

# 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.

## **Growing Hydrangeas**

Typically known as shade garden or woodland plants, too much shade can result in reduced bloom production. The ideal location is sun or partial sun, with consistently moist, well-drained, humus rich soils. When planting hydrangeas, enrich the soil with Stauffers Plant Mix and Biotone Fertilizer to stimulate rapid root growth. Applying a generous layer of mulch will help keep roots cool and retain moisture during dry summers. Also deep watering at least once a week or more for newly planted and established hydrangeas is recommended, especially in dry weather.

Fertilize established hydrangeas with low Nitrogen fertilizers such as Triple Phosphate Fertilizer or 5-10-5 Garden Fertilizer every spring.

## **Three Common Reasons Mophead and Lacecap Hydrangeas Fail To bloom:**

1. A Late Spring Freeze/Frost arrives and ruins the developing bloom buds. The freeze may be light and even go unnoticed until you notice no blooms are forming. Or it may damage emerging leaves, too. As a result, most of the new growth comes from the roots and no flowers will form
2. Improper pruning, check chart above.
3. Planted in wrong zone. If purchased as a gift for Easter, Mother's Day (often wrapped in foil) many of these varieties are hardy in warmer climates and forced to bloom in greenhouses to be sold as "gift type" hydrangeas. Late Spring Freeze (reason #1) often damage developing flower buds, and thus will only grow foliage.

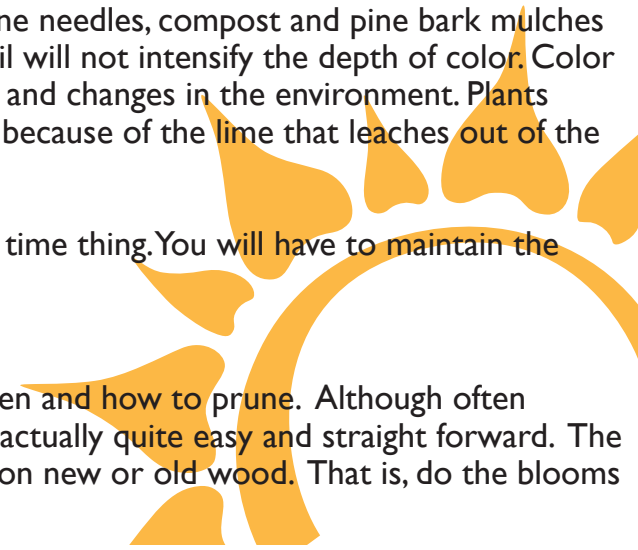
## **How To Change The Color Of Hydrangea Blooms**

Any of the macrophylla (Mophead or Lacecap) hydrangeas have the unique ability to change flower colors depending upon the acidity or alkalinity of the soil (except the white varieties). Even small changes in pH can cause a plant to produce blue flowers one year, lilac the next, and pink the year after. For **pink** flowers, maintain a soil pH of 6 or more by adding lime to the soil every spring. To obtain **blue** flowers, aluminum must be present in the soil. To make the aluminum available to the plant, the pH of the soil should be acid or below 5. (pH test kits available in Lawn & Garden Department) Depending on the existing pH, apply Espoma Soil Acidifier or Aluminum Sulfate at 6 month intervals to achieve the desired shade of blue. Soil can also be naturally acidified by adding pine needles, compost and pine bark mulches around the base of plant. Adding more amendment to the soil will not intensify the depth of color. Color may vary from season to season due to weather, plant stress and changes in the environment. Plants near a concrete foundation or walkway may never turn blue because of the lime that leaches out of the concrete.

Altering your soil to change your hydrangea's color is not a one time thing. You will have to maintain the altered soil conditions.

## **Pruning Hydrangeas**

One of the critical factors for successful hydrangea bloom is when and how to prune. Although often thought to be confusing or mysterious, hydrangea pruning is actually quite easy and straight forward. The key factor determining pruning is whether the plant blooms on new or old wood. That is, do the blooms



develop on this season's new growth or last year's mature stalks? It is always best to choose a plant that fits the space it will occupy. In that way, pruning can be kept to a minimum and done only for the wellbeing of the plant and to promote vigorous flowering.

There are five types of hydrangeas, which fall into two pruning groups.

**Group I**, generally, bloom on old wood. These plants produce flower buds on stems from August through October for the following summer's blooms. If these stems are pruned in the fall, winter, or spring, the bloom buds will be removed, and there will be little or no bloom the following summer. Types in this group are:

- **Hydrangea macrophylla** (mophead and lacecap) Pia, Nikko, Cityline Hydrangea Series (Hydrangea serrata is a sub-species of macrophylla) Blue Billow, Blue Bird
- **Hydrangea quercifolia** (Oakleaf) Alice, Sykes Dwarf, Snow Queen

**Group II** bloom on new wood. These plants produce flower buds in the current season, beginning about a month or two before they bloom. Therefore, they can be pruned anytime after they bloom and up until they begin producing flower buds. Types in this group are:

- **Hydrangea arborescens** (smooth hydrangea) Annabelle, Bella Anna, Incrediball
- **Hydrangea paniculata** (PeeGee and family) Limelight, Vanilla Strawberry, Pinky Winky
- **Hydrangea anomala petiolaris** (climbing hydrangea)

The **everblooming** or **remontant** varieties of Hydrangea macrophylla also belong to Group II **Forever & Ever Hydrangea Series, Endless Summer Series, Penny Mac**

The following table summarizes hydrangea growth, flowering and pruning.

Type	Height/Width	Bloom Time	Blooms on:	Pruning Group	Pruning Details
<b>Hydrangea macrophylla</b>	3-6 ft high & wide	late spring thru summer	old wood	I	Prune lightly to shape or remove spent flowers July-August. Remove older canes at soil level in fall to improve vigor on mature plants.
<b>Hydrangea macrophylla (everblooming varieties)</b>	3-6 ft high & wide	reblooms spring thru fall	old and new wood	II	Deadhead promptly to encourage continuous bloom. Light pruning in fall to maintain shape.
<b>Hydrangea quercifolia</b>	4-12 ft high; wider than tall	peak bloom in July	old wood	I	Prune immediately after flowering in July-August
<b>Hydrangea arborescens</b>	3-5 ft high; wider than tall	June thru summer	new wood	II	Prune to the ground in fall or late winter for best flowers.
<b>Hydrangea paniculata</b>	6-10 ft high and wide	July to September	new wood	II	Prune back to 2-3', fall thru early spring to control size and larger flowers.
<b>Hydrangea anomala petiolaris</b>	10-25 ft vine	June to early July	new wood	II	Prune if needed in summer after flowering or in early spring.

