



# Hydrangea Care Guide





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## Hydrangea

The genus *Hydrangea* has about 30 commonly recognized species. However, for the purpose of this overview, we will consider the three most popular types. *Hydrangea paniculata*, *Hydrangea arborescens* and the most popular being, *Hydrangea macrophylla*. *H. arborescens* and *H. paniculata* are the small tree and bush types which bloom August – September. The blooms are usually white with occasionally a slight shading of pink. They are easy to grow and very winter hardy. Then there is *Hydrangea macrophylla* which encompasses literally hundreds of varieties. *H. macrophylla* colors include whites, blues, bi-colors, pinks, and reds. They are available in both lace caps and ball or mophead types. *H. macrophylla* are the types which can rapidly change color depending on pH.





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## Discover The Pleasure of Hydrangea Plants

Native to China and Japan the Hydrangea has been celebrated for centuries. The Hydrangea most commonly known is *Hydrangea macrophylla*. *Hydrangea macrophylla*'s rich history includes an identity crisis of sort. Included among its many past names are *Hydrangea hortensis*, and *Hydrangea opuloides*. While hybridizing has been somewhat limited in the past what work has been done with this plant has been significant commercially. In the U.S., the variety 'Merritt's Supreme' was developed and is currently the most popular variety among Hydrangea growers. Hydrangeas are currently being bred in the U.S., Japan, Germany and France.





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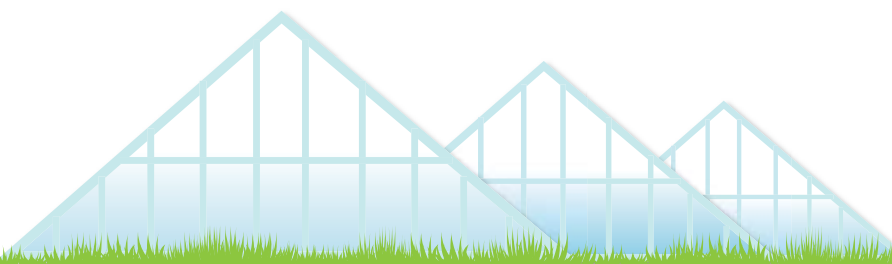
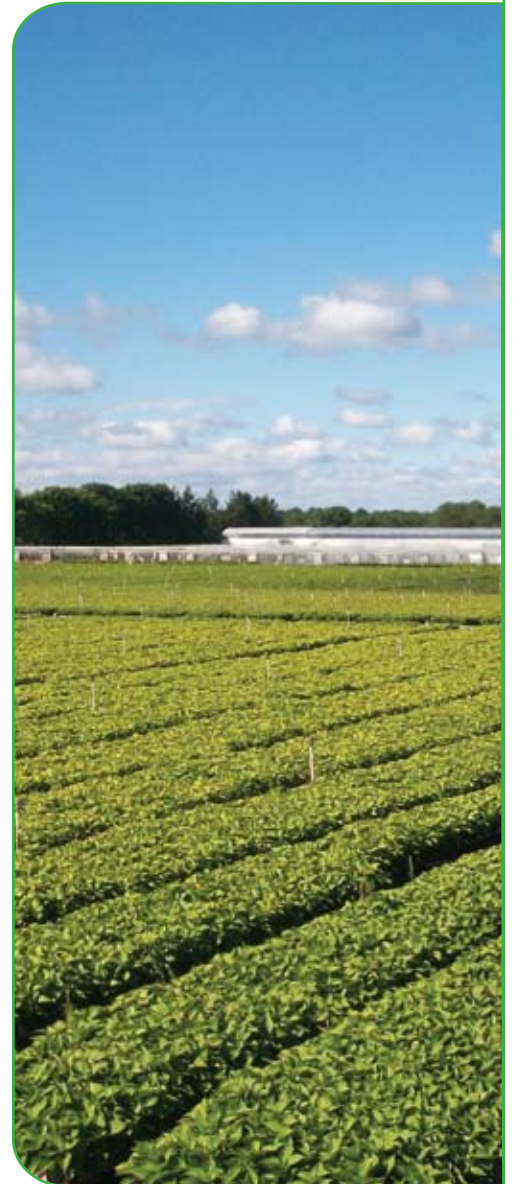
## Maintaining Hydrangea as a Flowering Potted Plant

**Temperature** - Keep plants in a cool location, from 65° to 75°F ( 18° to 24°C).

**Location** - Place plants near a window that provides high light levels. Avoid direct sunlight so that plants don't dry out rapidly.

**Irrigation** - Water plants frequently to avoid wilting of leaves and flowers. Hydrangeas can be damaged by overwatering, so it's important to maintain a moist medium without applying water so frequently that overwatering becomes a problem.

**Grooming** - Remove individual leaves and flowers as needed to keep the plant attractive.





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## Winter Hardiness:

Hydrangea macrophylla plants are winter hardy even in colder climates like Minnesota. However in colder areas like Zone 4 they are not always reliably bud hardy. In this case the plant will come back but they may not flower. Therefore, some type of over-wintering protection is needed. The older the plant, the better your chances are for summer blooming. Abscised leaves from large plants falling in between the branches, affords some bud protection. Additional protection can be given by placing the plant near foundations, and using natural materials such as straw, leaves or mulch for insulation. Plants may die down to soil level in extreme cases but they come back again as the weather warms like all perennials. There are considerable differences between varieties as far as cold tolerance and consistent blooming. Recently there has been some attention given to varieties which supposedly bloom on new wood. Such blooming is not uncommon, all varieties can bloom on new wood if the winter has not been too severe. Until now, claims for varieties blooming consistently on new wood, have not been sustained. However, new breeding shows that there will be introductions of varieties which reliably bloom on new wood. Until then, winter protection is the best answer for summer blooming pleasure.





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## Flower Color:

As *H. macrophylla* change color readily, below is a list of results that one can expect. The left column is for plants growing in soil with a low pH 4.5 – 5.0 to which aluminum sulfate has been added at the rate of  $\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. per 5 gallons of H<sub>2</sub>O (not on foliage soil only). Two to three applications at 2 week intervals will give the best results. The right column is for plants growing in a limed soil (pH 6.0), with high phosphorous.

Low pH		High pH
Slightly Blue	White	Slightly Pink
Purple		Red
Brilliant Blue		Pink
Blue Bicolor		Pink Bicolor
Purple Bicolor		Red bicolor

There are many variations of the above. We have seen white flowers which turn green after blooming which has a unique look. In general, we have found that light pink varieties tend to make the best blues.





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## Soil Characteristics:

Hydrangeas require a well drained media high in organic matter. They cannot stand wet feet. Aeration and good drainage is very important in overall plant performance.

## Fertilizer:

While Hydrangeas have a large leaf surface; they do not require large amounts of fertilizer. Rather they should be fertilized often at low rates. Plants can easily be harmed if fertilized too heavily when the leaf growth is not active. When transplanting, it is best to transplant into a media where little or no fertility is present. Such a poor start will encourage rooting and then plants can be fertilized.

## Pinching:

Any pruning should be done before July 1st. In fact, most hydrangeas as garden plants should not be pruned at all. Late pruning can result in flower buds for the next season being cut off.

## Planting in Garden

Any Hydrangea received during the cold months cannot be immediately planted outdoors. Movement to the outdoors should be done after the danger of frost. The plants will then have the summer and fall to acclimate for the next winter.





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## Attributes

Specimen  
Mass Plant  
Container  
Cut Flower / or Foliage  
Dried Flowers

## Exposure

Sun Tolerant  
Shade Tolerant

## Growth Rate in the Garden

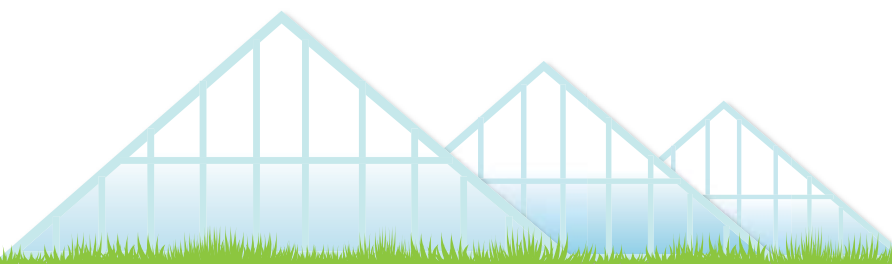
Medium

## Season of Interest (Flowering)

Late Spring / Early Summer  
Summer  
Late Summer

## Soil Moisture Needs

Average







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## Additional Information:

The best pictorial reference which we have found is the Hydrangea book called, "Encyclopedia of Hydrangea" by CJ & DM Van Gelderen of the Netherlands. Published by Timber Press. The Father-Son team, who collaborated on this book, have extensive experience with Hydrangeas both growing them and visiting many of the world's leading Hydrangea collections.

