

## Six Reasons Hydrangeas May Not Bloom



1. **Pruning incorrectly;** The best advice is to never prune your hydrangeas. Choose a variety that will be the appropriate size at maturity for your site. To keep from pruning off your bloom buds wait until all the branches have leaves before pruning out any dead wood. If you must prune the rule of thumb is to do so immediately after flowering. The 4<sup>th</sup> of July is an easy to remember date for your hydrangea pruning. If you wait too long you will likely remove the next years bloom buds. If you have a hydrangea that you prune each year, replace it with one that is a more appropriate size at maturity. Prune anytime to remove dead, diseased or diseased wood. Check to make sure it is dead by scratch the bark with your thumbnail, if you see green just under the brown bark it is still living wood.

2. **Weather;** Most of our spring blooming favorite hydrangeas bloom from buds formed the prior growing season (old wood). These buds can be damaged by either early or late frosts and are the cause of many disappointing bloom seasons. Some new introductions give us a second chance as they bloom on both old and new wood so if the freeze gets the early blooms you can still get some later in the season. If a frost is predicted you can cover your hydrangeas with burlap or bedding sheets to help protect them as long as you remove the covering during the day when temperatures rise.
3. **Water;** Hydrangeas as a rule like evenly moist well drained loamy soil. If not watered adequately it can affect flower bud development.
4. **They are new;** You may not get blooms the first or second year after planting as your plant may be putting all of its energy into getting established and building a good root system.
5. **The light may not be right;** Some hydrangeas prefer full sun and if planted in shade they will not bloom. Even the shade lovers appreciate some gentle morning sun. Four hours of dappled sun is ideal. Be sure to avoid the brutal mid-day and afternoon sun.
6. **Too much fertilizer;** Flowering plants given too much fertilizer focus on putting on lush green leaves at the expense of flowers. Your hydrangeas don't need much if any supplemental feeding. If you want to feed them, choose a slow release fertilizer or just a nice layer of compost in the spring.



### ***Deadheading and Harvesting Blooms***

Removing old blooms on a plant is called "Deadheading." Fortunately, we can remove the old blooms at any time of the year without harming the bloom for the following year. In May and June you can cut blooms for arrangements with long stems because the bloom buds haven't set for the following year. When you cut the blooms after the fourth of July, it would be safest to remove them with very short stems so you won't disturb any developing bloom buds for next year. Starting at the faded bloom, check around each set of leaves going down the stem. At the first or second set of leaves, you should see buds. Snip the spent bloom off well above those buds. As long as you cut above the first set of large leaves, the blooms for next year will be fine.

### ***What are Rebloomers?***

These new hydrangea varieties bloom on both old and new wood providing for a longer bloom season. Old wood have buds that formed last year and provide blooms in early spring. In the rebloomer the new growth will form buds that bloom in the current year. This second flush of new wood blooms come later and are generally smaller than the initial flush of blooms. This does not change the rule for pruning however (no later than July 4<sup>th</sup>) as you do not want to lose next years' early blooms that form on old wood. If you are planting a new hydrangea you should consider a rebloomer as it has a built in insurance policy for blooms each year and a longer bloom period.

