



PRUNING HYDRANGEAS

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Hydrangea Types

There are two distinct types of hydrangeas which are pruned differently. The type that produces bloom buds on “Old Wood” and those produced on “New Wood.” The most popular is the ones produced on old wood. This includes the *Hydrangea macrophyllas* or the old garden hydrangeas such as Mophead, Big Leaf, Oak Leaf and Lacecap types. They all produce blooms on old wood. (Stems are called old wood if they have been on the plant since the summer before the current season. New wood are stems that develop during the current season.)



Old Wood Bloomers

When can pruning be helpful: The majority of hydrangeas can be planted in areas where pruning is not necessary. Bloom size and quality will continue to be consistent for many years. However, you may want to prune to increase bloom size, to remove all dead or damaged stems, to revitalize older plants (after plants are 5 years or older) and to reduce the plant’s size.

When to prune: Prune these hydrangeas only after bloom in the summer before mid July or August. Old wood hydrangeas start developing their bloom buds for next year in August and September.

Deadheading: Hydrangeas should be deadheaded after blooms fade. When you cut for flower arrangements before August, cut long stems back to buds at the axel of the leaves. When you cut back the blooms after the first of August, it would be safest to remove them with a very short stem so not to disturb any developing buds for next summer.

How to prune: Thin stems to control shape and size. Remove dead or crossing stems. Cut these stem close to the ground. Remember buds for blooms are produced on old wood and the more old wood you remove the less floral display in the spring and summer. To rejuvenate the hydrangea, remove up to 1/3 of the older living stems down to the ground each summer. This will revitalize the plant. If necessary to control the size of the plant, cut back before late July to allow for buds to develop. Usually the plant will return immediately to its former size. This is why it’s best to plant hydrangeas where it does not have to be pruned.

New Wood Bloomers

These are the hydrangeas that set flower buds on current season wood (new wood). It is easy to grow these hydrangeas because they bloom every year regardless of how they are cared for or treated. They can be pruned to the ground in the fall and they will emerge in the spring with bountiful blooms. However over a period of time this drastic pruning may cause the plant to come back weaker. Included in this group are the *H. paniculata*, (PeeGee types) and *H. arborescence* (Annabelle types).

‘PeeGees and Limelight’ can best be pruned in the fall or winter. Trim out dead and crossing stems and prune to shape the plant. It is not necessary to prune every year. *Hydrangea paniculata* can be trained as a tree. Careful pruning is required to develop the trunk and main branches.

H. arborescence ‘Annabelle’ can be planted as hedges. Pruning can consist of selectively removing weak, crossing and dead stems. They also can be pruned to the ground each dormant season, but over time they will start developing weaker stems and will need to be staked.

Endless Blooming (Endless Summer)

Endless Summer variety produces flowers on old and new wood. It blooms in early spring and then blooms later on new wood. This plant can continue to produce flowers all summer. Cut faded flower stems 1/2 its length to encourage new growth and buds. Prune after last bloom in the fall to control shape and height.