



FYN Garden Q & A Series

Thomas Becker
Extension Agent, Florida
Yards & Neighborhoods



FYN Topic: 'Coral Bells' are Hybrid Azalea

Question: I bought a plant labeled 'coral bells.' Upon further inspection, its leaves don't look like any coral bell I've ever planted. What is it?

Answer: Coral Bells is a common name for a dwarf shrub or 'Karume' hybrid azalea. A *rhododendron* species, it is sold widely in southern states as an evergreen, flowering groundcover. Unfortunately, this or any Azalea is poorly suited for our warmer climate and alkaline soils, Coral Bells here will neither grow to its 2-3 feet height nor produce significant light pink blooms in January and February. Hopefully your yard matches what it needs the most, good drainage, no standing water, a native, high organic matter, low pH soil. If planting without first getting the soil acidity checked, amend the soil using aged pine bark or sphagnum peat moss. Plant only in the shade preferably under a pine forest canopy and where you can keep it watered regularly throughout the dry season.

Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>

<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>

<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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