

Member Gardening Tips

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WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR HYDRANGEAS IN THE FALL - by Jane Jeffers

The following are some practices I follow in preparing my hydrangeas for the winter. As usual, I will start out saying, what you do depends on the species of hydrangea – and no, “lacecap” is not a species, it is a flower type.

The following tips are what I have found to be successful in my garden.

A quick refresher:

1. Hydrangea Macrophylla – Examples: Endless Summer, Cityline, Nikko Blue. Hydrangea Macrophylla can either be lacecap or mophead. New varieties now grow on both old and new wood, but are the most susceptible to non-blooming based on the severity of winter weather. Last February’s deep freeze and early May cold snap affected some, but not all h. macrophylla.

Now is the time to DEADHEAD your h. macrophylla. Start at the faded bloom and move down the stem until you see buds. Cut the dead bloom off above the bud. Do this before it gets too cold.

Although this is not recommended, I will be cutting my h. macrophylla down quite a bit so I can winterize them. They grew so tall this winter, I will not be able to wrap them as usual. For those interested in wrapping, I use TYVAK cages, fill them with leaves, and then cover the top. In some cases I use many layers of burlap around the plants. If you want to wrap, focus on new plants.
2. Hydrangea Serrata – Examples: Tuff Stuff, Tiny Tuff Stuff, Tuff Stuff Ah-ha. These are “mountain” hydrangea and more tolerant of cold weather. Deadhead if you want, but I sometimes wait until Spring to do that.
3. Hydrangea Aborescens – Examples: Annebelle, Invincible Spirit, Incrediball. There are many recommendations on what to do with this species on the internet. I cut mine down each October to about 8” and they come back big and beautiful every year.
4. Hydrangea Paniculata – Examples: Quick Fire, Pinky Winky, Limelight, Little Lime. Hydrangea Paniculata can be trimmed like trees. Cut any branches that intersect other branches. I deadhead spent blooms and trim in the Spring, although this year I will deadhead my Little Lime and Limelight next month. The stems of this variety are not strong and they have been tortured by the rain this summer. Deadheading now may help prevent stems from breaking this winter if we have heavy snow.
5. Oakleaf Hydrangea. Nothing needs to be done now. Trim as you would a tree.
6. Potted Hydrangea. If you have hydrangea in pots that you overwinter in your garage or shed, bring them inside after all the leaves have fallen off – usually in November. They do not need to be watered until leaves start to bud in March or April. Then give them a drink, but wait until nights are going to be consistently in the high 30’s before bringing them out.

Winterizing your Dahlias By Barbara Merrill



Now that you have enjoyed your dahlias' 3 months of continuous blooms, it is time to put the tubers to bed for the winter. After the first frost when the leaves start to shrivel, cut the foliage to six inches, and use a pitchfork or spade to dig the tubers. Wash tubers with a garden hose and leave for one day to dry protected from the elements. Tubers should be stored in a cardboard box or crate lined with about 10-12 layers of newspaper, although I have had success using garden pots. Add damp peat moss or wood shavings around the tubers and store in a cool, dry area ideally 40 - 50 degrees.

Save Your Geraniums! By Kathy Mandeville



It isn't only that I hate to throw away living plants or spend a lot of money on new plants – well, maybe it's a bit of both – but also, it has been so EASY to save our geraniums from year to year. Before the first frost, I trim our geraniums to about one-half their size and store them in our cool basement (which has good-sized windows), and water them a few times during the winter. They get leggy by Spring, but then I bring them outside after danger of frost, do a little pruning, add water, and fertilize lightly. Alternately, you can shake the soil from the roots, hang them upside down (again, in a cool basement or garage), soak the stems a few times during the winter, then re-pot in the Spring. If you have a well-lit storage space that stays about 50-60 degrees in the winter and you can REMEMBER to water the plants a few times, you too can enjoy your lovely container beauties.