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HYDRANGEAS

Characteristics & Care

Hydrangeas are a favorite in southern landscapes. Plants are categorized as mopheads or lacecaps and are available in many colors and varieties. In some cases, the bloom color can be altered by changing the soil pH. They are deciduous (drop leaves in fall) Some bloom on old wood; some bloom on new wood; some bloom on both old and new wood. It is important to know when to prune so that future blooms are not destroyed.



Hydrangea anomala is the *Climbing Hydrangea*. This plant is considered by many to be the Cadillac of all vines. It is a strong grower but not so aggressive that it will take down a house or fence like many vines. It is, in fact, poorly suited for a metal fence because it does not twine but climbs by aerial rootlets. Best when grown on the trunk of a tall oak tree or covering the face of a brick wall or wooden fence. It blooms from late June to early July. Lightly fragrant, creamy white blooms are 6 to 10 inches across and composed of a lacy center of fertile flowers ringed with a bracelet of larger sterile florets. Also noted for attractive thick glossy leaves and rich brown exfoliating bark. Leaves are yellow in the fall. **No need to prune.**

Hydrangea arborescens is the *Smooth Hydrangea*. The cultivar most commonly grown today is *Annabelle*. It has extremely large, light, symmetrical blooms, reaching up to 14 inches across. It is widely used because it is hardy to zone 4, and because it blooms on new wood.

The wood will often freeze back in the winter but will bloom from buds produced in the spring.

It can be pruned either in the fall, winter or spring, or in mid to late summer after it is finished blooming. Responds well to being cut back to about 10"-12" above the ground. This promotes stronger stems and larger flowers.

Because the blooms are heavy, staking is often necessary to keep this plant together. Leaves are yellow in the fall.





Hydrangea macrophylla is the *Big Leaf Hydrangea*. (*Endless Summer, Lady in Red, Penny Mac, Nikko Blue and others*) Cultivars are available in blue, pink, red, white, purple. Each is different and color can change depending upon the soil pH. These typically do not require much pruning, but, if you wish to build a tighter plant or maintain a shorter size follow these instructions: The flower buds form in later summer and then flower the next year in early to mid summer. **The best time to prune is from mid-July to mid-August, after it blooms.** Selectively prune out any dead stems, or old non-flower producing stems. Cease pruning in mid-August to allow time for the flower buds to form prior to winter.



New varieties, such as *Endless Summer*, bloom on old and new wood. If the buds are lost from extreme temperatures in winter, the plant will form new buds in spring and still bloom.

Hydrangea serrata is loosely related to the *Bigleaf Hydrangea*, but has a more delicate appearance with slender stems, narrow leaves and smaller flowers. Grows 3 to 5 feet in height with flower color ranging from blue to pink to crimson. (*Fuji Waterfall*). **Pruning and care - same as Hydrangea macrophylla.**



Hydrangea quercifolia (*Oakleaf Hydrangea*) A great landscape plant, noted for its burgundy red fall color. It blooms in late June - early July and is persistent into winter. The flower heads are cone-shaped, open white and fade to a pleasing pink and then rich brown. Water is a necessity for young plant, however drought tolerant with maturity. Sets buds in fall. **The best time to prune is from mid-July to mid-August, after it blooms.** Selectively prune out any dead stems, or old non-flower producing stems. Cease pruning in mid-August to allow time for the flower buds to form prior to winter.



Hydrangea paniculata (*Panicle Hydrangea - Pink Diamond, Grandiflora/Pee Gee, Limelight, Tardiva*) This variety is more **sun** and **drought tolerant**. Blooms progress from white to warm hues of pink in the blooming season. Most adaptable of all hydrangeas to different soil types; only hydrangea variety that can be shaped into tree form. **Best pruned in early spring.** Blooms on new wood. Very tolerant of hard pruning, in fact cutting the plant back from 1/2 to 1/3 will result in larger flowers. Some selections, particularly, *Limelight*, make an excellent hedge.



Hydrangeas typically prefer a more shady environment, however, they do need a little sun in order to bloom well. Plant in part shade (morning sun - afternoon shade) or in filtered sun for best results. *Hydrangea paniculata* is the exception to the rule, and will tolerate full sun.

Hydrangeas are very adaptable, but proliferate in rich, well-drained, moist soil. Additional watering may be required in hot, dry summer months.

FERTILIZE in spring with *Espoma Holly-tone*.

FLOWER COLOR is affected by soil pH. For blue flowers, the soil must be more acidic and for pink flowers, the soil must be more alkaline. To induce blue flowers, add *Espoma Soil Acidifier* to the soil. Add *Espoma Garden Lime* to the soil to induce pink flowers. Begin adjusting pH of the soil in the fall.

***Ask us about soil testing through the local Clemson Extension Office.**

