

# Hydrangea

## COLORS

MACROPHYLLA (commonly known as Hydrangea) Old fashioned, traditional and elegant are a few of the thoughts that cross our minds when describing the beauty of hydrangeas. Pinks, reds, blues, lavenders and whites are the colors of the bracts that adorn the many varieties available.

## BASIC CULTURE CARE

**Temperature:** 25-80° F. In dormancy, hydrangeas can tolerate with mulching -6° F. In vegetative to flowering state, 55-75° F, is ideal.

**Light:** Diffused. No direct sun for prolonged periods.

**Water:** Never dry out. Hydrangeas love water. But do not let it sit in water for extended periods.

**Fertilizer:** None while in bloom. Balanced food unless soil is alkaline.

**Soil:** Almost any soil type that is slightly acidic. If alkaline, use iron sulfate.

## GARDEN CULTURE

Hydrangeas are basically quite easy to care for. While in the pot simply follow the above instructions. As the plant matures, the colored florets will darken, then eventually turn dark green. Once greenish, we recommend garden culture as opposed to pot culture. If you decide to plant in a tub, do so in a large diameter tub (24"+) and expect to water heavily especially in the summer.

Hydrangeas in the garden are first class. For success, cut off the spent blossom heads and transplant the hydrangea in a semi-shaded, but brightly lit area in your garden. In areas that are humid, hydrangeas can tolerate full sun; however, in more arid locations, even one day of full sun can cause leaves to burn and become crispy and blackened. Avoid areas that are dark or too dim, as the plant will not set buds properly. Almost any part of the country (temperature-wise) is acceptable for hydrangeas. Temperatures even down to -5° F, are tolerated provided the plant is mulched each fall before freezing temperatures.

The color of hydrangeas (with the exception of whites) can be changed by altering pH levels and by using aluminum sulfate. Blue flowers cannot be obtained from hydrangeas grown in alkaline soil.

If you desire a certain color in the garden, you should try to find out first if your soil is alkaline, or acidic. If neutral, or acidic select a pink, blue or white. If alkaline select a pink or white only. In acidic soils, the bluing can be done by fertilizing from the break of dormancy to flower with aluminum sulfate. Alkaline soils will prevent you from being able to obtain blue hydrangeas.

## AFTERCARE

While hydrangeas tolerate almost any soil, if you desire a high quality specimen, soil can become an issue. Hydrangeas prefer acidic soil such as peat moss. (A pH of 4.5 to 6.2 is best.) If your soil or water, or both are alkaline, you will have to regularly fertilize with iron sulfate. You can probably find out what your soil and water pH are by asking your local professional nurseryman. Buying a bale of peat moss and mixing it into your soil will also benefit your hydrangeas.

If your plant is persistently yellowish despite heavy feeding of nitrogen fertilizer, it could be that your soil is too alkaline. During the growing season, try feeding continuously with iron sulfate until the color improves.

While these instructions may sound difficult, hydrangeas are actually quite tolerant of a great deal of abuse and will survive in any environment. Keeping the mentioned details in mind however, will enable you to receive the admiration of your neighbors by having exceptionally high-grade plants.