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Timely Tips on GARDENING

By Betty Frankel

HYDRANGEA
Peegee hydrangea is a shrub with an odd name, but it is an attractive and reliable plant in the garden. It is one of the few late blooming shrubs, and at this season its trusses of bloom are apt to be the highlight of any yard in which it is grown. Botanically it is known as *Hydrangea paniculata* grandiflora, but in Grandmother's day it was often called a snowball bush or tree.

The flowers are not pure white, however, but are tinged with green or cream and as the season progresses many petals assume a rosy hue. The individual flowers are four-petaled and somewhat star-like. They are all sterile. They are gathered into large clusters that are conical in shape and often a foot high. The blossoms open in September but remain in good condition throughout the Fall. In fact, they seem to become even more attractive after the frost arrives. The flowers are excellent, too, for drying and may be used for long-lasting winter bouquets.

THE PLANTS ON which these flowers are borne are either shrubs or small trees up to thirty feet tall. They grow in almost any type of soil, but prefer soil that is fairly rich and moist. If moisture is ample they flower most freely in

full sun. However, they will tolerate considerable shade, but seem to need a drier soil in shaded areas.

Every year in early Spring the plants should be pruned. The past year's growth should be cut back to within an inch or two of the heavy branch from which it comes. Also to insure the finest flower heads, the shoots should be thinned out as they start to grow in Spring. Even without this severe pruning the plants will put on a creditable display. The pruning is useful in controlling the size of the plant and in keeping the plants small and shrubby. Those grown as trees can be trained to a single trunk and make most attractive specimen plants on the lawn.

IN ADDITION to the Peegee hydrangea that is in bloom now there are numerous other hydrangeas. *Hydrangea arborescens*, the Hills of Snow hydrangea, is a four to five foot shrub that bears heads of large creamy white flowers in late summer. The oak-leaf hydrangea has attractive foliage that turns a rich orange or red in autumn. It has heads of white bloom in July. It is especially suitable for planting in areas of light shade.

Perhaps the best known hydrangea is the variety sold by Mother's Day. This has round florists around Easter and heads of pink or blue flowers. It is *Hydrangea hortensis* (macrophylla). In addition to their popular use as forced pot plants, the *Hortensis* are grown as shrubs in the garden. In alkaline soil the flowers are shades of pink, but in acid soil the flowers turn blue. Plants with pale pink flowers become pale blue.

REMINDERS

Plant evergreens... Plant peonies, iris, oriental poppies and other perennials... Plant crocus, scillas, grape hyacinths and other small bulbs for early Spring bloom... This is the last call for seeding new lawns... Feed established lawns... Mums will add welcome color to the garden or can be used in pots to brighten the doorway.

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