

Hydrangea

There several species of hydrangea, but only about five of them are widely grown in the United States. The most popular include the hydrangea vines, the oakleaf, the paniculata, the mophead, and the lacecap. Each of them has both similarities and differences, but they produce enchanting flowers. They definitely brighten the landscape and the flowers are precious to florists and decorators.

Characteristics of Common Hydrangeas

Hydrangea vines are climbing plants that produce awesome flowers. There a several kinds and they usually grow well when given to the room to climb on the side of the house or on a tree. They don't require trellises. They simply attach to planar surfaces and holdfast. The flowers that grow on these types of vines are usually white, cream, light pink or pastel yellow.

For brighter flowers, the mophead or lacecap type is preferable. They feature flowers in colors such as bright blue and several shades of pink and purple, as well as white. The mophead plant is a bush while the lacecaps are more of a shrub that grows nicely around other shrubs and trees.

The oakleaf hydrangeas are original because of the shape and behavior of their leaves. Sure, they have stunning flowers that usually are white (occasionally pink as they age), but the leaves of the oakleaf hydrangea are shaped like an oak leaf and the leaf itself changes colors adorning red, burgundy, yellow, and orange in the fall. They are just beautiful.

The paniculata variety of hydrangeas is like a bush with blooms that are kind of cone-shaped. The flowers are similar to the lilac, but they are usually white and change into a pink blush color as the bloom ages.

Planting Hydrangeas

When choosing which kind of hydrangeas to plant, consider the characteristics of the different types, but also check your zone against the recommended zones for growing hydrangeas. Some of them won't grow in certain climates. There are so many different kinds of hydrangeas, that it isn't possible to provide a single method for planting them. Most plants come with planting instructions and it is recommended that you follow them.

Some require lots of sun while some are better off in the shade although most of them will grow well with morning sun and afternoon shade. The oakleaf does okay in extreme heat while other hydrangeas do not. If in complete shade, all of the hydrangeas will have problems blooming. Spacing of the plants is also important, so follow the instructions that come with the plant. When transplanting hydrangeas, it is best to plant them when they are blooming or dormant.

Caring for Hydrangeas

Most hydrangeas require moist soil but need to have good drainage. The oakleaf is especially sensitive to root rot if the soil does not drain well. They need fertilizer and for a thriving plant with blooms, provide fertilizer frequently.

Hydrangeas benefit from pruning. Dead blooms and stems should always be removed. Other pruning can be done to control height. The time and the method of pruning depend on the type of hydrangea you are dealing with. Look up the recommended pruning methods for your plant in particular.

Drying Hydrangeas

Hydrangeas are gorgeous when they are blooming and they a wonderful addition to landscape. However, they are also good for decorating and that requires drying the blooms which is a whole other ballgame. There are several methods for drying flowers including hanging them up-side-down and pumping them full of glycerin and colored dye.

The easiest, most successful way is to dry them naturally when it comes to hydrangeas. To do this, you pick flowers just before the top blooms open up all the way. You cut the stem to where it's about a foot long. Trim off the leaves and put the cut flowers in vase that is at least eight inches tall. Locate the vase in a cool area that isn't subject to sunlight; dark hallways are perfect places for drying hydrangeas. Fill the vase with about six inches of water and let it evaporate naturally. After the water evaporates, the hydrangea will be dry and ready to use.

With dried hydrangeas, you truly get the full life span out of your flowers. They are beautiful on the plant, as fresh cut flowers, and as dried flowers used in floral arrangements, wreaths, and other craft projects. Not all hydrangeas dry well, but most do.

Growing and drying hydrangeas is an experience you are sure to love. You can usually find the shrubs and bushes in any garden center. Of course, you can order your hydrangea plants from vendors through mail order or over the internet.

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