

HYDRANGEA CARE

Most Hydrangeas are deciduous shrubs (lose their leaves in the winter) and bloom in early summer to late fall. The long lasting showy flowers are white, pink, lavender or blue. Hydrangeas prefer morning sun and afternoon shade with moist, well-drained soils. The flowers can be used freshly cut in arrangements or dried and used later.

Pink vs Blue

The color of some hydrangeas (Group 1) can be manipulated with soil amendments. To change the color from pink to blue or enhance the blue color - lower the pH by adding Espoma Garden Sulfur, Aluminum Sulphate, or Grow More Blueing Formula in the spring according to package directions. To change a blue hydrangea to pink, or to keep a pink hydrangea pink, raise the pH of the soil by adding Espoma Garden Lime, Lily Miller Super Sweet or Calpril. The best time to raise the pH of soil is after the hydrangeas have finished blooming in the fall and again in the spring. Lime takes several months to actually change the pH of the soil. Apply the amendment to the surface of the soil under the shrub and water it in. In the Willamette Valley, most blue hydrangeas will stay blue without decreasing the pH, as the soils tend to be acidic. White hydrangeas can NOT be changed to pink or blue.

Fertilizing

Get your new hydrangeas off to a good start with AI's Transplanting Fertilizer (7-5-4) at the time of planting. For existing plants, fertilize with AI's All Purpose Slow Release Fertilizer (10-4-8) in the spring, when new growth appears and again in August.

Pruning

Begin your pruning project with clean, sharp tools. Most cuts can be made with bypass hand pruners or loppers.

Group I - *Hydrangea macrophylla* and *H. serrata* (Mopheads) - Varieties that flower on the previous season's growth should be pruned lightly after the leaves have fallen. In most cases, just removing the old spent flowers is all that's needed. Old or spindly branches should be removed to the base. In early spring, when the new buds are emerging, prune to just above the first pair of healthy buds. If this group is pruned severely in the late summer or dormant season, the blooms for the following season may be sacrificed.

Group II - *Hydrangea arborescens* and *H. paniculata* - Varieties that bloom on new growth can be pruned in the dormant season or early spring when the new growth starts. Prune low, down to a healthy pair of buds to generate new growth and flowers.

Group III - *Hydrangea quercifolia* (Oakleaf) - This variety blooms on new growth, but only needs spent flowers removed and pruned to shape. It seldom needs to be severely pruned.

Group IV - (*Hydrangea anomala* ssp., *H. petiolaris*, *H. serratifolia* and *H. seemanii* (Climbing Hydrangeas) - These hydrangeas should be lightly pruned after flowering and long branches cut back to shape. If the vine is completely overgrown or needs to be rejuvenated, prune in early spring. This should be a 2-3 year process. Trim only about 1/3 of the vines down short each year over a three year period.