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Pink or Blue—Which Hydrangea do you want?

Some hydrangea varieties will change color depending on soil conditions. Generally *Hydrangea macrophylla* grown in acidic soil will eventually produce blue flowers and those that grow in alkaline soil will produce pink or red flowers. It may take two to three seasons for the plant to establish its color.

Soil acidity is measured in PH units. A soil PH above 7 is alkaline, below 7 is acidic and 7 is neutral--neither acidic nor alkaline. Always determine the soil's PH before beginning to alter the color of your plant.

It is important to mulch hydrangeas. Mulching helps keep the moisture in the soil by reducing evaporation. Dry topsoil conditions can cause drought stress because most hydrangea roots are in the top layers of the soil.

Here are some recommendations for producing blue flowers on your hydrangea macrophylla.

- Make soil more acidic try adding garden sulfur or potash.
- Speed up the bluing process by using aluminum sulphate, but be aware that too much aluminum sulfate in one dose can be dangerous to plant roots and leaves. Also, avoid super phosphates. These tend to make the soil alkaline.
- ???Tap water in regions of alkaline soil is likely to be hard, lime-rich water of high alkalinity. Using collected rainwater on your hydrangeas will help control soil acidity.???
- Iron in the soil plays an important role in making aluminum available to the plant—and aluminum is the chemical that turns hydrangeas blue The papery dried flower heads of blue hydrangeas contain high levels of aluminum that can be recycled by leaving pruned heads under the bush. The flowers heads may need to be weighted so they stay in place until they begin to breakdown. The dried heads also acts as winter insulation protecting young buds from frost and cold.

Here are ways to produce pink to red flowers on your hydrangea macrophylla.

- Add phosphorus to the soil to make it more alkaline.
- Plant near a cement foundation where it will take up immediate free calcium.

