

Hydrangea Pruning Cheat Sheet

A simple guide to when and how to prune the most common hydrangea types.



First Rule

Know whether your hydrangea blooms on old wood or new wood before you prune.

1



Bigleaf Hydrangea

Hydrangea macrophylla



Blooms on:
Old wood



When to prune:
Right after flowering



Quick tip:

Only shape lightly and remove dead stems. Avoid heavy spring pruning or you may remove next year's buds.

2



Panicle Hydrangea

Hydrangea paniculata



Blooms on:
New wood



When to prune:
Late winter to early spring



Quick tip:

Cut back to shape and size. A light to moderate prune helps encourage strong new growth and blooms.

3



Smooth Hydrangea

Hydrangea arborescens



Blooms on:
New wood



When to prune:
Late winter to early spring



Quick tip:

Remove weak stems and cut back as needed. Many gardeners cut plants down to about 12–18 inches.

4



Oakleaf Hydrangea

Hydrangea quercifolia



Blooms on:
Old wood



When to prune:
Right after flowering, if needed



Quick tip:

Usually needs very little pruning. Remove dead wood and shape lightly only after blooms fade.

5



Climbing Hydrangea

Hydrangea anomala subsp. petiolaris



Blooms on:
Old wood



When to prune:
After flowering



Quick tip:

Prune lightly to control size or tidy growth. Avoid hard pruning unless absolutely needed.

Quick Rules to Remember

- Old wood = prune after flowering
- New wood = prune in late winter or early spring
- Remove dead, damaged, or crossing stems anytime
- When in doubt, prune lightly

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