

# Hydrangea

## Care Guide

growing tips for healthy plants and  
colorful blooms

# Planting Your Hydrangea



Plant your hydrangeas in early spring or  
in the fall.

When you are planting a hydrangea  
remember that the blooms and stems  
must be protected from strong winds and  
the hot afternoon sun.

(Planting on the eastern side of a building ensures that,  
in the afternoon, when the sun is at its hottest, your  
plants are in the shade.)

Incorporate a lot of organic matter, and  
an all-purpose slow release fertilizer into  
the soil to give your hydrangea a strong  
start.

# Planting Your Hydrangea

## DON'Ts

Avoid planting in open areas where strong winds could break stems.

Make sure your plant has good drainage. If the soil is too wet the roots might rot, and the plant will die.



# General Hydrangea Care

- If you plant them in the summer, they need a lot more water in the beginning to establish the root system.
- Most varieties thrive in full sun to part shade, as long as they are planted in moist, rich soil.
- Water deeply once a week, and maybe more, if the weather is particularly hot or dry.
- Hydrangea fertilization needs vary greatly depending on your intended bloom color. Certain elements of the fertilizer affect the soil pH, which is a major determinant of bloom color in the pink/blue hydrangea varieties.

# Hydrangea Planting Reminder

Hydrangeas are shade **tolerant**, but they do require adequate sunlight and irrigation to bloom properly.

In northern climates and coastal areas, Hydrangeas will grow beautifully in full sun, but in warmer southern areas, a location in part shade where the shrub receives full to partial morning sun with protection from harsh afternoon sun is ideal.

Placed in the right location, given ample moisture, and pruned using the guidelines above, your Hydrangeas will be an abundant source of gorgeous blooms long into the future.

# Pruning Hydrangea

Hydrangeas can live for many years without ever needing to be pruned, but if your shrubs grow out of bounds or lose flowering vigor, then there are some essential pruning guidelines you must follow to ensure bountiful blooms the next year!



**Hydrangea macrophylla**

**Hydrangea quercifolia**

**Hydrangea arborescens**

**Hydrangea paniculata**

**Hydrangea serrata**



# Pruning Hydrangea

*Hydrangea macrophylla* and *H. quercifolia*

These generally bloom on old wood and require little pruning.

Prune spent blooms immediately after flowering (midsummer), or remove only dead, damaged or unsightly wood.



*Macrophylla*



*Quercifolia*

**Exception:** If you have a reblooming variety such as Penny Mac that flowers on new wood as well as old wood, you'll want to prune a little every year just to keep the new wood coming.

# **Hydrangea macrophylla**

## **(Bigleaf, Mophead, or Lacecap Hydrangeas)**

These hydrangea begin blooming in early to midsummer and may continue until summer's end. They set their bloom buds during late summer or early fall.

When pruning mopheads, you have two options, and you may end up doing a combination of both:

1. Cut back the flowering shoots to the next bud, removing the spent blooms without damaging the buds that will bloom next year. Do this right after flowering, but before midsummer.
2. On older shrubs that have lost flowering vigor, cut up to a third of stems at the base in late winter. Ideally, you cut the oldest stems, leaving mature young stems that are loaded with buds for next year, but you can prune more to maintain a pleasing shape. The purpose of cutting off entire stems is to rid the shrub of old or poorly flowering parts, letting in more air and light AND encouraging the growth of healthy new branches.

Avoid the urge to start pruning before late winter. If you prune too early, you could encourage dormant buds to break, leaving tender growth susceptible to frost and freeze damage.



# Hydrangea quercifolia

## (Oakleaf Hydrangea)

You can get away without pruning Oakleaf Hydrangeas at all, but if you want to keep them well-shaped, cut dead stems back at the base in late winter or early spring.



*Hydrangea quercifolia*

# Pruning Hydrangea

*Hydrangea arborescens* and *H. paniculata*

These shrubs bloom on new wood and actually produce larger blooms if cut back to the ground in late winter.



*Arborescens*



*Paniculata*

# Hydrangea arborescens

## (Smooth Hydrangea)

Hydrangea arborescens shrubs bloom on new wood and actually produce larger blooms if cut back to the ground in late winter.

This is one of the easiest Hydrangeas to prune. Because it blooms only on new wood, you can just cut it back to the ground in late winter, before any new buds appear.

If you experience some flopping of flowering branches, then leave a framework of old growth to help support the branches by only cutting stems back to 2 feet from the ground.

# Hydrangea paniculata

## (Pee Gee or Panicle Hydrangeas)

Prune this Hydrangea in late winter to keep the plants from becoming overgrown and encourage more new growth, more flower buds, and larger blooms.

You can remove dead flowers, as soon as they become unattractive and clean up the overall shape of the plant.



*Hydrangea paniculata*

# Hydrangea serrata

## (Mountain hydrangeas)

Some varieties bloom on new wood, some on old wood, but for best overall blooming, avoid pruning and protect plants on spring nights when frost or a freeze is expected.

Easy to grow and maintain, mountain hydrangeas prefer some morning sun and afternoon shade; rich, moist, well-drained soil; and plenty of water.



*Hydrangea serrata*

Remember, Hydrangeas are shade tolerant, but they do require adequate sunlight and irrigation to bloom properly. In northern climates and coastal areas, Hydrangeas will grow beautifully in full sun, but in warmer southern areas, a location in part shade where the shrub receives full to partial morning sun with protection from harsh afternoon sun is ideal. Placed in the right location, given ample moisture, and pruned using the guidelines above, your Hydrangeas will be an abundant source of gorgeous blooms long into the future.



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