

Planting & Caring For Hydrangeas

- 1) **Preparing the planting hole**, the right way will help in getting your roses off to a good start. Below are some tips for preparing your planting hole:
 - Dig your hole shallow and wide. Don't dig the hole any deeper than the depth of the pot the plants came in. You will want to dig a hole at least twice as wide as the pot, this allows the roots to push out into the loosened soil quickly to gather moisture and nutrients. The faster they can do that, the more quickly they will adapt to their new home and grow.
 - If you've prepared the soil in your new bed with lots of compost, don't add more to the hole. The roots may never push out into the surrounding soil if you make the soil in the hole too rich.
 - Add mulch underneath your hydrangeas to help keep the soil moist and cool. An organic mulch breaks down over time, adding nutrients and improving soil texture.

- 2) **Watering:**
 - During the initial planting of new hydrangeas, make a basin around the edge of the hole to retain water. Fill the basin with water 3 to 4 times, soaking the plant thoroughly.
 - During the growing season, hydrangeas should be watered at a rate of one 1-inch per week. To encourage root growth, deeply water 3-times per week. Bigleaf and smooth hydrangeas require more water, but all varieties benefit from consistent moisture.
 - Use a soaker hose to water deeply and to keep moisture off the flowers and leaves.
 - Watering in the morning will help prevent hydrangeas from wilting during hot summer days.

- 3) **Fertilizing:**
 - Fertilizer application should be based on the specific hydrangea because each variety has different needs. Remember, the best way to determine your fertilizer needs is by doing a soil test.
 - Bigleaf hydrangeas need several light fertilizer applications in March, May, and June.
 - Oakleaf and panicle hydrangeas do best with two applications in April and June.
 - Smooth hydrangea plants only need fertilization once, in late winter.

4) **Changing Hydrangea Color:**

- Hydrangeas are unique in the plant world because you can control their color. However, you should keep in mind, not all hydrangea types are capable of color adjustments. Bigleaf hydrangeas, *H. macrophylla*, react to changes in soil pH. A low soil pH allows hydrangeas to absorb aluminum, which turns the flowers a beautiful blue color. To increase blue hydrangea flowers, lower your soil pH by adding Espoma Soil Acidifier or aluminum sulfate. You can also add additional aluminum sulfate to your soil throughout the growing season. Pink and red flowers shine when you add ground limestone to increase the pH.
- Acidic soil, with a pH lower than 6.0, will produce blue or lavender-blue blooms. Alkaline soil, with a pH above 7.0, promotes pinks and reds. To lower your pH,

