

Hydrangeas

Hydrangeas are lush shrubs with enduring flowers!

Few shrubs can rival their full form and unique bloom. These plants are perfect for bordering the edge of natural, wooded settings or along the side of the house with morning sun and light afternoon shade.

The most popular hydrangea is the macrophylla group, consisting of lace caps and mop heads. When people think of hydrangeas, they typically visualize **the mop head** or hortensia variety with large rounded pink or blue blossoms. **Lace caps** are flat, open flower heads and are considered more graceful, but not as showy. The **Oakleaf** hydrangea is a hardy shrub grown as much for its lush foliage as its flowers.

General Hydrangea Care

Planted 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. So, water deeply once a week (and maybe more), if the weather is particularly hot or dry.

Where are the blooms?

Many a gardener has asked why their hydrangeas produced bountiful leaves but no blooms. The secret to having blooming hydrangeas is to understand what kind of hydrangea you have and how they bloom on buds formed during the previous growing season. These buds overwinter, then open up in the Spring and bloom. Occasionally, a late spring freeze may kill the buds, so newer varieties (such as “Endless Summer”) were developed to be more cold hardy.

Prune with Care

Appropriate pruning for your type of hydrangea is very important!

For **lace cap hydrangeas** (flowers form around edge of head) remove flowers as soon as they have bloomed to keep them from going to seed. Cut the stems just above a bud or pair of buds beneath each flower head.

For mop head hydranges prune as flowers fade. Cut stems back to strong laterals or buds. In early spring, remove damaged wood and 1/3 of oldest flowered shoots to the ground.

Consider your ultimate size for the **Oakleaf hydrangea**. For a small shrub, prune to ground each spring. For other shapes, thin and shape as desired in the spring.

Oakleaf Hydrangeas bloom first in the spring followed by the mop heads and lace caps in mid summer.

Color (chameleons)

Yes, you may be able to alter the color of your blooms by changing the soil acidity. Add aluminum sulfate for blue blooms and lime for pink blooms. Wait a week or two and see what happens. Note that not all hydrangea varieties exhibit this color-changing trait. For example, white hydrangeas will not change color.

For further reading . . .

<http://www.oklahomagardening.okstate.edu/articles/maintenance-pruning/hydrangea-pruning-method-depends-on-variety>

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5816/HLA-6439web.pdf>

<http://www.clemson.edu/extension/hgic/plants/landscape/shrubs/hgic1067.html>



Mop head



Lace Cap



Oakleaf