**When to Prune Hydrangeas**

Like most woody flowering shrubs, when you prune a hydrangea depends on whether it blooms on new wood (growth produced in the current season) or old wood (growth from the previous season). In the case of hydrangeas, this is complicated by the fact that some species of hydrangea bloom on old wood, while others bloom on new wood.

Shrubs that bloom on new growth should be pruned in the late winter or early spring just before the critical new growth has started. This will maximize the amount of new growth and the number of flowers your shrub produces. Shrubs that bloom on old growth, on the other hand, should be pruned immediately after their flowers have faded. This gives the plant plenty of time to develop wood that will be "old" by the time the next season's flower buds emerge.

If you don't immediately know the type of hydrangea you own, it's relatively easy to determine it based on simple observation of its leaves and flowering pattern.

* **Bigleaf hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla)***have exceptionally large, long serrated dark green leaves (up to 8 inches) and they bloom for an extended period through mid to late summer. The flower color is affected by soil pH; acid soils cause flowers to be blue; alkaline soil causes pink flowers. Along with the large leaves, bigleaf hydrangeas are identified by the large, rounded flowers that bloom in summer. This is one of the species that bloom on old wood; you'll prune this just after the plant is finished flowering.
* **Smooth (wild) hydrangeas (*H. arborescens)***have spring and early summer flowers are that are big and round, either white or shades of pink. The most common garden variety is 'Annabelle', easily identified by its huge snowball-shaped flowers. This plant flowers on new wood, so you'll prune it in late winter or early spring.
* **Panicle (peegee) hydrangeas (*H. paniculata)***have large cone-shaped flower panicles. The flowers are white or green when they first bloom, gradually turning pink. This type is another of the hydrangeas that flower on new wood, requiring late winter or early spring pruning.
* **Oakleaf hydrangeas (*H. quercifolia)*,** as the name suggests, have leaves that resemble those of oak trees. Their flowers, which bloom early in the season, are cone-shaped and start out cream or green in color, gradually becoming pink. This species flowers on old wood, which means you'll prune immediately after it flowers.
* **Mountain hydrangeas (*H*.*serrata*)** look like a smaller, more compact version of bigleaf hydrangea. Its lacecap-shaped flowers vary in color depending on soil pH. It blooms on old wood, but its small size (2 to 4 feet) means that pruning is not needed very often. If you do prune, it will be done immediately after flowering.
* **Climbing hydrangeas (*H. anomala subsp. petiolaris*)**are very vigorous climbing vines (as much as 40 feet) with white flowers that appear in spring to early summer. The flowers form flattened clusters up to 8 inches wide. This is another of the varieties that flowers on old wood; when pruning is needed, it will be done after the flowers have faded.

| **When to Prune Different Types of Hydrangeas** | | |
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| **Category** | **Blooms on old or new wood** | **When to prune** |
| Bigleaf hydrangea | Old | Immediately after flowers fade |
| Smooth (wild) hydrangea | New | Late winter or early spring before new growth starts |
| Panicle (peegee) hydrangea | New | Light pruning in late winter or early spring |
| Oakleaf hydrangea | Old | Summer after the flowers fade |
| Mountain hydrangea | Old | Immediately after flowering |
| Climbing hydrangea | Old | Winter or early spring, only when necessary to control size |