

New Hydrangeas for North and Central Florida: Bigleaf and Mountain Hydrangeas¹

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A “hydrangea” to most people is a shade-preferring shrub producing ball-shaped or flat clusters of white, pink, blue or purple flowers, depending on soil conditions and cultivar. Hydrangeas with ball-shaped flower clusters are often called “mophead” or “hortensia” hydrangeas whereas “lacecap” hydrangeas have flat clusters of tiny, spidery flowers surrounded by a ring of prominent flowers. Bigleaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*)³ and mountain hydrangea (*H. serrata*) are the two species most commonly associated with these descriptions of “hydrangea.”

Many new cultivars of hydrangea have been introduced in recent years. Gardeners and landscapers have renewed interest in hydrangea because it flowers in shade, often produces blue flowers, and is considered an “heirloom” plant that reminds us of the garden heritage of our forefathers. Some of the new cultivars reflower throughout the summer, providing more garden impact and strengthening the ongoing appreciation of hydrangea. This revitalized enthusiasm for hydrangea is bringing greater attention to the historic varieties of hydrangea as well as inviting efforts to improve hydrangea through new selection and breeding programs.

Reflowering Hydrangeas

The discovery and development of reflowering hydrangeas revolutionized the market and demand for these shrubs. Reflowering hydrangeas produce an initial flush of flowers followed by sporadic flowering or later flushes of flowers in the same growing season. Though some older cultivars are considered “free-flowering,” it is the newer, “everblooming” or “remontant” cultivars that have been lauded and subsequently promoted with elaborate marketing campaigns.

Reflowering may occur on old wood (stems developed the previous year) or on new wood (new growth developed during the current growing season). All hydrangeas flower from buds formed in the tips of stems the previous year (on old wood). Some hydrangeas also form flower buds the previous year in buds up and down the stems (not just at the tips). These flower buds may develop and flower weeks or months after the terminal flower buds bloom in early summer. Hydrangeas with this pattern of reflowering are called “free-flowering.” Free-flowering hydrangeas have been recognized by collectors and breeders for decades, but they were never commercially promoted on a large scale.

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“Everblooming” hydrangeas reflower on new wood. In this case, flower buds form in the tips of new growth, and these buds will continue to develop and ultimately flower later in the same year. Technically called “remontant,” hydrangeas with this characteristic have the ability to flower almost continuously throughout the growing season.

The first commercially promoted remontant or everblooming hydrangea was noted by renowned plantsman, Dr. Michael Dirr. He first saw this hydrangea in the trial garden of a wholesale nursery in Minnesota. One of the nursery employees had noticed that a neighbor's hydrangea flowered late in the year, and he was given permission to propagate and test the plant. Years later, Dr. Dirr visited the nursery, saw this hydrangea flowering in September and realized this plant had great garden and commercial value. This plant was given the cultivar name of 'Bailmer' and is now widely known as Endless Summer[®] hydrangea. This plant has been promoted with an elaborate marketing campaign, resulting in nation-wide awareness and huge sales.

Shortly after this discovery, Dr. Dirr and others realized similar reflowering hydrangeas occurred in a few home gardens across the U.S. Their owners had often recognized the reflowering ability of the plant, and may have shared the plant with friends and neighbors, but no one had tried to commercialize the plant. These scattered plants were unique and subsequently collected under the names of 'David Ramsey', 'Decatur Blue', 'Oak Hill' and 'Penny Mac'. In addition, a number of old cultivars of hydrangea were noted in the literature as having reflowering characteristics, but were never widely promoted.

Table 1 lists new cultivars that are remontant (reflower on new growth) and generally available. Other everblooming cultivars that may be found at specialty nurseries are *H. macrophylla* 'All Summer Beauty' and *H. serrata* cultivars 'Blue Deckle' and 'Coerulea Lace'.

Table 2 lists cultivars that are free-flowering (late flushes of flowers originate on old wood) and somewhat available. Other free-flowering cultivars that may be purchased from specialty nurseries are *H. macrophylla* 'Altona', 'Bodensee', 'Bouquet Rose',

'Forever Pink', 'Frillibet', 'Gold Nugget', 'Goliath', 'Heinrich Seidel', 'La France', 'Mme Faustin Travouillon', 'Marechal Foch', 'Mousseline', 'Niedersachsen', 'Otaksa', 'Patio White', 'President R. Touchard', 'Princess Beatrix', 'Todi', 'Trophy', 'Wayne's White' and 'Wildenstein'. 'Ayesha' and 'Tovelit' also are reported to reflower in north Florida.

Other New or Notable Hydrangeas

The success of Endless Summer[®] hydrangea spurred interest in developing and promoting other hydrangeas. Those listed in Table 3 are considered “new” or otherwise notable and some are being promoted with elaborate marketing campaigns. Please remember that most hydrangeas in Table 3 do *not* normally reflower in the same growing season.

Other new hydrangeas are associated with recent European and Japanese breeding or marketing programs. Hovaria[®] has introduced a number of Dutch-bred cultivars ('Hobella', 'Hopeline', etc.) that are marketed in the U.S. under the name, Kaleidoscope[®]. The Masters Collection[™] is a series from the Japan Hydrangea Society bred for the garden and cut flower markets with double flowers ('Mikawa Chidori', 'Hanabi'[®], etc.). Dutch Ladies Collection[™] is a series with women's names (Salsa[™], Shakira[™], Samantha[™], etc.) developed in Holland for the cut flower and pot-plant markets; most have large florets with serrated “petals.” The Japanese Lady series ('Lady Katsuko', 'Lady Taiko Blue', etc.) was bred by Hiroshi Ebihara of Japan and features picotee florets (with each “petal” edged in white). Many of these cultivars are not widely grown in the U.S. and should be evaluated.

Future Hydrangeas

Many new breeding programs resulted from the re-emergence of hydrangea as an important garden plant. Growers, collectors and breeders are working to find or develop hydrangeas with additional ornamental characteristics such as double flowers, larger flowers and colorful stems or leaves. In addition, most breeders are searching for greater disease resistance and cold hardiness as well as reflowering capabilities. These efforts indicate we can anticipate many more new hydrangeas in coming years.

References

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Additional Notes:

3. *Hydrangea macrophylla* has been evaluated using the IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.

Table 1. *Hydrangea macrophylla* cultivars that are remontant (reflower on new growth).

Name	Flower Type	Flower Color		Comments
		Acid Soils	Alkaline Soils	
Blushing Bride	Mophead	White with blue tint	White with pink tint	Bred from Endless Summer [®] hydrangea; will be sold as Endless Summer [®] Blushing Bride
David Ramsey	Mophead	Blue	Pink	In a planting at UF/IFAS NFREC-Quincy, flowerheads are colorful an average of 20 weeks per year
Decatur Blue	Mophead	Blue	Pink	In a planting at UF/IFAS NFREC-Quincy, flowerheads are colorful an average of 20 weeks per year
Endless Summer [®]	Mophead	Blue	Pink	In a planting at UF/IFAS NFREC-Quincy, flowerheads are colorful an average of 33 weeks per year; trademarked name of the cultivar, 'Bailmer'
Mini Penny	Mophead	Blue	Pink	Compact plant derived from 'Penny Mac'
Oak Hill	Mophead	Blue	Pink	In a planting at UF/IFAS NFREC-Quincy, flowerheads are colorful an average of 21 weeks per year
Penny Mac	Mophead	Blue	Pink	From the garden of Penny McHenry, founder of the American Hydrangea Society

Table 2. Cultivars that are free-flowering (reflower from old growth). Cultivars are *Hydrangea macrophylla* unless otherwise noted in "Comments."

Cultivar	Flower Type	Flower Color		Comments
		Acid Soils	Alkaline Soils	
Ami Pasquier	Mophead	Blue to purple	Pink to red	Reported to flower heavily until frost
Europa	Mophead	Blue to purple	Deep pink	"Petals" are serrated; large flowerheads, also preferred for drying
Fuji Waterfall	Mophead	White (blue tones as flowers age)	White (pink tones as flowers age)	Double flowers appear to spill from the large flower head; very beautiful; reported to repeat-flower until fall; sometimes considered <i>H. serrata</i>
Generale Vicomtesse de Vibraye	Mophead	Blue	Pink	Heavy flowering; flowerheads are very easy to dry
Lilacina	Lacecap	Blue to pale purple	Pink	Reported to flower a long time; strong growing plant
Mme Emile Mouillere	Mophead	White with blue tint	White with pink tint	"Petals" are serrated; reported to flower repeatedly all summer; vigorous plant
Nikko Blue	Mophead	Blue	Pink	A standard of the industry, though many ordinary hydrangeas are wrongly sold under this name
Preziosa	Mophead	Purple	Pink to red	Dark purplish stems; flowers deepen to red by fall; reportedly very susceptible to mildew; <i>H. serrata</i>

Table 3. Other new or notable cultivars of hydrangea. Most do *not* normally reflower in the same growing season. Cultivars are *Hydrangea macrophylla* unless otherwise noted in “Comments.”

Name	Flower Type	Flower Color		Comments
		Acid Soils	Alkaline Soils	
Big Daddy™	Mophead	Blue	Pink	Extremely large flowerheads
Early Sensation	Mophead	Blue	Pink	Supposedly remontant or free-flowering, but this plant is untested
Eclipse	Lacecap	Blue	Pinkish white	White variegated foliage
Forever & Ever Double Pink	Mophead	Blue to purple	Pink	Double flowers; supposedly remontant or free-flowering, but this plant is untested
Forever & Ever Pink	Mophead	Blue	Pink	Supposedly remontant or free-flowering, but this plant is untested
Forever & Ever Red	Mophead	Blue to purple	Pink to dark pink	Supposedly remontant or free-flowering, but this plant is untested
Lady In Red	Lacecap	White	Pinkish white	Red stems, petioles, and leaf veins; flowers turn rose-colored as they age; leaves turn reddish-purple in fall; Plant Patent #15175
Lemon Wave	Lacecap	Pale blue	White	Variegated green and white leaves also have yellow splotches; stems can revert back to all-green leaves
Lemon Zest	Mophead	Blue	Pink	Green foliage aging to chartreuse-yellow; sometimes sold as Sun Goddess™
Mariesii Variegata	Lacecap	Blue	Pinkish white	Green leaves with white edges
Miyama-yae-Murasaki (“Purple Tiers”)	Lacecap	Blue to purple	Pink	Sometimes called “Purple Tiers”; double flowers; extremely beautiful; <i>H. serrata</i>