

# DUKES 4 TREES

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2022 / May 11 / Walk 3

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TOP - Pink blooms of an azalea shrub. (JMU/A. Sloop)

BOTTOM RIGHT - Pink blooms of a rhododendron shrub. (JMU EJC Arboretum)

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## Arboretum in the Spring

Every day in the spring, I can guarantee that you will find a new bloom popping open at JMU's EJC Arboretum. Beginning in mid-April, the arboretum invites the first blooms of azalea and rhododendron shrubs on campus. The blooms pop along the trails against the bright green hues of new leaves budding forth. In addition, larger trees are leafing out, creating a cooler micro-climate as the weather warms up, which all combines to make a stroll on their trails as delightful as can be.



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# TREES/SHRUBS IN BLOOM

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## Rhododendrons and Azaleas

### How can you tell the difference?

All azaleas are rhododendrons, but not all rhododendrons are azaleas. Confused, yet? Not to worry! Azaleas are usually smaller 1-3 ft tall shrubs and they bloom earlier than rhododendrons. Below are a few more distinguishing features to help you identify azalea or rhododendron while you are out on the trails.

<u>Azaleas</u>	<u>Rhododendron</u>
Deciduous	Evergreen
Tube/Funnel Shaped Flowers	Bell Shaped Flowers
Appressed Hairs	Scaly
5 Stamens	<10 Stamens

(PlantAddicts.com)



Typical rhododendron bloom on top of thick leathery, evergreen leaves. (JMU/A. Sloop)



Bracts and true flowers about to bloom on a flowering dogwood. (JMU/A. Sloop)

## Flowering Dogwood

You might be surprised to find out that the dogwood flower in the photo above does not include the white looking petals. Flowering dogwoods true flowers are the tiny yellow blooms clustered in the center of the white "petals". The surrounding white looking petals are actually called, bracts. The bracts surrounding dogwood flowers are designed to attract pollinators to the tiny yellow blooms. Once the flowers are pollinated the tree will produce its red berries. Poinsettias, a popular plant you see around the winter holiday season, also have bracts; the big red looking petals are bracts, not the flower.