

Hydrangea Characteristics: Understanding the Various Species

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<p>Bigleaf, “French”, or Garden Hydrangea (<i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i> & <i>Hydrangea serrata</i>) E.g. ‘Nikko Blue’, ‘Penny Mac’, Endless Summer™</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Native to China and Japan• Introduced to England from China in 1798• Soil pH affects blue / pink bloom color – unique feature of this species!• <u>Not</u> drought-tolerant; needs frequent watering• Prefers filtered sunlight or protection from hot mid-day and afternoon sun• Blooms on “old wood”; flower buds, set the previous year, bloom in May• Buds are often damaged by hard winter or late spring freeze• Prune when blooms begin to fade (complete pruning by mid-July; cut just above a pair of buds)• These make good cut flowers• New “reblooming” varieties like Endless Summer™ are very popular	<p>Oakleaf Hydrangea (<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>) E.g. ‘Snowflake’, ‘Snow Queen’, ‘Pee Wee’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Native to shady woodlands of south-east U.S.• Several varieties were discovered in Alabama• Leaves resemble the leaves of an oak tree• Prefers partial shade or filtered sunlight• Drought-tolerant once established• Blooms on “old wood” in early summer• Needs little, if any, pruning, but if pruning is desired, prune in mid-summer after blooming• Must have excellent soil drainage• Susceptible to armillaria root rot if soil stays wet• Red and burgundy fall leaf color and attractive exfoliating bark make this a four-season plant• Typically grows to 6-7’ tall and 8’ wide• Several 3’-5’ smaller cultivars have been introduced• Offshoot plants can be divided and potted up or propagate from softwood cuttings in June or from seed collected in November
<p>Panicle Hydrangea (<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i>) E.g. ‘Limelight’, ‘Tardiva’, ‘Bobo’, ‘Little Quick Fire’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Native to China, Japan, and Korea• Requires minimum half day sun to bloom well• Blooms on new season growth• Should be pruned in late winter / early spring to restrain size and create larger blooms• Reliable bloomer; blooms from July-October extending the hydrangea bloom season• Can be trained into upright “tree form”• Grows 8’-15’ tall if not pruned; should be kept smaller by annual hard pruning• Known as the “hardy hydrangea” – cold hardy to USDA Zone 3• Varieties promoted as turning pink may disappoint in our hot Alabama climate• New varieties being introduced every year• Propagated by hardwood cuttings in February	<p>Smooth Hydrangea (<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>) E.g. ‘Annabelle’, ‘Incrediball’, ‘Hayes Starburst’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Native to shady woodlands of eastern U.S.• This was the first hydrangea introduced to England from the American Colonies - 1736• Blooms on new season growth; reliable blooms which last all summer• Prune back to approx. 12”-18” tall in late winter / early spring to create stronger stem support for its large blooms• ‘Annabelle’ blooms change from apple green to brilliant white and back to green• These make good cut flowers• Grows 4’-5’ tall with new smaller varieties recently introduced• New varieties also introduce bloom colors of lime, mauve, pink and red• Offshoot plants can be divided and potted up or propagated by hardwood cuttings in February
<p>Climbing Hydrangea (<i>Hydrangea anomala</i> subsp. <i>petiolaris</i> [native to China], <i>Hydrangea barbara</i> [formerly <i>Decumaria barbara</i>, native to Southeast U.S.], and <i>Hydrangea hydrangeoides</i> [formerly <i>Schizophragma hydrangeoides</i>, native to Japan]). E.g. ‘Miranda’, ‘Moonlight’, Rose Sensation™</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clinging vine to 60’-80’ tall• Lesser known in U.S. gardens. Produces lacecap-like flowers.• Flowers best in partial or dappled shade. Slow to establish and flower (up to 7 years)	