



Caring for your Endless Summer Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*)

Northern Climate Winter Care

To ensure overwintering success in the first year, the following is recommended:

- Stop all applications of fertilizer after August 15th to acclimate the plant for winter.
- Keep the soil moist through the fall months until the ground freezes.
- Cover the plant with a 4" layer of organic mulch. There is no need to cover all the stems to the tip or to cut them back.
- Covering should be done when fully dormant. At the same time you would cover sensitive perennials.
- In spring uncover when the ground is no longer frozen. The plant will grow from the base and also from any old branches that survived winter.
- Be patient. Growth will come slowly until the heat of late spring stimulate the plant to grow faster.
- Once you see growth you can prune back the old branches to a finger width above the new green growth.
- Sit back and watch your plant grow and bloom (generally around midsummer).

Pruning

Endless Summer Hydrangea is very forgiving and will not suffer if left unpruned or pruned at the wrong time. In fact, young, recently planted shrubs are best left alone. Endless Summer hydrangea will bloom on old and new wood. Another unique feature is that this hydrangea will continue to set buds and bloom throughout the season. Deadheading the spent flowers will encourage this. Spring is the best time to prune. Many people like to leave the spent blooms on the plant in the fall for winter interest. It may also act to insulate the buds from frost and cold, just be sure to remove them in the spring.

Changing Flower Color

To encourage flowering, we recommend a fertilizer low in nitrogen and high in phosphorus, with a number over 30. For instance, an N-P-K ration of 10-40-10 would be ideal.

Endless Summer hydrangea are unique in that their flowers can change color. The color of the blossoms depends on the pH of the soil and its ability to absorb aluminum at different levels. An alkaline soil produces pink flowers and acidic soil produces blue flowers. You can buy a soil pH testing kit to test your soil.

It is possible to manipulate the color of hydrangeas, but one word of caution: many people have killed their plants by applying too much aluminum sulfate. More is NOT better.

Changing to Pink

To change from blue to pink you need to change from an acid soil to an alkaline one.

- To help raise your pH you can use dolomite lime several times a year. You will have to retest your soil and aim for a pH of about 6.0 to 6.2. If it goes above 6.4 your hydrangea may experience an iron deficiency.
- Use fertilizers with high levels of phosphorus. Phosphorus helps to prevent aluminum from being taken up in the plant's vascular system.
- Consider growing them in a large pot where it is easier to control pH.

Changing to Blue

Lowering the pH of your soil is produce blue flowers with a pH level of about 5.2 -5.5. Using a soil acidifier will lower your soils pH for beautiful blue blooms.

- Ask your Garden Center for recommendations to acidifiers for the soil in your area.
- Follow directions carefully on the product you purchase.
- Thoroughly water the plant before adding any acidifier.
- Adding large amounts of organic matter, such as peat moss and composted leaves will acidify the soil as they break down.

Remember to check the pH of your water. If you are trying to turn your flowers blue and you have hard water, it will be difficult to achieve. Also remember that concrete foundation and walkways tend to leach lime, raising the pH in that area.