



The Shady Hill Gardening Tips Series

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Hydrangeas

We get a lot of questions about when is the best time to plant a Hydrangea, how and when to prune Hydrangeas, and why it won't flower. Hopefully, the information below is informative and helpful.

It is fine to plant early in the spring when it is still cool so the plant is not stressed with heat and also to allow plenty of time for the roots to establish before winter.

As far as sun or shade, it depends on the variety. Some Hydrangeas can tolerate a fair amount of sun (paniculata varieties such as Pee Gee, Limelight, and Tardiva) while others prefer some shade (macrophylla varieties such as Nikko Blue, Endless Summer, and Forever Pink). A newly planted Hydrangea should always be well watered, especially in hot weather, until it is established.

You really do not have to prune Hydrangeas that bloom on "old wood". These varieties are usually the blue or pink ones (macrophyllas or mopheads), and will set their buds on the "old wood" in August or September for the next spring. Once the plant is about 3 or 4 years old, it is okay to remove about 1/3 of the old wood, which will help revitalize the plant.

The paniculata varieties (such as Pee Gee) as well as Annabelles (arborescens), which bloom on new wood, can be pruned in the late winter or very early spring, prior to new growth, to control size and shape, if desired.

Oakleaf Hydrangeas (quercifolia) are slow growing and bloom on old wood, so pruning is very rarely needed. This variety can tolerate nearly full sun with some afternoon shade preferred.

Climbing Hydrangeas (anomala petiolaris) are also slow growing, bloom on old wood, and thus need very little pruning. This variety can also tolerate quite a bit of sun. If pruning is necessary to shape a mature plant, it should be done in late winter/very early spring.

A new Hydrangea to recently hit the market is Endless Summer. This variety blooms in shades of blue and pink consistently on both old and new wood from spring until fall and is a great addition to any garden.

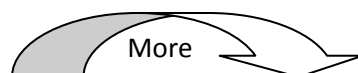
Regarding flower and color, the pH levels in your soil will dramatically impact the flower and color of the macrophyllas. Blue varieties prefer an acidic soil. Adding aluminum sulfate a few times during the spring can help if your blues are fading. However, only add aluminum sulfate to established plants, not newly planted ones, and it may take several weeks or months to see a difference in color.



Hydrangea



White Hydrangea



Pink Hydrangeas prefer alkaline or neutral soil. If your soil is too acidic and your pinks are not doing well, you can try adding some lime to sweeten the soil a bit.

If you have lovely green foliage and not a single flower, there are a few possible culprits. A late spring frost could have damaged buds, you could have removed all the dead wood (if it blooms on old wood), or the plant is not getting the correct fertilizer. You don't want to use a high-nitrogen based fertilizer as this will promote foliage growth but not flower development. Try using something more well balanced, such as a 10-10-10 or a blossom booster Superphosphate 0-20-0.