

Growing Hydrangeas

Hydrangea are easy-care, colorful shrubs with lush foliage and beautiful blooms. Whether you're looking to add color to your garden or create a striking focal point, Hydrangeas are an ideal plant for Bay Area gardens. Our Garden Guru receives many Hydrangea pruning questions each month. We thought we'd share some tips on how grow beautiful Hydrangeas!

Hydrangea microphylla, both mophead and lacecaps, should be pruned in late summer/early fall right after the flowers have faded. The buds for next year's blossoms are formed in October. If a hydrangea produces no flowers, it is probable that it was pruned too late in the year. Prune stems back to the first or second pair of fat buds below the finished flower. This can be as little as 4". It is not necessary to prune farther back unless you want to reduce the height of the shrub. Remove canes that are thinner than a pencil to encourage larger blooms on remaining canes. Remove all small, twiggy growth and dead wood.

September/October is the time of year to treat the soil around Hydrangeas to change or deepen flower color. Use Hydrangea Blue or Aluminum sulfate to make flowers blue or purple (acid). Treat the soil with Agricultural Lime to make flowers pink (alkaline). If your Hydrangea is white, the color cannot be modified.

The harder wooded Hydrangeas, *H. arborescens*, *H. aspera* and *H. paniculata*, should be pruned in late winter. Their flowers are formed on new, spring wood.

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