

Winter pruning is carried out in July to mid August. Stems should be cut back by a third. Remove all dead, old or spindly, weak growth. The whole objective of pruning is to allow the plant to channel all its energies into these flower buds. By cutting back too severely, you loose out on flowers the following season.

Pests and Diseases

Powdery mildew - a white powdery fungus on the upper surface of leaves - should be sprayed with Funginex.

Red Spider Mite - a minute, eight legged mite on underside of leaves causing leaves to turn silver-grey and later brown, should be treated with Spidermite spray.

Chewing insects - like beetles, caterpillars and grasshoppers can be treated with Karbasol or Folithion.

Chlorosis is a symptom of malnutrition - yellowing of leaves with prominent green veins. Apply Iron Chelate at recommended dosage, or foliar feed with Multifeed every second week.

Happy Gardening!

Contact details:

For details and further information, come in to any GardenShop or call our GardenLine on 0860 100 403. Alternatively, e-mail us at info@gardenshop.co.za or log on to www.gardenshop.co.za

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Hydrangeas

An expert guide to the planting and care of Hydrangeas



GardenCare



An introduction to Hydrangeas

Hydrangeas are amongst the most popular flowering shrubs in South African gardens. They grow well in most regions from the coastal areas to the drier highveld. Hydrangeas, also known as Christmas roses, often dominate the landscape through the heat of summer with their showy, colourful blooms and are very rewarding and easy to grow if you follow a few simple rules.

Position

Hydrangeas grow best in a lightly shaded position with plenty of water, south facing slopes are ideal. They are also happy planted under trees and along a south facing wall. They enjoy rich, loamy soil with plenty of compost and kraal manure. Protect them from prevailing salt laden winds in coastal areas. In cold areas, soft new growth tips require protection from late frosts.

Getting the most from your plants

Mass plant under trees in large gardens or plant amongst other shade loving shrubs in flowerbeds. Use Hydrangeas in pots and containers on shaded patios or as indoor, flowering displays in brightly lit rooms. They should be planted outdoors when blooms start to fade. The blooms are spectacular in flower arrangements, either fresh or dried.

Planting and Care

Dig holes approximately 600mm square and 450mm deep - rather wide, than deep as Hydrangeas have a shallow root system.

Mix 1/2 a bag of compost to the topsoil from the hole, mix well with 2 handfuls of Superphosphate and 1 handful of 2:3:2 then return this prepared mixture to the planting hole, firming down all the time.

Now dig a small hole, large enough to accommodate the root ball of the plant and carefully remove pot or bag. Soak the root ball well before placing in hole. Do not bury any deeper than the level of the root ball. Fill in soil and firm down well.

Water thoroughly for 20 minutes. Thereafter keep plant moist at all times from spring to autumn. Mulch with compost or peatmoss to keep roots cool and to conserve moisture. This greatly reduces watering needs.

Feeding or Fertilising

Hydrangeas are hungry plants and require regular fertiliser applications. Apply 3:1:5 (26) slow release or Rose food at two monthly intervals at the recommended application rate. Supplementary foliar feeding with Wonder Colourburst Azalea plantfood,

alternating with Multifeed or Nitrosol every 4 weeks prior to and during blooming, greatly improves flower quality.

The colour of blooms change according to the acidity of the soil that the plants are growing in. This can be altered by treating in the following manner:

Pink or red flowers are usually associated with alkaline or sweet soil conditions. Add 500 grams of Agricultural Lime to soil mixture at time of planting. Thereafter dress with lime every August at a rate of between 250 and 500 grams per plant. Fertilise with Shake 'n Grow Pink Hydrangea Plantfood.

Blue or purple flowers require acidic soil conditions which can be achieved by regular applications of Shake 'n Grow Blue Hydrangea Plantfood, mulching with acid compost or peatmoss.

Note that it is easier to maintain colour intensity on plants growing in pots.

Pruning

Pruning is essential to induce large, healthy blooms. Immediately after flowering (December, January) prune lightly by removing all dead or spent flower heads. Cut back by about 200mm to just above a strong double bud.