BEDNER'S
FARM & GREENHOUSE

HYDRANGEA CARE

As one of the most desirable landscape shrubs, hydrangeas provide showy flowers, striking and dynamic color choices, and lush foliage throughout the seasons. Hydrangeas can be complicated shrubs in your landscape if you are unsure on the proper techniques to care for them.

the basics

» **What kind of hydrangea do I have?**
There are 6 common types of hydrangeas:

Arborescens - Smooth Hydrangea; Large snowball size flowers; new wood *(ex. Annabelle, Invincibelle)*

Macrophylla - Big Leaf Hydrangea; Lacecap or Mophead flowers with large leaves; old wood *except reblooming (i.e. Endless Summer series) bloom on old and new wood *(ex. Nikko Blue, Endless Summer BloomStruck)*

Paniculata - Panicle Hydrangea; Cone shaped flowers; new wood *(ex. Limelight, Bobo)*

Petiolaris - Climbing Hydrangea; Lacecap flowers; old wood *(ex. Miranda, Semiola)*

Quercifolia - Oakleaf Hydrangea; Cone shaped flowers on oak-like leaves; old wood *(ex. Ruby Slippers, Jetstream)*

Serrata - Mountain Hydrangea; Lacecap flowers; old wood *except reblooming (i.e. Tuff Stuff series) bloom on old and new wood *(ex. Blue Billow, Tiny Tuff Stuff)*

When do I prune my hydrangea? Certain hydrangeas bloom on new wood, others on old wood and then some on old and new wood. Depending on the type of hydrangea that you have will determine when and how you prune so that you have the best blooms.

Old Wood- Buds are formed for next year's blooms at the end of the current growing season. Prune shortly after flowering or early fall if needed but pruning is not necessary. Look for newly set buds. Remove up to ⅓ of the stems to the ground, leaving a combination of old productive wood and strong new stems.

New Wood- Buds are formed on the new growth that emerge during the current growing season. Prune in late winter or early spring. Depending on the size that you are wanting to keep, you can cut back ⅓ of the plant to the next set of healthy leaves.

Old and New Wood - Buds are formed on new and old growth. Buds formed on old wood bloom early in the season and buds on new wood bloom later in the season. Treat as old wood hydrangeas and prune out dead stems as needed.

Overall, hydrangeas do not require yearly pruning. They will grow and flower well with nothing more than removal of spent flowers and any dead wood in early spring.

Can I change the color of my hydrangea? Not all hydrangeas will change color. The science comes down to the soil pH. Hydrangea macrophylla (Big Leaf) and Hydrangea serrata (Mountain) respond to changes in the pH. White hydrangeas are typically not affected. You can get a soil test from Penn State or amend your soil in the following ways:

» **Soil to become more acidic (Blue):** add Aluminum Sulfate, Espoma Soil Acidifier or an acidic fertilizer

» **Soil to become more alkaline (Pink):** add Lime with a neutral fertilizer

This may take an entire season to fully switch as the amendments only affect the developing buds, not the flowers that are currently blooming.

Why does my hydrangea not bloom? If your hydrangea is not blooming, there could be multiple factors.

» **Apply a Triple Phosphate** or a high phosphorus plant food to force more flowers.

» **Deer Damage-** Add protection around the shrub to deter deer such as fencing, deer resistant plants, or deer repellents.

» **Low Light-** Most hydrangeas will tolerate shade but need to have enough light (~4-6 hours of sun)

» **Pruning/Winter Damage-** Pruning may have cut off buds or a harsh winter may have damaged buds. Transplanting or adding protection from frost and freezing may be necessary.