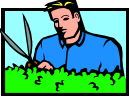


From the Ground Up

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A Cut Above



Deciduous flowering shrubs require so little attention that most homeowners do not think about pruning until the shrubs become an overgrown tangle of stems. Then, pruning becomes an afternoon job. Besides promoting healthy growth and controlling plant size and shape, a few pruning cuts each year (5 to 10 minutes per shrub) results in a benefit to you: a big increase in the number of flowers and ornamental fruit.

The best time to prune depends on when the shrub forms its flower buds and when those buds open. Flowering shrubs fall into two categories: spring-blooming and summer-blooming.

Spring-flowering shrubs such as forsythia, lilac and spirea, develop flower buds in the summer that will not open until the following year. Prune the shrubs immediately after flowering. If you prune too late, you will remove next year's developing buds. Summer-flowering shrubs, such as rose-of-Sharon and oakleaf hydrangea, develop buds during the spring growth period and the buds open into flowers that summer. Prune these shrubs during the dormant season in late winter or early spring before the buds show green.

- **Lilacs** maintain a full, balanced form when a few of the oldest stems are pruned about ground level each year. Also remove weak shoots at the base of the plant and spent blooms to encourage flowering.
- **Forsythia** becomes tangled unless pruned each year. To maintain its arching form, thin out 1/3 of the oldest stems on established plants to the ground after flowering.

After thinning, occasional wayward or overgrown stems may need trimming back called heading, to enhance the natural shape of the shrub. Because heading cuts promote branching, use them prudently. Otherwise, dense growth will develop at the ends of branches and will shade out the rest of the plant, resulting in sparse foliage on the inside. Likewise, do not head back all the branches to the same length or shear flowering shrubs into globes and boxes. This makes them look stemmy, awkward AND prevents them from flowering. An overgrown shrub can be rejuvenated by cutting its stems several inches above the ground.

Terms that you should know are:

Heading To head a small branch back to a bud, cut ¼ inch from the bud and angle the cut at 45° tilted in the direction the bud is pointing. A new branch will grow from the bud in the same direction.

Rejuvenating To restore a neglected, overgrown shrub by cutting all branches 4 to 8 inches about the ground. Use a pruning saw which cuts on the pull stroke for branches larger than 1 ½ inches.

Thinning Selectively cut the oldest branches to the ground which opens the center of the shrub to light and promotes new growth. Young, vigorous wood produces the most flowers.

Tools that you should use:



Bypass pruner

Use bypass pruners on living stems 1/2 inch or less in diameter when cutting twigs or fresh flowers. These cuts must be as clean as possible to maintain the plant's health.



Bypass lopper Use bypass loppers when you want to trim back an overgrown shrub or tree. The long handles give you more leverage so you can cut bigger stems up to 1 1/2 inches with less effort.



Anvil pruner An anvil pruner can snip away dead twigs and branches up to ½ inch. The wide anvil prevents close cuts but the jaws will not jam up with wood slivers the way a bypass pruner can.



Folding saw Use a folding saw for cutting a thick tree shoot rather than a lopper. The pocket-size tool is also handy for cutting branches into manageable pieces.



Lawn Care Calendar

High Maintenance Bluegrass lawns may need an early June feeding of a high-N fertilizer at the rate of one-half pound of nitrogen per 1000 square feet; do not fertilize in July. Do not fertilize shady or low-maintenance lawns until fall.

If nature does not provide adequate rainfall of at least an inch per week, you will need to provide water or your Bluegrass lawn may go dormant as long as there is not any traffic on it while dormant; it will survive until moisture returns. The grass will make best use of the water you provide if you give it a soaking, encouraging strong, deep roots that will be better able to gather food and water. High-maintenance lawns (and low-maintenance lawns with heavy traffic) will be damaged by inadequate water.

Several patch diseases can cause lawn problems during June and July. Keeping your lawn mowed at the proper height will help avoid these problems. When mowing, only one-third of the leaf area should be removed at one cutting. Try to avoid mowing any lower than three inches, with 3 ½ - 4 inches being ideal in the summer.



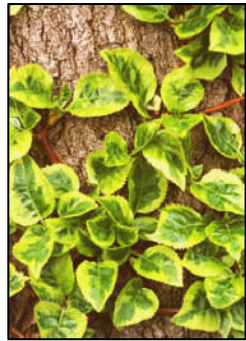
Is Hydrangea in Your Yard?



When it comes to beautiful flowers the genus Hydrangea is unrivaled in the shrub world. This diverse group of plants contains roughly 23 different species native to North and South America, and Eastern Asia.

The group offers a couple of cultivars that are well suited for our Zone 4 landscape.

This group of plants has become very popular. There are seven species that can make add to a great addition to our landscapes. Most thrive in rich porous, somewhat moist soils. Most prefer full sun, however, many will also grow and bloom in partial shade. The hallmark of Hydrangea is its large flower heads and its long bloom time. These attributes contribute to its appreciation by American gardeners.



Hydrangea anomala is the Climbing Hydrangea. We see the **Subspecies Petiolaris** because it is hardier (Zone 5) than the typical species. This plant is considered by many to be the Lexus of all vines. It is a strong grower but not so aggressive that it will take an arbor down. It climbs by aerial rootlets. It is at its best when grown on the trunk of a tall oak tree or covering the face of a brick wall. It blooms from late June to early

July. Its lightly fragrant, creamy white blooms are 6 to 10 inches across and composed of a lacy center of fertile flowers ringed with a bracelet of larger sterile florets. This plant is also noted for its attractive thick glossy leaves and rich brown exfoliating bark.

Hydrangea arborescens has the common name of Smooth Hydrangea. Few people have seen this conspicuously flowering species, but we all know its cultivars. The cultivar most commonly grown today is 'Annabelle'. This is because it has the extremely large, tight, symmetrical blooms, reaching up to 10 to 14 inches. It is widely used in the north because it is hardy to Zone 4 and blooms on new wood.

It can be pruned either in the fall or spring, or in mid to late summer after it is finished blooming. The one negative attribute of 'Annabelle' is that its blooms are so big that it will often collapse under its own weight. Staking is often necessary to keep this plant together. **White Dome** is a new lace-cap variety that has large lacy dome shaped blooms. It has attractive large dark green leaves and strong flower stems that never flop.



Hydrangea heteromalla is nearly impossible to find but with the new found interest in hydrangea we may begin to see more of this hardy species. It is a medium to large shrub that reaches 6 feet in height. Its white flowers are of the lacecap type. The noted ornamental attribute of this plant is its variation in flower color as it ages. The 5-7 inch white blooms appear in early July and gradually take on a brickish-pink tone to a brownish-orange color.

Hydrangea macrophylla, the Big Leaf Hydrangea is extremely popular today because of it is the most colorful of all the species.

Like *Hydrangea arborescens*, this plant can be categorized into two main groupings: Mopheads (snowballs) and Lacecaps. Mopheads are large round clusters of sterile flowers and the lacecaps are flat heads composed of both fertile and sterile flowers. It sets its flower buds in the fall and overwinters them. A hard winter can kill the buds and eliminate flowering. An early fall or late spring freeze may also result in a loss of flowers. Although completely root hardy in Zone 5, the buds should be protected with a light mulch in the North to improve the bloom reliability. The most exciting news is that cultivars like 'Endless Summer' have the ability to bloom on old and new wood alike. If the buds are winter killed, the plant will form new buds in the spring and still bloom.

Another interesting attribute of this plant is that its flower color may change depending on soil p.H.. It is not the p.H. itself that changes the color, but it is the availability of Aluminum ions that directs the color. Aluminum has greater availability in acid soils thus the blooms turn blue in acid soils. If the soil is either basic or high in phosphorous, the aluminum is tied up and flowers tend to be pink. Aluminum sulfate treatments become necessary to get blue flowers.

Hydrangea paniculata (Panicle Hydrangea) is our hardiest species and the best choice for the Midwest. When gardeners see this plant change daily from its pure white blooms to hues of warm pink, we start to salivate. It is unfortunate that many nurseries sell only the tree form of the cultivar '**Grandiflora**' which we call Pee Gee. This plant is noted for its abundance of sterile blooms on its thick conical flower head. An excellent cultivar now like **Limelight** is a new selection from the Netherlands with exquisite cool green flowers and is hardy to Zone 4. The blooms are large and held up on strong stems making a handsome display. The color may seem odd, but in the autumn the bright green flowers transform to yummy shades of pink, burgundy and green.

Oak Leaf Hydrangea, **Hydrangea quercifolia**, is a great landscape plant for Zone 5. As its name indicates it has an oak-shaped leaf. It is noted for its unrivaled burgundy red fall color. The flower heads are cone-shaped, open white and fade to a pleasing pink and then rich brown. The plant is 6 to 10 feet tall, coarse in texture, and sets its buds in the fall.



H. paniculata 'Limelight'

From the Ground Up

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Gardening Inside the Box

Something is missing here. You see them in Chicago neighborhoods. In Stockholm, Sweden, you see them on every balcony adding a dash of color to a dull apartment building exterior. You are not limited to the typical window box bracketed to the house beneath the window sill; you can perk up your deck rails, porch railing or house balcony with window boxes. After all, a window box is just an aerial container.



Prepare your window boxes by:

- Lining a wood box with plastic or metal if it is not made from a rot-resistant wood like redwood or cedar.
- Be sure your box has drainage holes both in the liner AND the box; layer netting (from an old window screen) on the bottom to keep soil from clogging them.
- Plant early to give plants time to fill out. Cover the boxes with newspaper if there is a frost in the forecast.

To thrive and produce loads of flowers, the plants in your boxes need a vigorous root system which means that you will want to provide them with a fertilized mix to stimulate growth. Lightweight soil is critical to the window box structure because fully watered flower boxes are extremely heavy. A pre-fertilized soil-less mix made from peat moss and vermiculite works well which can be found at most nurseries and garden centers. Do not top-dress over last year's soil; instead, start over by completely cleaning out the box and replacing soil. This prevents any of last year's diseases from carrying over into the new season. You can fertilize with a diluted liquid fertilizer every two weeks to promote vigor.

When you plant, follow these guidelines:

- Choose plants that vary in color, height, and shape but that do not require much pruning.
- Be sure they tolerate your sun conditions.
- Pack a punch with unusual combinations like begonias, sweet potato vine, and black-eyed Susan vine. For shade, consider caladium, coleus, fern and impatiens.
- Arrange the plants with the taller ones in back and the hanging ones in front.
- Finish planted boxes with a layer of mulch to retain moisture.



Maintain your boxes by:

- Checking if a box needs watering by sticking your finger into the soil up to the second knuckle. If the soil feels dry, water. You may have to water daily.
- Deadheading plants as soon as the flowers start to fade.
- Fertilizing regularly with a liquid fertilizer to make up for nutrients flushed out by watering.
- Emptying the boxes at the end of the season, remove them from beneath the window, and store them.
- If you leave the boxes up in winter, decorate them with winter foliage or drape them with fresh-cut evergreen boughs.



Tour de Garden

Circle July 11 on your calendar. The Minnehaha Master Gardeners is scheduling its annual Garden Tour for Wednesday, July 11; the tour rain date is Thursday, July 12. There will be both a morning tour at 9:00 a.m., and late afternoon tour at 6:00 p.m. of Sioux Falls gardens. Transportation will be by bus with boarding starting ½ hour before tour time. The bus boarding location is being planned. There will be a limited number of tickets available. Contact the Minnehaha Extension Office at 605-367-7877 for more information.



Your Gardening TO DOs

If you are running late with tending to your garden, continue 'to plow' ahead and work through the list.

- ✓ Plant warm-season annual and vegetable seedlings.
- ✓ Sow seed of fast-growing, heat-loving herbs, vegetables (basil, squash, melons) and flowers (nasturtiums, zinnias) directly in ground Thin out small green fruits on apple, peach and plum trees to one every 6 inches on the branch.
- ✓ Set up trellises to support pole beans, morning glories and cucumbers.
- ✓ Remove newest shoots from geranium plants to encourage fuller plants.
- ✓ Plant new lawns; fertilize and aerate established lawns.
- ✓ Divide and transplant spring-flowering perennials that have finished blooming.
- ✓ Protect cole crops (cabbage, broccoli, kale) from egg-laying cabbage white butterflies with insect-barrier cloth.
- ✓ Weed asparagus and strawberry beds.
- ✓ Remove new flower buds from chrysanthemums for bigger blooms later in the season.





Odds and Ends

By: Karin Woltjer, Master Gardener



Cool, rainy weather. Temperatures in the 70s. Dogtown and Squirreltown. Y'all and all y'all. These descriptions apply to Little Rock and North Little Rock, Arkansas, in early May. This writer attended International Master Gardeners in Little Rock, Arkansas, along with 1200+ other Master Gardeners at the infamous Peabody Hotel in downtown Little Rock.

The green environment culture is alive and well in Little Rock as evidenced by the Clinton Library built alongside Heifer International, Winrock and the Big Dam Project, a walking/bicycling bridge atop the Murray Lock and Dam on the Arkansas River, which are all certified by LEEDS, the green building certification program by the US Building Council.

There are 325 active Little Rock Master Gardeners devoted to projects in Pulaski County. The projects that we viewed were



Old Mill, Old State House, War Memorial Garden, Arkansas Arts Center, Contemplation Garden, Curran Hall and Historic Arkansas Museum. What was unusual about the Old Statehouse and Curran Hall were the use of parterre gardens, "formal garden construction on a level surface consisting of planting beds, edged in stone or tightly clipped hedges and gravel paths arranged to form a pleasing, usually symmetrical pattern."



Highly entertaining were P. Allen Smith's home in the Little Rock Quapaw Quarter with his chickens (Little Rock permits a small number of chickens in the city) and his work-in-progress Garden Home Retreat. When we asked if we could walk by his Quapaw home, we learned that he is used to tourists walking and gawking by his home.

Downtown is easily accessible by trolley. Art in the Market and the Farmer's Market in the Market District are available on Fridays and Saturdays in May throughout early fall.

With gardening and the avid gardeners garnering much attention and civil pride, you will not 'go far wrong' if you visit Little Rock in the Natural State.

Sincerely,

Crystal Stewart
Extension Educator

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