

Hydrangea

Hydrangeas provide outstanding interest to the garden with large, lush, colorful flowers late spring through fall. These old fashioned favorites add color and texture to the garden with their rich, bold foliage. With the creation of new varieties and cultivars, there's a hydrangea for every garden whether small or large, their beauty combines well with perennials and broadleaf evergreens.

Planting Location - Sunlight Requirements

Hydrangeas can grow in a wide variety of sunlight conditions, however flower production and leaf variegation diminishes as sunlight levels decrease below 4 hours of direct light.

Hydrangeas will NOT grow in heavy soil or wet conditions, however, best growth occurs in moist, well-drained soils enriched with organic matter such as sphagnum peat, perlite, and well-aged compost. Maintaining a 3" layer of aged mulch will help keep roots cool and moist during the summer heat, and protect them over the winter. Additional irrigation may be necessary to reduce wilting for plants situated in full sun conditions.

Flower Types



Mophead (Snowball)

(*Hydrangea macrophylla*, *Hydrangea quercifolia*)

Large, rounded blooms. Florets are sterile, forming large, colorful, globular head.



Lacecaps

(*Hydrangea serrata*)

Flat, delicate flower heads made up of small fertile flowers in the center with a ring of large sterile florets around the outside.



Cone-Shaped

(*Hydrangea paniculata*, *Hydrangea arborescens*)

Long, tapered flowers made up of large, sterile florets, often in combination with small fertile flowers. This type is excellent for drying.

Pink or Blue Flowers?

Certain varieties of BIGLEAF and SERRATA hydrangeas have the unique ability to change flower colors depending upon the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. Even small changes in pH can cause a plant to produce blue flowers one year, lilac the next, and pink the year after.

As a general rule, blue/pink varieties will produce the flowering color results at these pH levels:

pH between 5.5 and 6.0	very blue
pH between 6.0 and 6.5	blue
pH between 6.5 and 7.0	pink
pH between 7.0 and 7.5	very pink

Sample pH test kits are available in our Garden Department to determine the pH of your soil as well as various soil acidifying materials including garden sulfur and aluminum sulfate. Depending on the existing pH, several applications at 6 month intervals may be needed to achieve the desired shade of blue. Most soils in our area will naturally produce pink flowers, however, if you need to neutralize the soil, simply add lime to the soil surface.

Pruning Hydrangeas

With Hydrangeas, no pruning is best, however here are some simple guidelines if pruning is necessary.

1. Annabelle & Peegee Types

These hydrangeas bloom on new wood, or growth from the current year, so this category can be pruned hard in early spring, before new growth starts. Do not prune throughout the growing season. It is not necessary to prune at all, however; except removal of spent flowers, broken branches, and general shaping. Annabelle Hydrangea can be treated like a woody perennial and cut back to 3" each fall or spring to encourage a compact growth habit.

2. Oakleaf Types

These bloom on old wood, or last year's growth. Remove only winter damaged tips or stems after growth has fully emerged in spring. Heavy pruning should be done immediately after flowering to control size and shape. If these are cut back too hard in the fall/winter, there will be nowhere for the plant to set blooms and therefore will not flower.

3. Bigleaf (Mophead) & Serrata Types

These bloom on old wood, or last year's growth. Remove winter damaged tips or stems in spring only after growth has fully emerged. Flower buds form near the stem tips during the previous year so minimal or no pruning is best. Spent blooms can be removed in late summer.

Fresh Cut & Drying Flowers

Hydrangeas make wonderful cut flowers. Cut blossoms early in the morning to optimize freshness. If wilting occurs, just immerse the flower in water for an hour to re-hydrate. Re-cut the stem and place in a water filled vase. The secret to perfectly dried Hydrangeas is choosing the right time to harvest them. While it is tempting to cut blossoms at the height of their color, this seldom works. Hydrangeas dry best if allowed to dry on the plant a bit before cutting. Many varieties turn shades of mauve and pink as the days get cooler. It is not necessary to hang the blossoms upside down to dry, just arrange in baskets, containers, and vases.