

Azaleas

Sakura azalea / *Rhododendron tashiroi* / Sakura tsutsuji / サクラツツジ

The sakura azalea is a shrub that grows in the forests of Amami-Oshima, often in clusters along roads and streams. The bark is a smooth brown, and the leaves have pointed tips and smooth edges. The flowers bloom in early spring, in both white and darker pink varieties. The color and shape of the flower resemble those of cherry blossoms, giving the plant its name.

Amami sacred azalea / *Rhododendron amamiense* / Amami seishika / アマミセイシカ

This member of the azalea family is endemic to Amami-Oshima, where it grows to heights of up to 5 meters in rocky areas or along mountain streams. The glossy leaves are slender and pointed, and the buds of the flowers are first tinged with pink, turning white or light pink as they mature. They bloom from March to May, and attract insects with their fragrance.