

Why are my Hydrangeas not blooming?



There are three main reasons why your hydrangea may not be blooming:

1. A late spring freeze/frost destroyed developing flower buds
2. Incorrect pruning
3. Lack of nutrients

Unfortunately, nothing can be done when a late freeze damages your hydrangea flower buds, except to wait until next year. Incorrect pruning and/or lack of adequate nutrients though, is a simple fix when you follow the instructions below:

FERTILIZING: Hydrangeas are heavy feeders and prefer an acidic environment. To ensure adequate nutrient and pH levels in the soil, top dress your hydrangeas every spring with compost. Also, use an organic-based, slow release fertilizer, such as **Holly Tone***, twice during the growing season (end of March and beginning of June), supplemented with bi-weekly feedings of **Jacks Classic Acid Liquid Fertilizer.***

BLOOM COLOR CHANGE: Bloom color is determined by soil pH and how much aluminum is naturally in your soil. If you wish to manipulate the color of your blooms, incorporate **Color Me Blue*** or **Color Me Pink*** into the soil. Remember that as your hydrangea grows, so does the root system, add Color Me Blue/Pink out to the edges of the foliage, which is where the majority of root feeders can be found. Be sure to follow package instructions and

water well. Some reasons you may be having difficulty changing the color of your blooms include:

- You must be diligent, soils will automatically revert back to their original conditions.
- Water pH can affect the color of your hydrangea blooms.
- It is often difficult to get blue blooms from a hydrangea that is near a foundation or sidewalk. Lime leaching out of these structures raises the pH of the soil.
- Blooms that have already started to develop will not change color, only new flower buds will respond to your Color Me applications.

PRUNING: for Mop Heads and Lace Cap Hydrangeas (**Glowing Embers, Big Daddy, Pistachio, Blue Cassel**) (*H. macrophyllas* and *H. quercifolia*)

These hydrangeas set their flower buds for the following year in late summer. Prune them only in the summer BEFORE August.

This type of hydrangea blooms on OLD WOOD. (“Old Wood” are stems that have been on the hydrangea since the summer before the current season. “New wood” are stems that developed on the plant during the current season). This group of hydrangeas produce buds on hydrangea stems around August, September or October for the following summer’s blooms. If those stems are removed (pruned) in the fall, winter or spring, the bloom buds will be removed and there may be little or no bloom the following summer.

*Ask a staff member about these products.

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Note: Endless Summer Hydrangeas—This group of mop head and lace cap hydrangeas bloom on old wood and new wood. Prune immediately after spring flowering, this will encourage new growth and the development of summer blooms. Do NOT prune in the fall or early spring as you will be removing the first set of spring blooms. Protect from late spring frost. Blooming will be better if the Endless Summer Hydrangea gets six hours of morning sun. Fertilize with a bloom boosting fertilizer, such as **Super Phosphate**. Stop fertilizer applications in August. Hydrangeas like water, but excessive watering will encourage leaf growth and deter flower production. Water well and deep, but less often. If you have tried everything else and are still not getting blooms from your ES Hydrangea, but have lush full foliage, try using a pitch fork and poking it in and out of the ground a few times around the root zone. This will make the hydrangea think it is under stress and reproduce, resulting in blooms.

PRUNING: for Summer Blooming Hydrangeas (Limelight, Little Lime, Incrediball, Invincibelle Spirit, Quickfire, Pinky Winky) (H. paniculata and H. arborescens)

These hydrangeas set their buds and blooms in the same growing season.

This type of hydrangea blooms on NEW WOOD (new stems). The only time they cannot be pruned is in the summer when they are preparing to bloom. Avoid severely cutting back these hydrangeas. Even though they bloom on new wood, drastic pruning may not allow stems to increase in size, and they may need staking to hold the large flower heads. They can be pruned in the fall, winter, or spring. However, it is not necessary to prune them every year. Prune out crossing branches and those that do not contribute to an attractive form whenever necessary.

DEADHEADING((a.k.a. removing old blooms):

You can remove old blooms at any time without harming the blooms for the following year. In June and July, you may remove them in any way you would like (long or short stems) and use them in flower arrangements. Below are some tips for dead-heading:

- In June or July, cut blooms with long stems because bloom buds have not set for the following year.
- After the 1st of August, cut short stems so that you will not disturb the developing buds for next year (cut above the first set of large leaves).