The present invention relates to a new and distinct cultivar of Azalea, botanically known as *Rhododendron simsii*, and herein referred to by the cultivar name ‘Wendy’. The new cultivar is a product of a planned breeding program conducted by the inventor in Geldern, Germany. The objective of the breeding program is to create new Azalea cultivars that grow rapidly and have uniform plant habit and attractive flower colors. The new cultivar originated from a cross made by the inventor of the nonpatented cultivar ‘Knut Erwin’ as the male, or pollen, parent with the nonpatented cultivar ‘Heuresel’ as the female, or seed, parent. The cultivar ‘Wendy’ was discovered and selected by the inventor as a seedling within the progeny of the stated cross in a controlled environment in Geldern, Germany, in 1989. Plants of the new Azalea were first flowered in 1991.

Compared to plants of the male parent, the red-flowered cultivar ‘Knut Erwin’, plants of the new Azalea flower earlier and differ in leaf shape. Compared to plants of the female parent, the lilac-flowered cultivar ‘Heuresel’, plants of the new Azalea grow faster and flower earlier.

Asexual reproduction of the new cultivar by terminal cuttings taken in Geldern, Germany, has shown that the unique features of this new Azalea plant are stable and reproduced true to type in successive generations of asexual reproduction.

The following traits have been repeatedly observed and are determined to be the unique characteristics of ‘Wendy’.

1. Upright and outwardly arching growth habit.
2. Very freely branching.
4. Good postproduction longevity.

Plants of the new Azalea can be compared to plants of the cultivar ‘Gloria’ (not patented). However in side-by-side comparisons in Geldern, Germany, under commercial practice, plants of the new Azalea differ in flower color and are less compact, grow faster and flower earlier than plants of the cultivar ‘Gloria’.

Plants of the new Azalea can also be compared to plants of the cultivar ‘Lara’ (not patented). However in side-by-side comparisons in Geldern, Germany, under commercial practice, plants of the new Azalea have a more compact growth habit, fuller flowers, longer postproduction longevity and flower earlier.

Plants of the new Azalea can also be compared to plants of the new Azalea’s sibling cultivar ‘Sayonara’ (disclosed in U.S. Patent application Ser. No. 08/929489). However in side-by-side comparisons conducted in Geldern, Germany, and Salinas, Calif., under commercial practice, plants of the new Azalea differed from plants of the cultivar ‘Sayonara’ in the following characteristics:

1. Plants of the new Azalea are more upright than plants of the cultivar ‘Sayonara’.
2. Plants of the new Azalea are taller than plants of the cultivar ‘Sayonara’.
3. Lateral branches of plants of the new Azalea are thicker and more rigid than lateral branches of plants of the cultivar ‘Sayonara’.
4. Plants of the new Azalea have longer leaves than plants of the cultivar ‘Sayonara’.
5. Plants of the new Azalea have slightly larger flowers than plants of the cultivar ‘Sayonara’.
6. Petal margins of plants of the new Azalea are less ruffled than petal margins of plants of the cultivar ‘Sayonara’.
7. Petal color of plants of the new Azalea is reddish pink whereas petal color of plants of the cultivar ‘Sayonara’ is lavender pink.

The new Azalea plant has not been observed under all possible environmental conditions. The phenotype may vary significantly with variations in environment such as temperature, light level, nutrition and water status without, however, any variance in genotype.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS**

The accompanying colored photographs illustrate the overall appearance of the new cultivar, showing the colors as true as it is reasonably possible to obtain in colored reproductions of this type.

The top photograph comprises a side perspective view of a typical plant of ‘Wendy’.

The lower photograph comprises a close-up view of typical flowers of ‘Wendy’. Flower and foliage colors in the photographs may appear different than the actual colors due to light reflectance.

**DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION**

The following observations, measurements and values describe plants grown in Salinas, Calif., in 12.5-cm containers under glass with day temperatures ranging from 24° to 27° C., night temperatures ranging from 13° to 16° C., and light levels averaging 4,500 footcandles.
In the following description, color references are made to The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart except where general terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used.

Botanical classification: *Rhododendron simsii* cultivar ‘Wendy’.

Parentage:
- Male or pollen parent: *Rhododendron simsii* cultivar ‘Knut Ervin’, not patented.
- Female or seed parent: *Rhododendron simsii* cultivar ‘Heursel’, not patented.

Propagation:
- Type: By terminal cuttings.
- Time to initiate roots: 20 to 25 days at temperatures of 23°C depending on season.
- Time to develop roots: 45 to 55 days at temperatures of 23°C depending on season.
- Rooting habit: Vigorous and finely-branched.

Plant description:
- Plant form and growth habit: Perennial, evergreen, upright and outwardly arching, inverted triangle. Moderate vigor.
- Branching habit: Dense, very freely branching, about five lateral branches develop after removal of terminal apex.
- Plant height, soil level to top of flowers: About 18 cm.
- Plant diameter, area of spread: About 27 cm.
- Lateral branch description: Length: About 8.5 cm.

Foliage description:
- Arrangement: Alternate, single.
- Leaf size, largest leaves: Length: About 5.25 cm.
  - Width: About 2.1 cm.
- Leaf shape: Oblanceolate.
- Leaf apex: Macronate.
- Leaf base: Cuneate.
- Margin type: Entire.
- Texture: Durable, leathery, some glossiness. Both surfaces pubescent, upper surface relatively dense.
- Petiole: Length: About 1 cm. Diameter: About 2 mm. Color: 138B.

Flower description:
- Natural flowering season: Spring after sufficient cool period, forced into flower year round.

*Flower appearance and arrangement:* Semi-double pink flowers with dark purple-speckled spots. Flowers arranged singly at terminals with usually about fifty flowers per terminal, freely flowering. Flowers face outward. Flowers persistent.

*Flower diameter:* About 7.5 cm.

*Flower longevity:* Four to six days depending on temperature.

*Flower bud:* Rate of opening: About three days depending on temperatures. Length: About 2 cm. Diameter: About 1.1 cm. Shape: Ovoid. Color: 63C.


Disease resistance: No known Azalea diseases observed to date on plants grown under commercial greenhouse conditions. Plants of the new Azalea appear to be less susceptible to diseases than other commercial cultivars.

Seed production: Seed production has not been observed.

It is claimed:
- I. A new and distinct Azalea plant named ‘Wendy’, as illustrated and described.

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