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## First report of *Rhododendron carolinianum* (Ericaceae) spontaneous in the Manetto Hills of Long Island, New York

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Recent field work by Greller in the Manetto Hills, Nassau County, New York revealed spontaneously occurring individuals of *Rhododendron carolinianum*, the first report of the species for the state. We consider these individuals escaped from cultivation because nursery plants occur nearby in landscaped residential properties. A voucher was collected by Greller and will be deposited at The New York Botanical Garden herbarium. Common names of *R. carolinianum* include Carolina rhododendron, Carolina azalea, and punctatum.

We do not consider this species truly naturalized in New York. For a species to be naturalized it first needs to be introduced into the wild and then spread from where it was initially introduced. This process takes at least two generations. In the case of *R. carolinianum* on Long Island, the species has taken the first step towards naturalization; the initial introduction into the wild (escape from cultivation) has been documented but it remains to be seen if it spreads. For now, this species can be categorized as having an unknown nonnative status in New York (following Werier 2017) until more evidence of it being naturalized has come to light. Many species have been found outside of cultivation in New York but have not gone on to become naturalized.

*Rhododendron carolinianum* is a Southern Appalachian endemic. Its center of distribution is in and near the Great Smoky Mountains in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee; it occurs in rocky summits, heath balds, high elevation forests, and moist slopes (Weakley 2015). Haines (2011) included *R. carolinianum* as a nonnative member of the flora of New England occurring in Connecticut and Massachusetts.



Figure 1. *Rhododendron carolinianum* at the Manetto Hills, Long Island. Photo by Andrew Greller, 2020.

In April 2020, Greller began hiking on trails in the Manetto Hills and found approximately 10 individuals of *R. carolinianum* in the southern wooded border of Northern State Parkway about 200 m east of Sunnyside Blvd.; additionally, one seedling was found near the grassy border of the parkway.

Habitat for *R. carolinianum* is near trails and borders of Mixed Oak Forest dominated by black oak (*Quercus velutina*), white oak (*Q. alba*), and scarlet oak (*Q. coccinea*). The understory is dominated by heath family shrubs including blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.) and black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*); poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) and common greenbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*) also are common. The herb layer is composed of large colonies of hay-scented fern (*Dennstaedtia punctilobula*) and Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*)

with scattered individuals of wild oats (*Uvularia sessilifolia*), white wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*), wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*), pink lady's slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*), and large whorled pogonia (*Isotria verticillata*). Haircap mosses (*Polytrichum* spp.) are common. Nonnative species include tea viburnum (*Viburnum setigerum*), linden viburnum (*V. dilatata*), and multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*).

The Manetto Hills are complex geological features associated with the Ronkonkoma Moraine. Fuller (1914) described them in *The Geology of Long Island, New York*. The Manetto Hills are older than the glacial till deposited on top of them. Fuller (1914) discussed and provided maps of "massive hills of irregular outline . . . different in age and origin" from the

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