

Hydrangea Varieties made for Chicago Landscapes

The hydrangea is a very popular deciduous shrub with mature dimensions ranging from dwarf to tree-sized, and boasts showy flower heads that are large for our area.

- Check the hardiness zone of the plant when shopping. Chicago is zone 5
- Hydrangea flower colors in some plants can change due to soil acidity
- Note: Keep tags on ALL your plants so you know what you have

Smooth Hydrangea or *aborescens*, originally had lacecap flowers. In the 1960's, a mophead hydrangea was found in Anna Illinois, and took over the species. Garden centers carry tons of these in our area, and these are the quintessential hydrangea in Illinois. It is easy to grow in well drained, sunny locations! They all look similar.

Annabelle hydrangeas – zone 4-9/3-4 feet: These are the original smooth hydrangea native to Illinois. They feature large white (only) balls that can sometimes flop in wet weather.

Incrediballs – zone 4-9/4-5 feet: Bred from the classic Annabelle by a Michigan plant breeder, this plant offers substantial improvements in form. It has significantly improved stem strength combined with much larger, round flowerheads that do not flop in wet weather. This plant is stunning in mass plantings,



Invincibelle Limetta – zone 3-8/2.5-3 feet: Similar to the classic Annabelle, these plants have much larger blooms that first appear in lime green hues and then turn green-white before finally fading to a deeper jade green. A relatively compact hydrangea that is made for Chicago.

BIG LEAF hydrangea, *H. macrophylla*, is a large species that includes 2 common groups: Lace Cap and MopHead.

Lace Cap Hydrangeas have a distinctive flower head “corymb”, that includes a center of buds, with a ring of open flowers. They generally are grown in zone 6 and warmer, however a few selections do well in zones 4 or 5, making them suitable for Chicago gardens.

Endless Summer Twist-n-Shout – zone 4-9 /3-5 feet: with outstanding cold tolerance this plant is quite popular in Chicago garden centers! is a blue lace cap that tends toward pink in less acidic (Chicago) soil. Generally, even if you plant a blue flowered plant, it will turn pink in Chicago soil unless you aggressively amend the soil. It's called “endless” or “reblooming” because it produces flowers on both old and new wood from summer through to frost, facilitated by deadheading.

POPULAR Garden Hydrangeas:

Five main groups are:

1. Smooth Hydrangeas:

- Annabelle
- Incrediball
- Invincibelle Limetta

2. Big Leaf Hydrangeas (2 types):

- Lace Cap Hydrangeas:
 - Cherry Explosion
 - Wedding Gown
 - Endless Summer:Twist-n-Shout
- MopHead Hydrangeas:
 - Twist-n-Shout
 - CityLine Paris
 - Endless Summer
 - Tiny Tuff Stuff

3. Panicle Hydrangeas:

- Bobo
- Vanilla Strawberry
- Little Quick Fire
- Lime Light
- Pee Gee

4. Climbing Hydrangeas:

- Miranda

5. Oak Leaf Hydrangeas:

- Gatsby Pink
- Ruby Slippers



- **Cherry Explosion** – zone 4-9/ 2-3 feet/ good in containers: This plant is hard to find in Chicago garden centers, but can be ordered online. It is a smaller hydrangea with cherry pink/red blossoms which can be more of a lavender color in our acidic soil. Sounds delightful!! An excellent choice for containers and borders. It prefers full sun to part shade. This shrub can tolerate cold, making it viable in our area. It blooms on both old and new wood, and with deadheading, puts on a showy display from spring into fall, when its leaves darken to burgundy. Plan to mail-order this plant soon!!
- **Wedding Gown** - zone 5-9/ 2-3 feet/containers: Part of the Double Delights™ series, ‘Wedding Gown’, has a flattened WHITE flower head with a double ring of impressive blossoms surrounding a double-bud center. This type prefers light shade. It blooms on both old and new growth, so with deadheading, it should bloom from spring through to fall. It is always a white flower regardless of soil acidity

Mophead big leaf hydrangeas : These mophead plants offer blossoms in shades of blue, pink, or purple. They are very pH sensitive and tend to be pinker in alkaline Chicago soil and bluer in acidic soil. Most plants in this group are too cold sensitive for Chicago, however there are 3 GREAT exceptions!! These hydrangeas like evenly moist, rich, well-drained soil. Provide a thick layer of mulch over the roots to help them retain water. Apply fertilizer in spring or early summer, and add gypsum if your soil has a lot of clay (we do!!).

Endless Summer – zone 4-9/3-5 feet/ full sun/pH sensitive: The most popular hydrangea in Chicago garden centers! Its best characteristic is that it is a re-blooming type, that sets buds on BOTH old and new wood for summer to fall flowers. This plant is a pH sensitive variety that may have blossoms that are blue or pink, depending on the soil. (In Chicago, its pink unless you aggressively add soil amendments). It likes full sun and exhibits better cold hardiness than many cultivars. This type tops out at a modest three to five feet, and should be planted in full sun and deadheaded to prolong flowering.

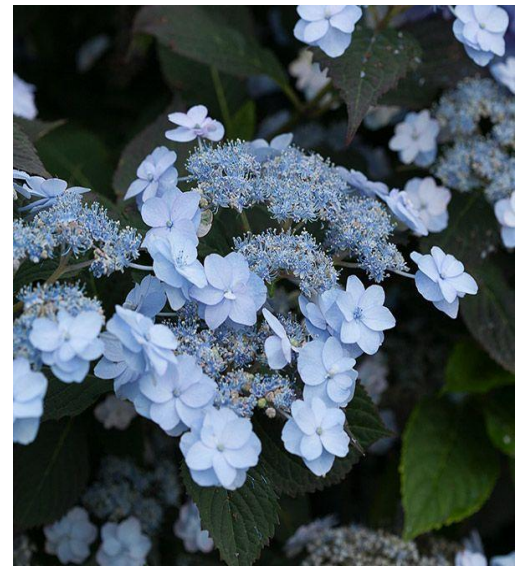
Tilt-A-Swirl – zone 5-9/ 3-4 feet/part shade *H. macrophylla* ‘QUFU’ is a stunning choice for the avid gardener that will provide additional TLC in their Chicago garden. It’s an especially cold-hardy shrub with striking bi-color flowers and a long growing season. It grows at a slow to average rate and does best with partial shade, because too much sun tends to reduce its color vibrancy. It can offer two-tone blossoms in eye-catching lime and magenta blooms on both old and new wood for a color-changing show from summer to mid-fall. This is a pricy shrub, and the right location is key to colorful blooms.

The next two are hard to find, but perfect container plants that add real interest to the garden!

Cityline Paris – zone 5-9/2-3 feet/container: This is quite small, perfect for a planter that can be moved into the garage for winter protection! is one of the Cityline® series of dwarf plants with smaller-stature and flowers. Its color is deep pink/red in alkaline soil and tends toward purple in Chicago’s acidic soil. It has a mature height is just one to two feet, with no pruning necessary. Plan to mail-order these.



Tiny Tuff Stuff – zone 5-7/ 18-24” /container perfect: This is a mountain hydrangea that is similar, but much smaller than the Big Leaf. It is a stunner and a great container plant, with a maximum height of 18 to 24 inches!! This great, reblooming BLUE lace cap is very attractive, and you can easily control the pH of the soil if it is in a container, allowing you to retain the blue coloring – this may take repeated soil amendments. It offers moderate cold hardiness and blooms on both old and new wood from early to late summer. You might want to store in the garage over winter. Mountain Hydrangea are strong rebloomers! Autumn foliage provides additional interest with rich bronze red tones when in a sunny location. Plan to mail-order these as well!



Panicle Hydrangeas: zone 4-8/ ht: *H. paniculata*, has conical blossom clusters called panicles that start out white and fade to pink. Blossoms form on new wood. GOOD for us, as they are guaranteed to bloom, if a bit late in the summer!! This species grows beautifully in Zones 4 to 8, and possibly Zone 3 with winter protection. A wide variety of beautiful cultivars are available.

Bobo Hydrangea: zone 3-9/Ht: 2-3 ft: This plant has a lot going for it and would be great in Edgebrook! This plant is much smaller in size than aborescens.

- Dependable bloomer year after year
- Sun loving hydrangea variety, great in large containers
- Extremely hardy!! Strong stems to hold up the flowers!
- Massive bloom display from summer through fall
- Super easy care, prune ONCE, in early spring
- Perfect for foundation plantings and as low hedges
- Deer tend to leave this plant alone!! YES!!!
- Could it be any better????



Be careful on the shade – as these plants require 6 full hours of sun to produce the best flowers...and you WANT the best flowers!!

Vanilla Strawberry – zone 4-8 /Ht: 6-7 feet. Another striking plant to consider!! This is a tall, big plant that offers a big bang to a sunny corner in your garden. From creamy white to pink and red, the cone-shaped blooms of *H. paniculata* ‘Renhy’ are sure to delight. They are NOT pH sensitive, and put on an impressive show from summer into fall. And as they fade, they add interest to the early winter garden. Grows in sun or part shade, and beware - attracts butterflies & pollinators. (Photo to the right)



Little Quick Fire: zone 3-8 /Dwarf Flowers turn white, to pink to red.

Pee Gee: zone 3-8. One of the largest varieties – at 10-20 FEET. White conical flowers that can reach 10-18” across.

Limelight hydrangea . zone 3-8/Ht:3-9 This is a really large plant with heavy, thick stems. It was bred from paniculata hydrangeas and is a patented hydrangea cultivar with dramatic blooms that range from lime green to creamy white to dusty rose and even burgundy during a long flowering season from July through September. The leaves of this fast-growing hardy shrub also feature attractive fall foliage, becoming tinged with deep red. Wait until the flowers start to turn blush pink before cutting them for drying.

This is a difficult plant to manage and prune. As the stems age they become thick and wooden, and it can easily be pruned into a small tree form in your garden. Traditional shrub pruning is difficult as the plant ages, with heavy stems winding around each other getting thicker, stiffer with age. This plant demands careful pruning each and every year. *Aborescens* is a far more manageable plant!!

Climbing Hydrangea: *H. anomala* subsp. *Petiolaris*, zone 4-8/30 feet or more!! This climbing species, *petiolaris*, is a slow-growing, long-lived vine that may exceed 50 feet over the years. Train it along a fence or up a trellis, or let it meander as a unique flowering ground cover. Fragrant flattish “corymb” flower heads that bloom in June resemble small white lace caps. Anticipate at least 30 feet of growth, and plan to provide support! Keep in mind that the vines may leave marks where they cling. Many climbing types are sold without mention of a particular cultivar. They generally have solid green leaves. I have seen to grown on the side of homes in our area, and it can soften an area where the house and driveway are right next to each other, with no room for other plants. This is a really, really large plant. Think before you plant it!



Miranda - This plant blooms on old wood from late spring to early summer. It benefits from winter protection like burlap and mulch in cold regions, and grows in full shade, but flowers better with some sun. Some pruning may be required to keep it manageable, and it is somewhat drought tolerant. *Miranda* offers unique, variegated green, white, and yellow leaves, and exfoliating bark, for winter interest. This is a really, really large plant.

Oak Leaf Hydrangea: zone *H. quercifolia*, zone 5-9/6-8 feet: This plant has leaves that resemble those of oak trees that redden in the fall. These in general, they become very large plants in Chicago, but do not produce many flowers. It is native to the US, tolerates shade and has white, conical, single or double blossomed flowers that turn pink with age. As it blooms on old growth, winter protection is mandatory to protect flower buds, making this an extremely high maintenance plant for our area. *Ruby Slippers* is the most common form found in garden centers in the area.



All things considered, you can find a hydrangea that will fit nicely into your garden to create interest and color through most of our growing season, without too much effort! It would be wise to identify the location where you need a substantial plant with large flowers first, then determine the sun, drainage, and if it is important, the pH for color, before buying your plant! Happy gardening in Edgebrook! .