

Azalea and Hydrangea Information for Farmers Markets

Pruning Azaleas:

From Evergreen Azaleas for Alabama ANR 0200

“Although not required, azaleas can be pruned without damaging the plant and without interfering with future flower production. **The best time to prune is soon after the flowering period in the spring.** Shaping to maintain a natural form is preferred. Prune back branches that have grown out of the main body of the plant. Do not shear unless your intention is to create a formal hedge, espalier, or topiary plant. Shearing destroys the natural form of the plant.

Azaleas often become too large for the area they occupy, especially when they are used as foundation plants around a home. If this happens, cut back the large plants to 6 to 12 inches above the ground shortly after they bloom. When new growth buds appear on the stem, the new stems and leaves will grow very fast. Pinch out any long, unbranched shoots that develop to force a branch system. Be sure to keep the soil moist for several days after severe pruning.”

Pruning Hydrangeas:

From Hydrangeas ANR-1276

“Understanding flower development for each species is helpful. **Some hydrangeas bloom on “old wood” while others bloom on “new wood.”** Bearing flowers on stems produced from last year’s buds describes blooms on old wood. Flower buds forming on this year’s growth appear on new wood. Prune shrubs that bloom on old wood shortly after current flowering to avoid removing developing buds. The next year’s flower buds begin forming in August. If a shrub blooms on new wood, prune in late winter or in spring to stimulate new growth for additional blooms.

Annual, general maintenance on bigleaf and oakleaf hydrangeas is recommended. Remove all dead wood and cut about one-quarter to one-half of the older stems to the ground. This improves plant vigor, overall shape, and bloom volume. Remember to prune these two species soon after flowering. Bigleaf and oakleaf bloom on old wood. A few bigleaf hydrangeas bloom on both old and new wood. Choose these if you live in an area prone to late frosts.

Both smooth and panicle hydrangeas bloom on new wood. Cut smooth hydrangea 6 to 12 inches from the ground, or at half its height, every year in late winter or early spring. The height you choose to prune these hydrangeas is strictly personal preference. Pruning after initial flowering can even stimulate a second flower period. Panicle hydrangea is most effective in tree form. Remove lower suckers and up to one-half of older stems for greater flowering.”