

# How to care for your Hydrangea



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# Cook's



**Cook's Garden Centre**

26 Worcester Road  
Stourport-on-Severn DY13 9PB

✉ [cooksgardencentre@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cooksgardencentre@yahoo.co.uk)

☎ 01299 826169

[www.cooks-garden-centre.co.uk](http://www.cooks-garden-centre.co.uk)



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## Hydrangea

Hydrangeas are a very popular garden shrub that can be grown both in the border and in pots and containers. With long lasting heads of flowers in various shades of pink, white and blue coupled with pretty autumn colour and leaf shape they prove to be a valuable addition to any garden.

## Cultivation

Hydrangeas thrive in a moist, but well drained soil. Avoid sunny dry positions, instead place them in a cool semi-shaded spot. However, sunny positions are perfect for *Hydrangea paniculata* varieties, but even so avoid drying out. When planting add plenty of organic matter around the roots in a planting hole 2 to 3 times the size of the pot the plant is currently in. They are frost hardy but avoid exposed east facing sites as cold winds can damage young spring growth.

## Pots and Containers

Firstly, choose a container no more than 2 to 3 inches bigger than the pot the Hydrangea is growing in. Add a little drainage to the pot then choose your compost dependent on the flower colour. Blue and purple flowers use Westland Ericaceous Compost. White and Pink Flowers use Westland Multi-purpose with added John Innes. Place your pot in a position of semi shade and keep moist.

## Feeding

Hydrangeas need to be fed in late winter/ early spring. Use a correct feed low in Nitrogen. Westland Hydrangea Feed is the perfect formula; it helps both promote flower colour and size. Apply as directed on the bottle.

## Flower Colour

Hydrangeas will change colour dependant on the pH of your soil. To maintain blue/purple flowers they must be grown in acidic soil so the plant can access aluminium sulphate that is present in the soil.

Pink and red forms should be grown in an alkaline soil to maintain their colour. To help maintain blue/purple colours, try to water with rain water as tap water may contain lime. You can also apply Westland Hydrangea Colourant to help maintain the colour; this is particularly effective on container grown plants. To help maintain pink colours you can apply ground limestone or chalk at 2/3 Oz's per sq. yard in winter, which will enhance the colour of their flowers the following year. White and green flowering Hydrangeas are not affected by soil pH. Colour changes in late summer/early autumn occur naturally. Pink/blue flowers face to become shades of red/green. This is a normal process and cannot be reversed. In some varieties, white flowers may mature to a pink colour, however be assured there is nothing wrong and your Hydrangea will create new flowers next season in the original white colour.

## Pruning

Hydrangea Mophead and Lacecap varieties will bloom well with little attention but regular pruning will encourage vigorous growth that can create a better display of blooms. For Mopheads remove dead flower heads towards the end of the winter so they can protect new buds from frost damage. Cut back to the first set of healthy buds, leaving non flowering stems unpruned. To prune old established plants, cut out 2/3 old stems right to the base to encourage new growth. Lacecaps tend to be hardier and faded blooms can be cut back to the second pair of leaves much earlier. Climbing Hydrangeas require their overlong shoots being cut back after flowering. Most flowers appear at the top of the plant so avoid over pruning of this area. *Hydrangea paniculata* and *arborescens* varieties are completely different and respond well to a hard pruning. Cut back the framework to within 10" of the ground early each spring. *Hydrangea quercifolia* only require minimal pruning, with removing dead flowers and over long stems.

## Potential Problems

Hydrangeas are on the whole robust shrubs. Non flowering can be caused by overzealous pruning. Late frost damage or over feeding with a high nitrogen based feed can also be the cause of no flowers. Luckily hydrangeas are not affected by pests such as Scale Insect, capsid bugs or Aphids. If in doubt, please contact us for further advice.

# Tour Dates

**RHS Cardiff:**  
13th April - 15th April

**Ascot Spring Garden Show:**  
13th April - 15th April

**Harrogate Spring Flower Show:**  
26th April - 29th April

**RHS Malvern Spring Festival:**  
10th May - 13th May

**Chelsea Flower Show:**  
22nd May - 26th May

**Gardening Scotland:**  
1st June - 3rd June

**RHS Chatsworth Flower Show:**  
6th June - 10th June

**NEC Gardeners World:**  
14th June - 17th June

**RHS Hampton Court Flower Show:**  
3rd July - 8th July

**RHS Garden Hyde Hall Flower Show:**  
1st August - 5th August

**Shrewsbury Flower Show:**  
10th August - 11th August

**Southport Flower Show:**  
16th August - 19th August

**RHS Garden  
Wisley Flower Show:**  
4th September - 9th September

**Harrogate Autumn Show:**  
14th September - 16th September

**Malvern Autumn Show:**  
29th September - 30th September



Don't forget to purchase Hydrangea feed and compost



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