanaged, larger shrubs and woody trees will shade the azaleas out.

California State Parks employs a variety of techniques to suspend the natural succession progression in the reserves to provide visitors an opportunity to enjoy these spectacular blooms. Management strategies are based on site-specific conditions.

Grasslands are typically brushed and mowed. Conifers and alders, along with larger shrubs such as coyote brush, are removed around the perimeter of forestlands. Within the azalea community, competing native and non-native species are removed and mature azaleas are pruned.

*All photos by Mary Lou Goodwin.*

## Native Plant Species

Common Name	Scientific Name
Bittercrest	<i>Cardamine sp.</i>
Blue blossom	<i>Ceanothus thyrsiflorus</i>
California blackberry	<i>Rubus ursinus</i>
Calypso orchid	<i>Calypso bulbosa</i>
Cascara	<i>Frangula purshiana</i>
Columbine	<i>Aquilegia formosa</i>
Coyote brush	<i>Baccharis pilularis</i>
Douglas iris	<i>Iris douglasiana</i>
Evergreen huckleberry	<i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>
Fairy bells	<i>Prosartes smithii</i>
Fetid Adderstongue	<i>Scoliopus bigelovii</i>
Fireweed	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>
Horsetail	<i>Equisetum telmaties</i>
Nooka grass	<i>Calamagrostis nooka</i>
Red alder	<i>Alnus rubra</i>
Red elderberry	<i>Sambucus racemosa</i>
Red flowering currant	<i>Ribes sanguineum</i>
Redwood violet	<i>Viola sempervirens</i>
Salal	<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>
Salmonberry	<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>
Stika spruce	<i>Picea sitchensis</i>
Sweet cicely	<i>Osmorhiza berteroi</i>
Sword fern	<i>Polystichum munitum</i>
Thimbleberry	<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>
Trillium	<i>Trillium ovatum</i>
Wild cucumber	<i>Marah oreganus</i>
Woodnymph	<i>Moneses uniflora</i>