

HYDRANGEA

A group of several species of particular merit, especially for the mid-summer garden. They are native to East Asia and North America. The name Hydrangea comes from the Greek word Hydor, meaning water and Ageion, meaning a vessel or vase, in reference to the shape of the seed capsule. It reminds us they like a good soil, one that doesn't dry out too much.

Hydrangea arborescens: These are the best for dryer soils, and do well in full sun flowering July – September. H. 'Annabelle' is known for its large flowers and ease of culture, there are many more sorts one of our favourites being H. 'Hayes Starburst'. Prune hard in spring, for large flowers, lighter pruning encourages more flowers of smaller size.

Hydrangea paniculata: There are many types and sizes they will grow in sun or shade, depending on the soil. All provide a long season of flowering with many changing colour from white to ruby pink as the 'florets' age. The upright panicles can be dense or show clusters of smaller flowers surrounded by larger ray florets. As with arborescens the size of these flowers varies with pruning, prune hard in the spring for the largest flowers, or a mere trim produces more flowers of smaller size.

Hydrangea involucrata: These can include smaller sorts, producing an abundance of 'flowers' from July until the frosts of Autumn. Tolerant of dryer sites with a bit of overhead shade the inflorescence is produced from a bud like whorl of bracts which open to reveal the exquisite creamy, pink, lilac or white tinged flowers. These sorts of Hydrangea do not require any pruning, until you want to shape them or reduce the size to fit your garden. Prune in the Spring selecting out one or two stems and cutting back to the base.

Hydrangea macrophylla: The mop head hydrangea is a vast group of free flowering types which have a long and noble history in gardens. The sorts seen available today are generally well suited to garden cultivation and have their origins from the wild Hydrangea of Japan.

These are effective additions to a selection of other shrubs or among perennials; they can even be planted among roses where their predominately vertical presence makes a lovely contrast. Often loved because of their blue flowers, these are only produced naturally on acidic soils. Selectively removing half of the growth stems is a good way to keep the plant flowering and growing neatly, after flowering or in the spring.

Hydrangea serrata These have 'flowers' more closely akin to the wild hydrangea, lovely in a mixed planting due to the elegance of their flowers, not much more than 70cm high and look great massed among trees. Most originating from the mountains in Japan and Korea. Prune hard back after flowering or in the spring.

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