Draw a Rhododendron: Clustered Trumpet Blooms Step by Step

Original tasks 1, 2, 3 / complete keys

Task 1

Draw one rhododendron trumpet bloom facing the viewer. Use a narrow tube, a flared mouth, and five soft lobes. Add a short stem.

Answer: A single trumpet with a tube about as long as the mouth is wide, five rounded lobes around the mouth, and a short stem at the base.

Reason: The exercise isolates the trumpet structure so the five-lobed mouth and flared cone are clear before clustering.

Check: Confirm the mouth is wider than the tube, five lobes are visible, and the stem attaches at the narrow end.

Task 2

Draw a cluster envelope with four bloom centers. Place four trumpets at different angles, allowing one overlap. Do not erase the envelope yet.

Answer: A rounded envelope containing four funnel shapes with varied angles and one clear overlap, each with five lobes.

Reason: This practices placement and angle variation inside the cluster before refinement.

Check: Check that all four centers are inside the envelope, angles differ, and the overlap does not hide a mouth completely.

Task 3

Add three leathery leaves to a branch below a bloom cluster. Make each leaf elongated and curved downward, with a central vein.

Answer: Three long oval leaves attached to the branch below the cluster, each curving down and showing a central vein.

Reason: Leaves establish the rhododendron's leathery character and must sit below the blooms.

Check: Verify leaves attach below the cluster, curve downward, and have a visible central vein.

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Original tasks 4 / complete keys

Task 4

Refine a cluster of three trumpets by connecting mouths with small overlaps and adding light shading under the cluster. Keep individual flowers readable.

Answer: Three distinct trumpet mouths linked by small overlaps, with shading beneath the cluster and no single blob outline.

Reason: Refinement tests whether the cluster reads as separate blooms while gaining depth.

Check: Check that each mouth remains visible, overlaps are small, and shading sits under rather than inside the flowers.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Cluster envelope is rounded and wider than tall, with uneven bloom centers.
- [ ] Each bloom reads as a trumpet with a narrow tube and flared five-lobed mouth.
- [ ] Trumpet angles vary and overlaps are intentional, not merged into one blob.
- [ ] Leaves are elongated, downward-curving, and attached below the cluster.
- [ ] Line quality is controlled, with darker edges and light shading for depth.
- [ ] Valid alternatives in leaf curve, lobe softness, and bloom count are accepted if structure remains readable.

Reflection: What did you check, what did you change, and what will you try next?