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Bergman

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(54) **AZALEA PLANT NAMED 'YBAZ-2504'**

(50) Latin Name: ***Rhododendron hybrida***
Varietal Denomination: **YBAZ-2504**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
A01H 5/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **Plt./238**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** Plt./238
See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A new and distinct cultivar of Azalea plant named 'YBAZ-2504', characterized by its dark green-colored leaves that do not abscise during the cooling and forcing periods; uniform, outwardly spreading and mounding plant habit; freely branching habit; uniform and freely flowering habit; pink-colored flowers; double flower form; and excellent postproduction longevity with plants maintaining good flower substance for about five weeks in an interior environment.

2 Drawing Sheets

Botanical designation: *Rhododendron hybrida.*
Cultivar denomination: 'YBAZ-2504'.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present Invention relates to a new and distinct cultivar of Azalea plant, botanically known as *Rhododendron hybrida*, an evergreen greenhouse-forcing type Azalea, and hereinafter referred to by the name 'YBAZ-2504'.

The new Azalea plant is a product of a planned breeding program conducted by the Inventor in Alva, Fla. The objective of the breeding program is to create new Azalea varieties having uniform plant habit, profuse and uniform flowering response, dark green foliage, good foliage retention during the cooling and forcing periods, resistance to *Cylindrocladium* and excellent postproduction longevity.

The new Azalea plant originated from a cross-pollination made by the Inventor in April, 1997, in Alva, Fla., of the Azalea 'Sonnet', disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 16,784, as the female, or seed, parent with the Azalea 'Lavender Lace', disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 11,137, as the male, or pollen, parent. The new Azalea was discovered and selected by the Inventor as a single flowering plant within the progeny of the stated cross-pollination in a controlled greenhouse environment in Alva, Fla. in October, 2000.

Asexual reproduction of the new Azalea plant by terminal cuttings taken in a controlled environment in Alva, Fla. since January, 2001, has shown that the unique features of this new Azalea are stable and reproduced true to type in successive generations.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Plants of the new Azalea have not been observed under all possible environmental conditions. The phenotype may vary somewhat with variations in environment such as temperature and light intensity without, however, any variance in genotype. The following traits have been repeatedly observed and are determined to be the unique characteristics of 'YBAZ-2504'. These characteristics in combination distinguish 'YBAZ-2504' as a new and distinct Azalea cultivar:

1. Dark green-colored leaves that do not abscise during the cooling and forcing periods.
2. Uniform, outwardly spreading and mounding plant habit.

3 Freely branching habit.

4. Uniform and freely flowering habit.
5. Pink-colored flowers.
6. Double flower form.

7 Excellent postproduction longevity with plants maintaining good flower substance for about five weeks in an interior environment.

Plants of the new Azalea differ from plants of the female parent, 'Sonnet', in the following characteristics:

1. Plants of the new Azalea are more outwardly spreading than and not as upright as plants of 'Sonnet'.
2. Plants of the new Azalea flower more uniformly than plants of 'Sonnet'.
3. Flowers of plants of the new Azalea are pink in color whereas flowers of plants of 'Sonnet' are lavender in color.

Plants of the new Azalea differ from plants of the male parent, 'Lavender Lace', in the following characteristics:

1. Plants of the new Azalea have double flowers whereas plants of 'Lavender Lace' have single flowers.
2. Plants of the new Azalea have pink-colored flowers whereas plants of 'Lavender Lace' have lavender-colored flowers.

Plants of the new Azalea can be compared to the plants of 'Party Favor', disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 10,050. In

side-by-side comparisons conducted in Alva, Fla., plants of the new Azalea differed from plants of 'Party Favor' in the following characteristics:

1. Plants of the new Azalea had stronger foliage than plants of 'Party Favor'.
2. Plants of the new Azalea had double pink-colored flowers whereas plants of 'Party Favor' had semi-double dark pink-colored flowers.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS

The accompanying colored photographs illustrate the overall appearance of the new Azalea plant. These photographs show the colors as true as it is reasonably possible to obtain in colored reproductions of this type. Colors in the photographs may differ slightly from the color values cited in the detailed botanical description, which accurately describe the colors of the new Azalea plant.

The photograph on the first sheet comprises a side perspective view of a typical flowering plant of 'YBAZ-2504'.

The photograph on the second sheet is a close-up view of a typical flower of 'YBAZ-2504'.

DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

The aforementioned photographs and following observations and measurements describe plants grown in Alva, Fla. with three plants per 15-cm containers, in a polypropylene-covered shade house during the late spring and under commercial production conditions. During the production of the plants, day temperatures ranged from 13° C. to 37° C. and night temperatures ranged from 0° C. to 26° C. Plants were pinched at planting, pinched a second time about twelve weeks later and then pinched a third time about twelve weeks after the second pinch. After sufficient flower bud development, plants were cooled at 3° C. to 5° C. for four weeks to break flower bud dormancy. Plants were subsequently forced into flower under commercial production conditions in a polyethylene-covered greenhouse. Plants used for the photographs and description were one year old. In the following description, color references are made to The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart, 2007 Edition, except where general terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used.

Botanical classification: *Rhododendron hybrida* 'YBAZ-2504'.

Commercial classification: Evergreen greenhouse-forcing type Azalea.

Parentage:

Female, or seed, parent.—*Rhododendron hybrida* 'Sonnet', disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 16,784.

Male, or pollen, parent.—*Rhododendron hybrida* 'Lavender Lace', disclosed in U.S. Plant Pat. No. 11,137.

Propagation:

Type.—By terminal vegetative cuttings.

Time to initiate roots, summer.—About five weeks at temperatures of 24° C.

Time to initiate roots, winter.—About six weeks at temperatures of 24° C.

Time to produce a rooted young plant, summer.—About nine weeks at temperatures of 24° C.

Time to produce a rooted young plant, winter.—About eleven weeks at temperatures of 24° C.

Root description.—Fine, fibrous, and white in color.

Rooting habit.—Freely branching; moderately dense.

Plant description:

Plant form and growth habit.—Perennial, evergreen; uniform, outwardly spreading and mounding plant habit; broad inverted triangle; moderately vigorous growth habit; densely foliated; full and bushy plant form; uniform and freely flowering habit with numerous double flowers per plant.

Branching habit.—Freely branching habit with about four primary lateral branches develop after the initial pinch (removal of terminal apex); numerous secondary and tertiary branches develop after the sequential second and third pinches.

Plant height, soil level to top of flowers.—About 26.5 cm.

Plant diameter, area of spread.—About 38 cm.

Lateral branch description.—Length: About 22 cm. Diameter at base: About 5 mm. Internode length: About 1.1 cm. Strength: Strong. Texture, developing: Pubescent, fine brown hairs. Texture, mature: Woody; pubescent, fine brown hairs. Color, developing: Close to 144A. Color, mature: Close to 165A.

Foliage description.—Arrangement: Alternate, single. Foliage retention: Very good foliage retention on plants of the new Azalea that have been in a box for six weeks during the cooling treatment. Length: About 5.1 cm. Width: About 2.5 cm. Shape: Mostly elliptic. Apex: Mucronate. Base: Attenuate. Margin: Entire. Venation pattern: Pinnate. Texture, upper and lower surfaces: Pubescent; leathery, tough. Color: Developing and fully expanded leaves, upper surface: Darker than 147A; venation, darker than 147A. Developing and fully expanded leaves, lower surface: Close to 147B; venation, close to 146A to 146B. Petiole: Length: About 8 mm. Diameter: About 3 mm. Texture, upper and lower surfaces: Pubescent. Color, upper and lower surfaces: Close to 146A to 146B.

Flower description:

Natural flowering season.—Spring after sufficient cool period. If forced, plants typically flower about one month after a four-week cooling treatment; relatively rapid flowering response.

Flower arrangement and appearance.—Flowers arranged singly at terminals with usually about three flowers per apex; uniform and freely flowering habit, flowers face upward or outward.

Flower appearance.—Flowers rotate and rose-like; double flower form with a single outer whorl of five petals and four to five inner whorls of imbricate petaloids (transformed reproductive organs).

Postproduction longevity.—Excellent postproduction longevity; under interior conditions, plants maintain good flower substance for about five weeks; flowers persistent.

Fragrance.—None detected.

Flower diameter.—About 7.7 cm.

Flower depth.—About 3.4 cm.

Flower bud (*before showing color*).—Length: About 1.6 cm. Diameter: About 7 mm. Shape: Ovoid. Color: Close to 146B.

Petals/petaloids.—Arrangement: Double flower form; one outer whorl of five petals and about four to five inner whorls each with about five imbricate petaloids; petals and petaloids fused at the base; petaloids vari-

able in size and shape. Petals: Length: About 3.7 cm. Width: About 3.5 cm. Petaloids, largest: Length: About 3 cm. Width: About 2.8 cm. Shape, petals and petaloids: Beyond fused base, roughly spatulate with rounded to acute apex. Margin, petals and petaloids: Entire; undulate and ruffled. Texture, petals and petaloids, upper and lower surfaces: Smooth, glabrous; velvety. Color, petals and petaloids: When opening, upper and lower surfaces: Close to 62A. Fully opened, upper and lower surfaces: Close to 62A; towards the base, close to 62B to 62D.

Sepals.—Arrangement: Five in a single whorl, fused; subtending the petals. Length: About 6 mm. Width: About 5 mm. Shape: Elliptic. Apex: Acute. Base: Fused. Texture, upper and lower surfaces: Pubescent. Color, upper surface: Close to 144A. Color, lower surface: Close to 146A.

Peduncles.—Length: About 2.3 cm. Diameter: About 2.5 mm. Angle: Mostly upright. Strength: Flexible; strong. Texture: Pubescent. Color: Close to 144A.

Reproductive organs.—None observed, stamens and pistils transformed into petaloids.

Seed/fruit.—Seed and fruit development have not been observed.

Weather/temperature tolerance: Plants of the new Azalea have been observed to be very tolerant to rain and wind. Plants of the new Azalea have been observed to tolerate temperatures from about 0° C. to about 38° C.

Disease/pest resistance: Plants have not been observed to be resistant to pathogens and pests common to Azaleas.

It is claimed:

1. A new and distinct cultivar of Azalea plant named 'YBAZ-2504' as illustrated and described.

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