

PRUNING HYDRANGEAS

by Jan Mathers

There are 3 reasons that we prune:

- To remove dead and diseased wood.
- To improve or maintain the shape of a plant
- To increase flowering - when pruning hydrangeas we aim to reduce the number of individual flower heads, enabling the plant to produce larger better quality flowers.

It is not essential that you prune your hydrangeas each year. The new growth will emerge and eventually smother the old flowers. The bush however could be covered in many smaller flowers.

When to prune: Start your serious pruning when you are reasonably sure the danger of heavy frosts are past. So perhaps late August early September.

New growth after pruning can be damaged by frost and although you will still get growth you may not get as many flowers.

If you prune incorrectly you will get the same result - fewer flowers.

How to prune: [Hydrangea macrophylla](#) (Flowers on old wood) and [Hydrangea serrata](#) types:

- Remove all overhanging branches that are in the way or intruding on other plants - cut them back at the base
- Remove all dead wood - again cut back to the base.
- Remove all thin, weak or crossing stems - you need to get inside the bush to do this.
- Reduce the height of the remaining strong stems. Look for stems that flowered last season - you should be able to identify them because they will have bits of dried flower on them - cut these stems back to above a nice fat pair of buds keeping 1 - 2 pairs - the fat buds are the ones most likely to produce lots of flowers - don't worry if you have to lop a fair bit off but don't get too carried away.
- Next look for any other stems that have no evidence of having produced flowers and cut them back by a third - down to a nice fat pair of promising buds. However it is these stems that many gardeners are happy to leave alone. Remember that fat buds equate to strong stems and strong stems equate to lots of flowers.
- The flower buds are usually in pairs near the top of the stem and vary in size with different varieties. The leaf (growth) buds are below these and are smaller in size.

Prune [Arboreneceus](#) Annabelle down to ground level (flowers on new wood)

Prune [Paniculatas](#) (flowers on new wood) to 30cm late winter

[Paniculatas /climbing / oakleaf / dichroa / scandens](#) prune minimally after blooming