



**By Brian Sams**

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## Growing Hydrangeas - Fact Sheet

Hydrangeas would have to be one of the most rewarding of old fashioned garden plants. There are a surprisingly large number of species and cultivars of Hydrangea with some tolerating full sun to others needing full shade. To grow well in full sun I would recommend either Hydrangea quercifolia (pictured below) or Hydrangea paniculata.



*Images Brian Sams Wattletree Horticultural Services.*

The more familiar and commonly grown species grown is **Hydrangea macrophylla**.

There are now 2 groups of this type of Hydrangeas commonly sold

1. Fixed colour cultivars – if the variety is named with a particular flower colour it will keep that colour regardless of the soil in which it is grown
2. Old fashioned types that change their flower colour (actually subtending bracts) according to the pH of the soil. If the soil is acidic then the flowers will be blue whereas if the soil is alkaline it will be pink or tending to red.



*Images Brian Sams Wattletree Horticultural Services.*

To change the soil colour the following products can be added

- To encourage blue flowers use Hydrangea bluer (Aluminium sulphate) or Sulphur.
- To encourage pink flowers use lime or Dolomite.

To grow well this type of hydrangea needs shade in summer and plenty of moisture. Plants will be ok up to about -15C so frost is rarely a problem in Australian climates. I recommend a yearly application of a complete fertiliser like Troforte in early spring to encourage strong growth. Extra water at this time may be required if spring rain is not about.



## Winter pruning of Hydrangeas

Hydrangeas will flower without pruning. However over time the plants will become very tall and straggly and the flower size will become relatively small. An annual winter prune will encourage good flowering.

- Prune when the plant become fully dormant.
- Prune out old canes entirely – those over a couple of years old should go.
- Prune growth down to where you see the last pair of fat buds as pictured below. These fat buds will each produce a shoot and a flower bud.
- If you prune lower than this your flowering will be reduced.
- Don't stress you are very unlikely to kill a Hydrangea from pruning too much!
- If the finished pruned plant looks like the one under on the right you will have great flowers just before Christmas.

