

Hydrangeas

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Cuttings:

Phil cuts a 12” piece of hydrangea stem, removes the bottom leaves, dips it in rooting powder, plunks it in a sand-filled tray and places a clear plastic soda bottle over the top to create a little greenhouse. When it roots, he has a new hydrangea plant. Hydrangeas like moisture and part shade. His “Everlasting Summer” are about 3’ high now and in full bloom. Spots near the stone wall have pinker blooms (leaching from the masonry?).



Changing the color of hydrangeas

From My Home Improvement

Question:

What fertilizer should I use to make the hydrangea flowers a pink color?

Answer:

To turn your garden hydrangea to pink you must make the soil alkaline. Adding dolomite lime will help to do this. Add about 1-2 cups of dolomite to the general root area below the plant and work into the surface soil. Irrigate thoroughly.

From Kathy Anderson

It is much easier to change a hydrangea from pink to blue than it is from blue to pink. Changing a hydrangea from pink to blue entails adding aluminum to the soil. Changing from blue to pink means subtracting aluminum from the soil or taking it out of reach of the hydrangea.

Blue to Pink

- Add dolomitic lime several times a year. This will help to raise the pH. Shoot for a pH of about 6.0 to 6.2 (If it goes above 6.4 hydrangeas may experience an iron deficiency). Since hydrangeas take up aluminum best at lower pH levels, raising the pH will help to keep the bluing effect of aluminum out of the hydrangea's system.
- Use a fertilizer with high levels of phosphorus. Phosphorus helps to prevent aluminum from creeping into the system of the hydrangea. Choose a fertilizer close to the ratio of 25/10/10 (Phosphorus is the middle number).

Pink to Blue

- To obtain a blue hydrangea, aluminum must be present in the soil. To ensure that aluminum is present, aluminum sulfate may be added to the soil around the hydrangeas.

Authorities recommend that a solution of 1/2 oz (1 Tbsp) aluminum sulfate per gallon of water be applied to plants (which are at least 2-3 years old) throughout the growing season. Important:

Water plants well in advance of application and put solution on cautiously, as too much can burn the roots.

To make the aluminum available to the plant, the pH of the soil should be low (5.2-5.5). Adding aluminum sulfate will tend to lower the pH of the soil. Another method for lowering the pH is to add organic matter to the soil such as coffee grounds, fruit and vegetable peels, grass clippings etc.

If the soil naturally contains aluminum and is acid (low pH) the color of the hydrangea will automatically tend toward shades of blue and/or purple.

The choice of fertilizer will also affect the color change. A fertilizer low in phosphorus and high in potassium is helpful in producing a good blue color(25/5/30 is good. Potassium is the last number). Superphosphates and bone meal should be avoided when trying to produce blue.

After stating this with much certainty, I hasten to add that it is virtually impossible to turn a hydrangea blue for any length of time if it is planted in soil with no aluminum and that is highly alkaline (chalky). One would have to be very diligent in keeping the soil properly conditioned as stated above.

One last suggestions for those who are serious about this process. It is important to have your water tested so that it will not "contaminate" the soil that you have so rigorously balanced. The pH of the water should not be higher than 5.6.

Planting hydrangeas near a concrete foundation or sidewalk will often affect the color since the pH of the soil may be raised considerably by lime leaching out of these structures, making it difficult to obtain blue.

Drying Hydrangeas

Hydrangeas make excellent cut flowers and the dried blooms make beautiful arrangements. The key to successfully drying hydrangeas is to cut them at the right time.

Unfortunately, it's difficult to dry hydrangea blooms that have been cut at their peak of color. For best results, allow the blossoms to dry somewhat on the plant before cutting them. Even the white hydrangeas will turn colors as they age, and most commonly they will turn slightly green, but may also turn light pink or even burgundy. The best time to harvest the blooms for drying is after they begin to change color and dry a bit in late summer to early fall.

After collecting the blooms, they can be placed in a dry, airy room out of direct sunlight until fully dried. They may be left standing in a dry vase or hung upside down. Either method works well. The method used to dry them isn't nearly as important as the timing for gathering the blooms.