

# LANDSCAPE DESIGNS NURSERY



3290 Elvehjem Rd.  
McFarland, WI 53558  
Nursery: 608-209-3436 Office: 608-233-4215  
[www.landscapedesigns.bz](http://www.landscapedesigns.bz)

## Hydrangea for Southern Wisconsin Gardens

*Hydrangea* is derived from two Greek words. 'Hydor' - meaning water and 'angeon' - meaning storage vessel. Supposedly the seed capsule is shaped like a water holding vessel. However, some *Hydrangea* seed pods have protuberances that are more reminiscent of the mythical Hydra, so, the name may allude to Hydra. We may never know what *Hydrangea* means. They began their evolution about 70 million years ago. They belong to the Saxifragaceae Family, along with *Philadelphus* - Mock Orange. There are about 23 species found in North America, Central and South America, China, Japan, Philippines, Taiwan, Java and Sumatra.



### Foliage:

The vast majority of *Hydrangea* have simple lightly serrated (like a saw) leaves. Only Oak-Leaf *Hydrangea* & *Sikokiana Hydrangea* have leaves that are naturally pinnately lobed. All *Hydrangea* hardy in our area are deciduous.

All *Hydrangea*, except for the vining ones, grow about the same width as they grow in height.

### Soil:

Nearly any type of soil excluding both excessive drought or wet conditions. Although *H. macrophylla* and *H. serrata* enjoy very moist, bordering on wet conditions.

### Lighting:

Since the following list contains a number of different species, their lighting requirements will be individually noted.

### Mulching:

All of the noted hydrangea may be mulched in the autumn or spring with 2-3" of mulch.

### Flowers:

Nearly all of the following *Hydrangea* inflorescences or flower heads have both fertile and sterile flowers. The showy sterile flowers are modified sepals and that help attract pollinators. The sterile flowers have no pollen or nectar. The fuzzy tiny flowers, lacking petals and sepals, supply the pollen and nectar. A combination of both fertile flowers with an outer ring of sterile flowers is often called a lace-cap. Some cultivars have only or mostly sterile flowers and are called mop-heads.

Some species flower on wood that is produced on this season's growth - new wood, while others have their buds produced the year before - old wood, and the buds must go through the winter before flowering the subsequent season. Nearly all *Hydrangea* inflorescences may be cut for fresh flowers. After cutting them from your garden plants, it's best to cut them a second time, by removing about 1" from their cut stems while the stems are under water. Adding a fair amount of food coloring to the water will gradually cause white flowers to become the color of the water, as they take up the colored water.

#### Winter:

Unless noted, the listed *Hydrangea* require no winter maintenance

#### Fertilization:

*Hydrangea* respond to a good quality time release fertilizer, especially when applied in the late autumn or very early in the spring. I recommend our PLGF - Perennial Landscape and Garden Fertilizer. *Hydrangea* that require special fertilization and acidic soils will be noted in the following descriptions.

#### Planting:

Anytime from ground thaw to 4 weeks before *ground* freeze.

#### Propagation:

Cuttings

#### Pest and diseases.

*Hydrangea* are generally trouble free and very long lived.

All of the following *Hydrangea* are hardy in Southern WI. Where required, flower bud hardiness will be noted.

*Hydrangea anomala* var. *petiolaris* - Climbing *Hydrangea* is a scandent vine able to grow up to 50' or more on tree trunks, porous boulders or as a ground cover. This is one of more attractive deciduous shade loving vines. It slowly develops top growth until its roots are established well enough to support the plant. When planting at the base of a tree, provide good moisture and fertilizer to expedite establishment. It is tolerant of most any garden soil except heavy wet clays and near pure sand. While preferring acid soils, it may become anemic in very pH soils. Being native to Japan and Taiwan, it enjoys moisture.

It will not strangle its host tree.

Flowering is earlier than the other *Hydrangea*. It must develop 'arms' or short branches off the climbing stems before white lacey-cap flowers are produced. It blooms on old wood.

Autumn foliage color is usually a bright yellow.

No special fertilization is required.

Mulch in the autumn or spring with 1-2" of mulch.

Zones 4 to 8

Cuttings are best taken during the summer from ground growing runners that already show roots.

Cultivars include:

'**Mirranda**' has soft yellow bordered newly emerging leaves that gradually age to green with yellow and even near white markings. Leaves are significantly smaller than the species. 'Firefly' is similar, if not the same.

'**Skylands Giant**' has larger leaves and flower heads than the species.

'**Tiliifolia**' is a very small-leaved cultivar with smaller flower heads than the species.

Other cultivars are occasionally available.

*Hydrangea arborescens* -- Smooth Hydrangea is native to shady deciduous forests of Eastern USA to Iowa and then south to Florida. It tolerates nearly any type of soil, including rocky outcrops. This has been cultivated since 1736! The native flowering form is a fairly flat corymb lacecap, blooming on new wood. They begin green, mature to white and then age to green and ultimately, brown. Many pollinators visit the fertile flowers. Sterile flowers are useless to pollinators. Growing to a height of 5-10' in the wild, it is more commonly 4-6' in the garden.

Typically, Smooth Hydrangea blooms in July to September.

Once established, it is very drought tolerant.

In the wild, smooth Hydrangea forms a slow to moderately spreading suckering colony. Some cultivars are very slow to sucker. They will produce very dense colonies that are excellent for erosion control.

Since these bloom on new growth, the plants may be severely pruned in the autumn or very early in spring.

I recommend pruning them to about 12-18" from earth level.

They make excellent cut flowers when the above directions are followed.

It's best to divide them as soon as the earth is workable in the spring.

They are very tolerant of 1-3" of mulch in the autumn or v. early spring.

Some cultivars include:

'Annabelle' was discovered in a garden in Anna, IL in 1910, and named for the ladies -- 'Belles of the Garden' -- who discovered and grew it. It has been popular ever since. Sterile white 4-12" mop-heads on 5-7' stems bloom in July & August.

'Bella Anna' flowers atop sturdy 3-5' tall with bright pink mopheads. Rebloomer.

'Grandiflora' aka 'Hills of Snow' is similar to 'Annabelle' with 4-way partitioned smaller heads and more pointed sepals. Heavily spreading. Introduced just before 'Annabelle'

'Hayes Starburst' has double white sterile flowers that start off apple-green and then change to white and then back to green. The flowers are almost continuously born inside each other like an open stacked set of shallow bowls. The effect is quite stunning. I recommend only lightly pruning off the old flower heads and 3-4" of the previous year's growth. This way the stems are stronger and the flowers are held better.

'Incrediball'™ is like 'Annabelle' with mop-heads held atop 5' sturdier stems. Flowers heads are more often in the 8-12" diameter.

'Incrediball Blush' grows about 4-5' high with very strong stems topped with large blush-pink mops that age a clean green.

'Invincibelle Garnetta' grows only 30" tall with stout stems covered with glossy dark green foliage. Mophead flowers emerge dark burgundy and mature to a deep garnet-pink.

'Invincibelle Limetta' grows 3-4' tall with sturdy stems topped with lush lime-green mophead flowers that mature to a lighter greenish white and then age to green.

'Invincibelle Mini Mauvette' grows 30-36" tall with dark green leaves and showy mauve-purple mophead flowers.

'Invincibelle Ruby' grows 3-4' tall with deep green foliage on strong stems. Its mophead flowers emerge dark near-red and open to a two-toned display of bright ruby-red with silvery-pink. A rebloomer.

'Invincibelle Spirit II' is an improvement over 'Invincibelle Spirit' with sturdier stems, and larger deeper pink mophead flowers. A rebloomer.

'Invincibelle Wee White' is a compact 12-30" grower with rich green foliage and strong stems. The mophead flowers emerge a flushed soft pink and age to white. A rebloomer.

'Haas Halo' grows to 3-5' tall with dark bluish-green foliage with lace cap flowers up to 14" in diameter with a complete crown of sterile flowers. Stout and sturdy stems.

'Lime Rickey' grows about 4-5' high with very strong stems topped with delicate mops of white flowers with pink pollen.

'Pinkerella' Sturdy stems growing 4-5' topped with very large pink mophead flowers.

'Riven Lace' (may be the same as 'Emerald Lace' and 'Green Dragon') is a wonderful lacecap cultivar with an outer crown of sterile white flowers surrounding a low mound of fertile white flowers. The deep green wonderfully dragon cut foliage is held atop sturdy shiny brown stems.

'White Dome' is a 5' very sturdy stemmed form with strongly domed lacecap white flowers. *subspecies radiata* is horticulturally defined by having dark green with dense fuzzy tomentose silver-backed leaves. Very attractive on breezy days with the wind flipping the leaves to expose their silver undersides. Don't cut these back in the late autumn or early spring by more than 50% as this could hinder flowering during the following season.

'Samantha' is a form with round mophead white flowers.

*Hydrangea macrophylla* -- Bigleaf Hydrangea is native to very moist rich humusy soils of Japan, Korea and other nearby areas. In the wild, it has lacecap flowers atop 10-15' stems with thick rich green leaves and stems. It enjoys acidic soils in maritime climates. In the Midwest, it typically dies to the ground each winter and therefore, it grows only 3-4' in height. It blooms on old wood, with flower and foliage buds that are hardy - depending on cultivar -- to about 0°F. With the advent of cultivars that bloom on new wood, this *Hydrangea* is being becoming more common in our light shady gardens. However, since it enjoys acidic MOIST soils, and our Dane County tap water is often very alkaline - 7.5-8.0 pH, it is difficult to maintain proper growing conditions. The soil must be regularly treated with Iron Sulphate to maintain acidity in the 5.0 - 6.0 pH range. A dash of aluminum sulfate is occasionally required for the blue flowering cultivars. Prune down in spring, once vigorous growth begins, just above the most vigorous shoots.

There are 100's of cultivars that rarely, if ever, bloom in our area. Search for only the reliable ones that bloom on new wood. Even then, the original introductions have been surpassed by even better ones. Lacecaps, mopheads and everything in between in rich blues to purples to pinks to reds and whites may be found in the newer hardier offerings.

There are 100's maybe even 1000's of cultivars on the market - too many to list.

'Grateful Red' is one of the very interesting cultivars was developed by McKay Nursery in Waterloo, WI. In our production, it even blooms on 8" plants with bright red mophead flowers atop 2-3' study stemmed bushes with lush green foliage that ages to burgundy in the autumn. If grown in acidic soils, the flowers will be more purplish.

*Hydrangea serrata* - Mountain Hydrangea, from Japan & Korea, is very similar to the above *H. macrophylla*. It is much smaller in stature, leaf and flower, only growing to 5' in the wild. Care is very similar to *H. macrophylla*. Again, there are 100's of cultivars, but one is a very recent introduction that is worthy of our garden.

'Let's Dance Cancan' grows about 3-4' tall and wide, with great reblooming. Its lacecap of star-like sterile double flowers are a bright silvery pink, and with acidic soils, periwinkle-violet. The fertile flowers are similarly colored.

*Hydrangea paniculata* - Panicle Hydrangea has been cultivated in the USA since 1861. It's native to Japan, Eastern China and other nearby areas. Growing 10-20' high and wide in the wild, this tree-like hydrangea is one of our best flowering shrubs. It's tolerant of most any soil and moisture regime, excluding excessive drought or excessive wet conditions.

No special soil treatments.

Panicle Hydrangea are sensitive to Walnut Tree's juglone.

They bloom on on new growth, so pruning may be accomplished in winter or early spring.

They enjoy full sun to light shade or just full afternoon sunlight. However, when receiving just afternoon full sun, they will typically only bloom on the sunny side. If pruned to a single trunk, they may be cultured to look like an open lollipop. Very attractive. They make excellent fresh or dried cut flowers.

Cultivars include:

**'Berry White'** grows about 6-7' tall with a more upright growth pattern. Large conical shaped panicles of sterile flowers begin bright white and continue to be produced as the older flowers progress to a rich dark pink. Very handsome.

**'Bobo'** is one of the most compact panicle Hydrangea to date - growing to about 3' high. Delicate white sterile flowers age to a very light pink and are held upright on sturdy stems.

**'Bombshell'** is a very compact form growing to 3' high with strong stems. Green sterile flowers turn white and then age to green with a pink blush base. The florets are cup-shaped.

**'Chantilly Lace'** grows to about 5-6' with 10" high panicles of white 50% sterile flowers and 50% fertile flowers. They mature to pink with age. Later flowering.

**'Diamond Rouge'** grows upright to about 4-5' tall with dark green foliage turning yellow and orange in the autumn. Rounded conical panicles of sterile and fertile flowers start white and progress to pink, to intense raspberry-red and finally wine-red earlier than most other Panicle Hydrangea.

**'Fire Light'** has an upright fountain growth pattern to 8' with pure white panicles of sterile flowers that are pink and finish red.

**'Fire and Ice'** aka **'White Embers'** is one of the first Panicle Hydrangea to bloom. Very compact growing with sturdy stems to about 5'. Creamy white flowers on conical panicles continue to be produced as the oldest florets turn blushed pink to pink and finally to deep magenta.

**'Firelight Tidbit'** is heavy flowering with a dwarf, 3' x 3' bun-shaped habit. Rounded blooms emerge light green to creamy-white and age to pink.

**'Floribunda'** is an old variety that has been largely replaced with the new improved forms.

**'Grandiflora'** is another older form (1862) that is still sold as P.G. Hydrangea. It has also been replaced with more desirable forms.

**'Great Star'** aka **'Le Vasterival'** grows 6-7' high, with open rounded 7-8" panicles with huge white, cupped open-formed sterile flowers born randomly over fertile flowers.

**'Lavalamp Candelabra'** grows 4-6' high with strong reddish stems. Large conical panicles of white sterile flowers that continue to form as the oldest ones turn a nice pink.

**'Lavalamp Flare'** grows about 2-3' on sturdy stems with nicely sized conical panicles. Lightly fragrant white sterile florets age boysenberry red.

**'Limelight'** grows 6-10' high, with slightly pendulous 10-12" long by 6-7" high panicles of white flowers rapidly aging to lime-green blushed pink and burgundy. Very floriferous. Excellent as a tree form.

**'Limelight Prime'** is a compact form of **'Limelight'**, growing about 4-6' high. It has darker foliage, stronger stems and a more upright form. Its green flowers last longer before aging to deep pink.

**'Little Lamb'** grows 4-6' tall with small delicately domed panicles of white flowers that slowly blush to pink in the autumn.

**'Little Lime'** grows 3-5' high, with the same flowers as **'Limelight'**.

**'Little Quick Fire'** grows 3-5' tall with open lacecap white panicles that rapidly turn a deep red. Autumn foliage is blushed burgundy wine.

**'Magical Candle'** is a compact form maturing to 5 feet with sturdy stems. Very large yellow-greenish sterile flowers mature to porcelain-white from July thru September and finally a grayish light pink.

**'Magical Fire'** is a compact form maturing to 4' with sturdy stems. Lacy white sterile flowers that are held high above fertile flowers. The flowers age from light pink, gradually to red.

**'Magical Flame'** is another compact bush growing from about 4' high. White sterile florets are held above fertile flowers, that age intense strawberry red.

**'Mega Mindy'** is a quick growing 4½-5½' sturdy stemmed form with upright pointed conical white sterile flowers, aging pink-red later in the season.

**'Moonrock'** grows about 5-6' tall on sturdy stems with lush green leaves. Stout panicles of mostly sterile intense lime-green flowers mature to white and then age to a soft pink. Nice color transition.

**'Passionate'** grows to about 8-10' with a fountain-like form. White flowered 12-18" panicles of all sterile flowers with dark green foliage provides a complimentary look for the garden. The flowers age to a light

rose-pink with lime green centers. It produces a handsome fountain-like tree form.

**'Phantom'** grows to 8' or so with sturdy stems topped with rounded domed-shaped conical, mostly sterile large white flowers. The flowers age in the autumn to a deep tinged pink.

**'Pink Diamond'** grow 8-10' on sturdy spreading fountain-like stems. Soft rounded domed-shaped 12" conical panicles start blooming with pink buds maturing to large sterile white flowers irregularly spaced above white fertile flowers. They rapidly age pink to a bright pink with red undersides in the autumn.

**'Pinkie Winky'** is a sturdy stemmed 6-8' high bush with upright sharp conical white sterile flowers that age rapidly to pink-red while the newest flowers are still white. Nice combination of colors.

**'Quick Fire'** is just like **'Little Quick Fire'** but grows to 6-8' tall. Autumn foliage is blushed burgundy.

**'Quick Fire Fab'** is an early bloomer similar to **'Little Quick Fire'**, but with fuller blooms that emerge green, then white and age to deep pink to red from the bottom up. 6-8' tall.

**'Silver Dollar'** grows about 5-6' tall with sturdy stems topped with rounded conical, mostly sterile white flowers. The flowers age a soft pink with green highlights. Dark green foliage. Later blooming.

**'Snow Mountain'** is nearly the same as **'Kyushu'**. Growing 12' feet tall on sturdy stems with bright green lush foliage. The copiously produced pointed conical panicles have both sterile and fertile flowers in mid to late July. The flowers are white and turn pinkish to almost purple as they age.

**'Strawberry Sunday'** grows to about 4-5' with 7" panicles of sterile and fertile white flowers that are continuously produced while the oldest flowers age to pink and ultimately strawberry red. Nice combination of colors.

**'Sweet Summer'** matures at 4-5' with 5" panicles of mostly sterile white flowers that age to shades of pink in the autumn, while the newest flowers are still white. Very floriferous. Sturdy stems. The leaves may blush with purple in the autumn.

**'Tardiva'** is a very old form with wonderful late blooming tapered conical form with fertile and sterile white flowers on a large bush that grows to about 12-15' tall.

**'The Swan'** is a bit unruly when it is young, but become truly remarkable with age. Huge white, cupped, spatulate, non-overlapping and twisted sterile florets are born in a windmill pattern here and there over white fertile 10" tall panicle of flowers. Its flowers age pink.

It matures to a height of around 8-12'.

**'Tickled Pink'** is a round form at 6-8' with up to 10" panicles of cupped white sterile flowers and white fertile flowers. The flowers age to a rich pink.

**'Unique'** grows up to 15' high with huge 2" diameter sterile white flowers on 10-13" panicles. Fertile white flowers are almost completely covered by the sterile flowers. It is difficult to find the real **'Unique'** cultivar.

**'Vanilla Fraise'** (aka **'Vanilla Strawberry'**) is nearly identical to **'Strawberry Sunday'** except **'Vanilla Fraise'** grows to about 7' with red stems. The flowers are on stems that cascade a bit later in the season.

**'White Diamonds'** is a compact 4-6' growing form with strong stems and deep green leaves. The 6-8" panicles have large white sterile flowers that nearly cover the white fertile flowers. The flowers age to light green to parchment.

**'White Lace'** grows to 15' tall with study stem and lush green pointed foliage. Blooming in open panicles of mostly fertile white flowers with the sterile white flowers being randomly produced - giving a nice lacy effect.

**'White Moth'** grows 6-8' tall 12" short irregular panicles with randomly positioned large white sterile flowers around small white fertile flowers. This gives the appearance of fluttering 'White Moths'. Flowers continue to form well into autumn with the oldest ones turning pale green.

**'Zinfin Doll'** grows to about 6' tall and is covered in soft-domed panicles of white flowers the age pink and then further age to red-pink. Early flowering. Burgundy autumn foliage.

*Hydrangea quercifolia* - Oakleaf Hydrangea is native to the south eastern area of USA. It grows natively in light shady deciduous forests in rich moist acidic soils. They spread by root suckers, so they can become quite wide. The rich green textured oak-leaves can reach 12" long and 6" wide, that age to a fabulous red to orangish brown to purple in the autumn.

The bark peels longitudinally in beautiful cinnamon-brown strips on shrubs that mature to about 8-12' high. Blooming on buds produced on previous season's growth, they must survive our winters if they are to bloom. To the best of my knowledge, only one cultivar has been selected for northern zone 5 climates. Provenance is very important for flowering. 4-12" panicles have large 1-1½" diameter sterile white flowers with fluffy fertile interior apetalous fragrant white flowers.

Excellent as fresh or dried cut flowers.

Rabbits and deer enjoy the entire plant, so they do require some protection.

Oakleaf Hydrangea are sensitive to Walnut Tree's juglone.

Cultivars include:

**Nebraska Form** is grown in Clarkson, Nebraska. We have had wonderful success in having this form bloom following winter temperatures as low as -20°F.

**'Jet Stream'** is a new cultivar (introduced in 2013) that is flower bud hardier than the typical species, and repeatedly blooms on new growth. Growing 5-6' high with a compact dense non-flopping habit. Dark green, leafspot resistant foliage, turns a wonderful orange-red in the autumn. Its white sterile flowers are held high on strong stems, and age to a rich pink.

I have seen **'Ruby Slippers'** and **'Pee Wee'** bloom after a very cold winter if they are completely covered with snow or with some other means of protection. Well worth the effort.

Steve Lesch Landscape Designs, Inc. © 2020