

A Hydrangea for Every Landscape

The hydrangea is an ornamental that, although appreciated during the summer, is often left out of landscape plantings. Its large, attractive flower heads make it especially striking during the summer, when few other woody plants are in flower.

Cultivating a Hydrangea

Most species of hydrangea can be grown in either full sun or partial shade. They are resistant to most insects and diseases. While they can be grown in a wide range of soils, hydrangeas prefer a rich, moist soil and should be planted where watering will not be a problem. Their large, soft leaves lose water quickly, especially on hot, windy days, causing the foliage to wilt. Therefore, avoid planting them in dry, windy locations.

Since flowers are produced on new growth, it is important that hydrangeas be given some care each season to insure that vigorous new growth occurs. Irrigate plants weekly to replace moisture loss. Use mulch for decorative purposes only, being careful not to overmulch. Prune the flowering stems after their flowers have withered.

Fertilize hydrangeas in the late winter or early spring with a complete granular fertilizer at the rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet. Apply fertilizer as broadcast top dressing. During prolonged periods of drought, the plants should be watered thoroughly each week.

Choosing a Variety

Depending on the species, hydrangeas have several different habits of growth: multi-stemmed shrubs, single-stemmed shrubs, small trees, or clinging vines.

Hills-of-Snow Hydrangea

(*Hydrangea arborescens Grandiflora*). The hills-of-snow hydrangea is a dense, globe-shaped shrub 3 to 5 feet tall and equally broad. In July, it has large, creamy white clusters of flowers at the end of each slender, new stem. All stems should be pruned to the ground each fall after the frost has killed the foliage.



Bigleaf Hydrangea

(*Hydrangea macrophylla*). The bigleaf hydrangea is a dense, upright shrub 3 to 4 feet tall. It has large, round pink or blue flower clusters that bloom in mid to late summer. Most varieties, except *Nikko Blue*, can be made to flower pink by liming the soil to a pH near 6.5. All varieties, except *Mariesii*, can be made to flower blue by applying aluminum sulfate to the soil to maintain a soil pH between 5.0 and 5.5. Some of the popular, hardy, blue or pink flowering varieties are *Otaksa*, *Mandshurica*, *Domotoi*, and *Blue Prince*.

Most varieties grown in greenhouses are not bud-hardy and will not flower regularly when planted outdoors. With any of these varieties, prune only the stems that have flowered as soon as the flowers wilt and prune them close to the ground. In the spring, remove only the thin, weak stems.

Peegee Hydrangea

(*Hydrangea paniculata Grandiflora*). The peegee hydrangea is generally grown as a single-stemmed shrub or a small tree. It can grow to a height of 10 to 20 feet. In August, it produces large clusters of creamy white flowers almost a foot long. As the flowers mature, they become yellow brown and can be used in dried arrangements. In the spring, prune all of the slender stems near the main

supporting branches to maintain the desired height and shape.

Oakleaf Hydrangea

(*Hydrangea quercifolia*). The oakleaf hydrangea is a dense, upright shrub 3 to 6 feet tall. Its large leaves are similar in shape to those of red oak. Its leaves turn purplish red in the fall. The oakleaf hydrangea produces white to pink open clusters of flowers in mid-July, which also turn purple at maturity. This variety should be grown in partial shade. It can tolerate competition from nearby larger plants.

Climbing Hydrangea

(*Hydrangea anomala petiolaris*). The climbing hydrangea is a clinging vine capable of growing up to 50 feet on trees or masonry walls. It produces large, flat open clusters of white flowers in June. Lateral branches can extend up to 3 feet from the wall or tree. To prevent ice and snow from pulling the vines down, the lateral branches should be trimmed in the fall.

A close relative of this species, *Schizophragma hydrangeoides*, is similar in growth and flowers. It is frequently confused with climbing hydrangea in nurseries and garden centers.

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