

Flower Power

Showstopping Flowers Blooming Beautifully On Patios And Decks

(NAPSA)—Gardeners have long enjoyed the beauty of hydrangeas, but until recently these show-stopping flowers were not usually potted for display on a patio or deck.

Fortunately, many varieties of these gorgeous garden dwellers can now be planted in large containers and thrive all summer long. Here's how you can enjoy these blooming beauties potted right on your patio:

Select A Well-Suited Variety

There are several new varieties of hydrangeas that have been introduced in the past few years that perform wonderfully in containers. The Forever & Ever Series and Endless Summer Hydrangeas are quite successful as potted plants, with compact growth and long-lasting blooms.

Forever & Ever Peppermint features gorgeous mop-headed blooms and one-of-a-kind bicolor petals. Depending on your soil, the petals will display a brush-stroke of either pink or blue in the center. Growing to approximately 24 inches tall and 36 inches wide, its compact stature makes it ideal for patio containers.

Forever & Ever Together is yet another attractive variety sure to bring attention to your patio. Its blooms span 8 inches across and are made up of unique double florets that actually change color throughout the season. Starting the summer off by opening with a light-green color, the blooms change to pink or blue by mid-summer (depending on your soil pH), and end the season with a rich violet or red color as temperatures begin to cool.



Beautiful new varieties of hydrangeas have been introduced that perform wonderfully in containers.

Choose The Correct Container

As a general rule, the patio container you select should be a good 2 to 4 inches wider and deeper than the nursery pot in which your hydrangea came. This will give the roots adequate room to grow. Choose light-colored containers to reflect heat away. Most importantly, the container should have adequate drainage holes.

Start With A Specific Soil

When planting hydrangeas in containers, always use a commercial potting mix that is sterilized and disease-free. Remember, your plants will thrive in a humus-rich soil. Some mixes even contain polymers to retain water, as well as slow-release fertilizers, both of which are excellent for containers.

Plant A Particular Way

When planting hydrangeas, place several inches of soil in the bottom of your container first. Remove your hydrangea from its previous pot and center it on top of this base soil. Fill in the sides with soil so there are no air pockets, then press gently with your hands, adding more soil if needed.

If your soil mix did not contain fertilizer, apply a blend made for flowering shrubs according to package directions. Top it off with a thin layer of bark to help keep the plant from drying out. Water thoroughly right after planting, making sure the soil is very moist.

Look After It Lovingly

Hydrangeas prefer full sun to partial shade, but potted hydrangeas should not be placed in full sun for the entire day. Find a place on your patio with morning sun and afternoon shade for your hydrangea to be happiest and perform its best. It's also a good idea for the location to be protected from the wind.

Hydrangeas tend to be thirsty plants, even more so in containers. Daily watering will keep your plants looking their best, but be careful not to overwater either—just keep the soil nice and moist. Using a water-soluble fertilizer every few weeks will help with new growth for continuous beauty.

Keep a watchful eye out for signs of pests or diseases. Pests such as red spider mites and aphids, as well as diseases like powdery mildew, can be common. If you suspect problems, contact a garden center to help keep your blooming beauties healthy and strong.

Cold winter temperatures are hard on container plants since their roots are above ground. Bring your hydrangea inside an unheated garage or storage building over the winter, watering regularly. Then in the spring, bring your plant back out onto the patio.

Hydrangeas might require a little extra TLC, but the summer-long blooms are worth every minute of it.