

Beautiful Oakleaf Hydrangea

Have you noticed how popular hydrangeas are in Ocean County? *Hydrangea quercifolia* or oak leaf hydrangea is a deciduous shrub native to the eastern United States. The oak leaf hydrangea has three-season interest in the garden and is the best hydrangea for autumn color.

Its leaves resemble those of the Red Oak in shape and have a silvery color and downy feel underneath. The green topsides turn a purplish red as they age for fantastic autumn color. The long-lasting, conical shaped flowers are greenish to white in mid-summer, then pinkish purple before turning brown when the weather cools down.

The best time to cut hydrangea blooms for drying or indoor use is when they are a pink color. This shrub has multiple stems which, when mature, add to its winter appeal with exfoliating bark in various shades of brown.

Hydrangea quercifolia can tolerate slightly acid to neutral, moist to moderately dry and well-drained soil. The foliage colors will perform best in full sun, but it also likes some shade, especially in the southern regions. It is hardy to Zone 6.

This hydrangea needs pruning only to keep its size in check. Otherwise, deadhead the flowers to keep it tidy. It grows 3-8 feet tall and 4-7 feet wide depending on the cultivar and may spread over time to form colonies. They need 2" to 3" of mulch around them to keep their roots cool in summer. They do not have any serious pest problems.

The dwarf varieties are more suited to foundation plantings.

- 'Pee Wee' is a compact, dwarf form, 2-3 feet tall, suitable for growing in containers. It has dense white flowers 4 inches long that turn pink in autumn.
- 'Sikes Dwarf' is a compact form, 2-3 feet tall, 3-4 feet wide, suitable for use as a hedge. Its flowers are 3-4 inches long and its leaves are 5 inches long.
- 'Snowflake' has spectacular large snowy-white double flowers that change to rosy-pink. Its round dome of foliage turns burgundy as winter approaches.
- 'Snow Queen' takes full sun and is 4-6 feet tall. It has an upright habit. The large flower heads are less prone to droop after a rain.

Checklist for November

Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Water perennial beds thoroughly before the ground freezes.
- ✓ Pre-chill tulips and hyacinths for indoor forcing.

Indoor Plants

- ✓ Check indoor plants to ensure they are receiving enough water, humidity and air circulation. Check for spider mites and scale. Treat as needed.

Trees and Shrubs

- ✓ Fertilize shade trees after leaf fall. See Rutgers Fact Sheet #031 "**How to Fertilize Shade Trees**" for additional information.
<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=fs031>

Lawn

- ✓ Rake and compost shredded leaves. See Rutgers Fact Sheet #074 "**Backyard Leaf Composting**."
<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=FS074>
- ✓ Continue to mow lawns. The last cut should be 2½" high.
- ✓ Do not fertilize lawn after November 15, as per New Jersey Fertilizer Law.
<http://snyderfarm.rutgers.edu/fertilizerlawfaq.html>