

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 94

Hydrangea macrophylla

History

Hydrangeas are natives of the Himalayas, North and South America, and central and eastern Asia. The bush grows wild along the rivers of China and Japan and was brought to Europe by plant collectors in the 1800s. Hydrangeas are marsh or aquatic plants.

The name “hydrangea” should give scholars a clue to the main need of this plant. The name is derived from the Greek word *hydro*, meaning “water” and *angion*, meaning “bowl” or “tub,” and indicates the plant’s love of water and humidity.

Hydrangea macrophylla is popular on the gift giver’s list as a Mother’s Day or Easter gift and is an indoor reminder that spring has arrived.

Description

This species is often referred to as “mop heads” because of the large flower heads ranging from 4 to 6 inches across.

Hydrangeas have large white, pink or blue flower heads with dark-green foliage. The flower heads last for approximately six weeks, from early spring to the beginning of summer.

Light

For good leaf colour, hydrangeas require full light but not direct sunlight. The plant can become dehydrated in the direct sun, but the growth is stunted in the shade. A bright, well-lit room with windows facing east or west is the best choice for your hydrangea.

Temperature

For best seasonal longevity, place your hydrangea in a cool, well-ventilated room away from drafts, open windows or vents. In the summer, the temperature should not exceed 20° C. Excessive heat can cause dehydration, leaf scorch and unnecessary stress for your plant.

Water

This is one plant that appreciates moisture. Hydrangeas should be kept evenly moist at all times; the leaves may droop if the plant becomes dry.

Fertilizing

In spring and summer, feed your hydrangea weekly by adding a liquid houseplant food to water; this encourages healthy foliage and flowering. A general-purpose fertilizer such as 20-20-20 is sufficient for foliage and flowering.

To lower the soil’s pH to make your hydrangea blue, add a water-soluble aluminum sulphate to your water when you fertilize.

Soil

Hydrangeas are an acid-loving plant and are well known for the change in bloom colours from pink to blue. Soil acidity plays the largest role here. Hydrangeas thrive best in a basic potting mixture. Soil should be well drained with a pH of about 7 for pink blooms and 5.5 for blue blooms.

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