

The Ultimate Guide to Hydrangea Happiness

Pruning Guide

Presented by Wayne Gruber, Niemeyer's Landscape Supply, **Visit Wednesday's with Wayne @ Niemeyer's Landscape Supply YouTube * Watch and Like us on Facebook & Instagram**
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The One Rule That Matters Most

Prune based on when the hydrangea sets its flower buds — not by calendar alone.

- **Blooms on OLD wood** → prune **right after flowering**
- **Blooms on NEW wood** → prune **late winter to early spring**

Northern Indiana warning: Old-wood hydrangeas form next year's flower buds from **late summer into fall**. Pruning too late removes flowers you'll never see.

❑ Critical Professional Warning: Misidentification = Lost Flowers

Pruning the wrong hydrangea at the wrong time is the #1 cause of non-blooming plants.

Before making any cuts, positively identify the species: - Bigleaf (*macrophylla*) and Oakleaf (*quercifolia*) bloom on **old wood** - Smooth (*arborescens*) and Panicle (*paniculata*) bloom on **new wood**

When in doubt, **delay pruning and reassess after flowering.**

Know Your Hydrangeas (The Big Four)

❑ Hydrangea macrophylla — *Bigleaf Hydrangea*

- **Blooms on:** Old wood (some cultivars bloom on old + new wood)
 - **Prune:** **Immediately after flowering (late June–July)**
 - **Method:**
 - Remove winter-damaged and dead wood
 - Thin selectively by removing a few of the **oldest stems at the base**
 - Avoid hard pruning
 - **Avoid:** Fall or spring structural pruning
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❑ Hydrangea quercifolia — *Oakleaf Hydrangea*

- **Blooms on:** Old wood
 - **Prune:** Only **if needed**, right after flowering
 - **Method:**
 - Minimal pruning preferred
 - Remove crossing, broken, or weak stems
 - Rejuvenate gradually over multiple seasons if necessary
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□ *Hydrangea arborescens* — *Smooth Hydrangea (Annabelle, Incrediball)*

- **Blooms on:** New wood
 - **Prune:** Late winter–early spring (Feb–March)
 - **Method:**
 - Cut back to **6–12 inches** for larger blooms and sturdier stems
 - Or reduce by one-third for more, smaller flowers
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□ *Hydrangea paniculata* — *Panicle Hydrangea (Limelight, Quick Fire)*

- **Blooms on:** New wood
 - **Prune:** Late winter–early spring (Feb–March)
 - **Method:**
 - Remove weak, dead, and crossing stems
 - Reduce last season's growth to manage size
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Northern Indiana Pruning Calendar (Quick Reference)

Month	What To Do
Jan–Feb	Dormant pruning for <i>paniculata</i> & <i>arborescens</i> only
March	Finish dormant pruning; remove winter damage
April–May	No major pruning — allow full spring growth
Late June–July	Prune <i>macrophylla</i> & <i>quercifolia</i> after bloom
August	Stop major pruning on all hydrangeas
Sept–Dec	No pruning — protect next year's buds

Professional Pruning Tips

- Use **thinning cuts**, not shearing
 - Cut just above a healthy node with sharp, clean tools
 - Deadheading is optional and cosmetic
 - When uncertain, **prune less — you can always cut later**
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Midwest & Professional Resources

- Purdue University Extension (Indiana)
- University of Illinois Extension
- Iowa State University Extension & Outreach
- Ohio State University Extension
- University of Minnesota Extension
- Chicago Botanic Garden

All recommendations are based on Midwest extension research and professional horticultural guidance.

WHY ISN'T MY HYDRANGEA BLOOMING?

Which hydrangea do you grow?

SMOOTH

-or-

PANICLE

CLIMBING

-or-

OAKLEAF

BIGLEAF

-or-

MOUNTAIN

How long ago did you plant it?

< 2 years

2+ years

How old is the plant?

< 5 years

5+ years

Did you cut it back?

Yes

No

Needs more time to develop a root system. Mulch and keep well watered; it will bloom in time.

How much light does it get?

< 4 hours

4+ hours

These plants tend to need to be more mature to flower well. Give them more time.

Did you cut it back?

Yes

No

Oops! You cut off the flower buds. Avoid pruning.

Do you live in a cold climate?

Yes

No

Needs more sun

Did you cut it back?

Deer damage or low light

Flower buds were killed by cold. Move to a more protected spot; protect plant on spring nights when frost or freeze threatens.

Too much shade or deer damage

When?

Yes

No

Fall

Late spring/summer

Deer damage or low light

But it's a reblooming hydrangea!

Deer damage or low light

Buds removed - blooming may be delayed or not occur. Prune in late winter or early spring.

Not all reblooming hydrangeas are equal - some need to reach a certain height to set new wood buds. Let's Dance® reblooming hydrangeas were developed to bloom sooner.



WHICH HYDRANGEA DO YOU GROW?

Though there are 50+ species of hydrangeas found worldwide, only six main types are commonly grown in North American gardens. Each one has its unique characteristics and care requirements, so knowing which one(s) you have is key to success.

BIGLEAF *Hydrangea macrophylla*

- Pink, red, purple, or blue globe-shaped flowers; glossy green leaves
- Bloom on old wood: do not prune, may benefit from winter protection
- Full sun - part shade
- Also known as florist's, hortensia, mophead, or lacecap

CLIMBING *Hydrangea petiolaris* | *Hydrangea hydrangeoides* (formerly *Schizophragma hydrangeoides*)

- White disc-shaped flowers, stems need support of a tree or structure to climb
- Bloom on old wood: do not prune
- Part shade

MOUNTAIN *Hydrangea serrata*

- Pink, red, purple, or blue flowers, usually disc-shaped; glossy green leaves
- Bloom on old wood: do not prune
- Full sun - part shade

COLOR

All hydrangeas undergo some color change as their flowers age, but only bigleaf and mountain hydrangeas can change their color in a predictable, controllable way. It is not solely the pH of the soil that is responsible for this change – it is actually the presence of aluminum in the soil.

- Certain varieties of bigleaf hydrangeas cannot change color. For example, white bigleaf varieties, like Fairytrail Bride® cascade hydrangea®, will not change color.
- It is easier to change a hydrangea from pink to blue than from blue to pink, but both endeavors involve making chemical application in specific amounts at specific times. A soil test is necessary to determine the best course of action. If you decide to try to change the flower color, shop for products carefully and read all directions.
- Pennies, nails, aluminum foil, or coffee grounds in the soil will not change the flower color!

GROWING TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Plant in moist but well-drained soil (hydrangeas will not tolerate wet feet – ever!) It's a myth that hydrangeas require acidic soil; they actually tolerate a wide range of pH levels, from acidic to slightly alkaline.
- Some sun each day is ideal. Most people think of hydrangeas as shade plants, but they look and flower best with at least four hours of sun, ideally in the morning. Panicle hydrangeas are the most sun tolerant and can take full sun in northern climates.
- Provide plenty of water, especially as they are getting established. Hydrangeas have shallow roots, so they dry out quickly. A two to three inch layer of shredded bark mulch is a useful addition to any hydrangea planting.

OAKLEAF *Hydrangea quercifolia*

- White conical flowers; large, oak-shaped leaves
- Bloom on old wood: do not prune, rarely needs winter protection
- Full sun - part shade

PANICLE *Hydrangea paniculata*

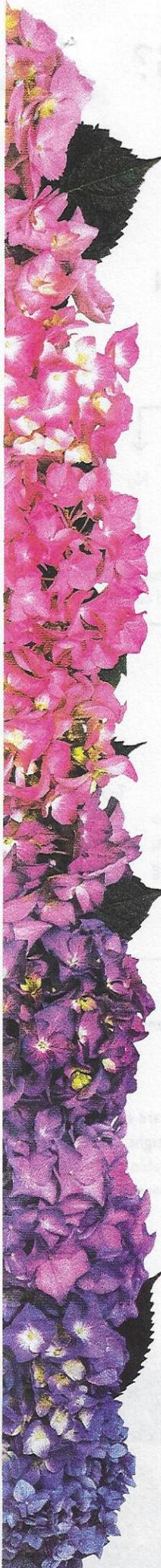
- White conical flowers that turn pink or red
- Bloom on new wood: prune in late winter/early spring
- Full sun - part shade
- Also known as peegee

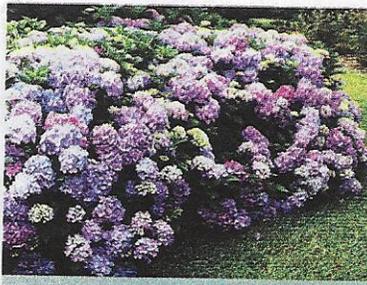
SMOOTH *Hydrangea arborescens*

- White, pink, or green flowers, usually globe-shaped
- Bloom on new wood: prune in late winter/early spring
- Full sun - part shade
- Also known as 'Annabelle' hydrangea



Scan the QR code for more details on all Proven Winners® ColorChoice® hydrangeas.





LET'S DANCE LOVABLE®*
3-4' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



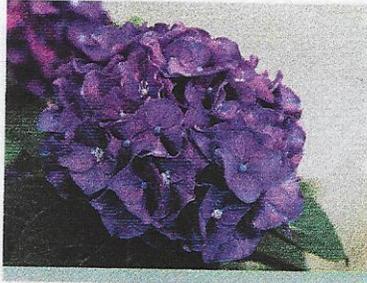
**LET'S DANCE®
RHYTHMIC BLUE®***
3-4' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



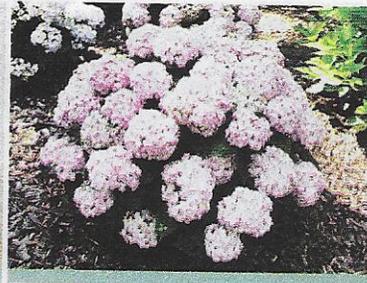
LET'S DANCE SKY VIEW®**
2-3' tall + 2-4' wide | USDA 4-9



WEE BIT GIDDY®*
2' tall + 2.5' wide | USDA 5-9



WEE BIT GRUMPY®
2' tall + 2.5' wide | USDA 5-9



WEE BIT INNOCENT®
2' tall + 2.5' wide | USDA 5-9



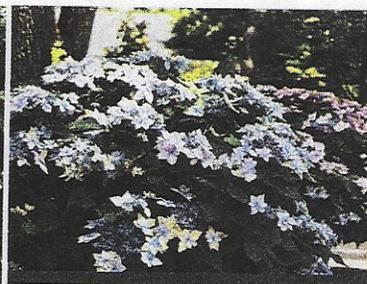
FLIRTY GIRL®
40-50' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



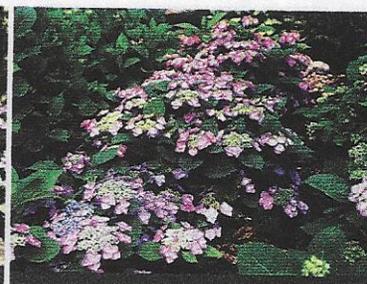
ROSE SENSATION™
40-50' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



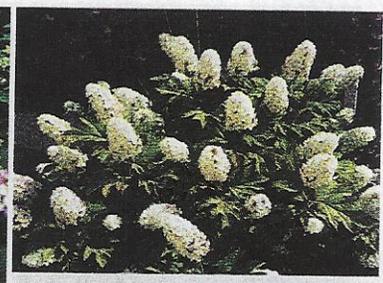
TINY TUFF STUFF™*
1.5-2' tall + wide | USDA 4-9



TUFF STUFF AH-HA®*
2-3' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



TUFF STUFF TOP FUN®*
2-3' tall + wide | USDA 4-9



GATSBY GAL™
5-6' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



GATSBY BUBBLY BALLERINA™
3-4' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



GATSBY MOONBEAM™
6-8' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



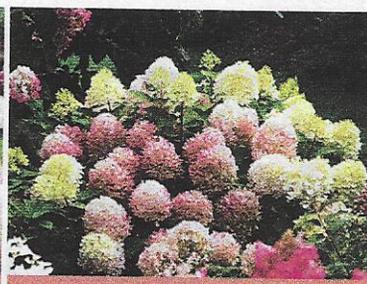
GATSBY BINKY™
6-8' tall + wide | USDA 5-9



BOBO®
2.5-3' tall + 3-4' wide | USDA 3-9



FIRE LIGHT®
6-8' tall + wide | USDA 3-9



FIRE LIGHT TIDBIT®
2-3' tall + 3' wide | USDA 3-9



'LIMELIGHT'
6-8' tall + wide | USDA 3-9



LIMELIGHT PRIME®
4-6' tall + 4-5' wide | USDA 3-9

* reblooming variety ** continuous blooming variety