

NAOMI SLADE
photography by
GEORGIANNA LANE

Celebrating an astonishing flower in all its exuberance, *Hydrangeas* captures the varying forms and colors that have brought about a glorious renaissance for this chameleon bloom.

This contemporary guide features over 50 of the most beautiful hydrangea varieties. From the lacecap blooms of Cotton Candy, to the blue mophead Endless Summer, brilliant Harlequin and crazy colorful Glam Rock, hydrangeas bring drama to your garden and home.

Stunning photography by Georgianna Lane and lively commentary by Naomi Slade illuminate magnificent hydrangeas suited to North American gardens. Relating the flower's fascinating history and sharing practical advice on how to grow and enjoy hydrangeas at home, Slade will give you the confidence to try them. Hydrangeas can be grown in the landscape or in pots, in full sun or partial shade, which makes them contenders for any garden. The myriad colors of hydrangeas will enliven any space and never disappoint.

HYDRANGEAS

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HYDRANGEAS

beautiful varieties for home and garden

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Tuff Stuff syn. Cotton Candy, Blueberry Cheesecake

This cracking little shrub is a cultivar of *Hydrangea serrata*, a species heaven-sent to bring hope to gardens that have proven inhospitable to the more tender *H. macrophylla*.

The ancestral home of Tuff Stuff and its serrata brethren is the chilly mountains of Asia, so it is notably tolerant of low temperatures. It also has a winning habit of repeat-flowering – producing blooms on both new and old wood, and steaming ahead all summer.

Depending on the pH of the soil it is grown in, the showy lacecap blooms have a striking semi-double appearance and can range from pretty coral-pink to a blue-purple, with a central eye of greenish white.

An adaptable garden plant, it is compact and tidy enough to thrive in a decent-sized container while also holding its own near the front of an herbaceous or shrub border. It only really needs pruning when there is old wood to be thinned out, and it will grow happily in both part-shade and full sun, but it will be grateful for afternoon shade in a really warm climate.

Hydrangea serrata 'Tuff Stuff'

Height Up to 36 in

Spread Up to 36 in

Flower size Small to medium

Habit Small, mounded, deciduous shrub

Color Rose-pink or blue-mauve with a cream center

Preferred situation Will be happy in both full sun and part-shade and with a reasonable amount of sun

Hardiness USDA Zones 5–9

In the garden Works well in a woodland border and in gardens where *H. macrophylla* struggles

As a cut flower Busy and bold, it lends itself to country cottage-style arrangements





Glam Rock syn. Pistachio

In recent times, hydrangeas have been lauded as an elegant and sophisticated option in the modern garden or muted bouquet. But then, sliding out of the wings in a gold lamé jumpsuit and war paint to tumultuous applause, comes Glam Rock.

This is a flower that doesn't care what you think and departs itself accordingly. The buds open with an assertive shade of green and then hit you with a pout of pink before embarking on an exhilarating crescendo of purple and blue at the core. Eye-catching and borderline psychedelic, it is, like all the best rockers, a small plant but one that lives its life as a stadium event.

A master of reinvention, this magical, morphing floral freak-out goes by several names. 'Pistachio' suits it very well in its early phases, but 'Glam Rock' does it more justice later in the year.

This hydrangea was discovered as a chance seedling and was introduced in 2012 by Star® Roses and Plants. The tones of the relatively small mophead flowers will vary according to the soil in which it is grown, but that is par for the course and given the nature of the beast, is probably best viewed as another interesting quality. Grow Glam Rock in a warm and sheltered spot in reliably moist soil, or let it put on a show in a container.

Hydrangea macrophylla 'Glam Rock'

Height 24–36 in

Spread 36–45 in

Flower size Small

Habit Small to medium

Color Vivid green flowers mature to a tricolor combination of pink, green and blue

Preferred situation Sun or partial shade

Hardiness USDA Zones 6–7

In the garden Provides flower and foliage interest over a long period; an excellent specimen plant or container subject

As a cut flower A striking addition to an arrangement or great on its own



Cocktail

Lavish, luscious and ever-so-slightly decadent, it is hard to know whether Cocktail is named for that deceptively innocent, creamy, fruity drink that packs such an unexpected punch, or for the glamorous frock a woman would wear to the sort of soiree where such beverages would be drunk.

The serrated foliage is bronze at first, becoming a darker green: the perfect foil to spherical flowers that flounce onto the scene in high summer. The petals are white, distinctively fringed with pink, and are carried erect on strong stems that lend themselves to cutting.

As the flower ages, it becomes creamier in color before antiquing to lime, tarnished copper and pistachio in an exit that is just as fabulous as its entrance.

With frilled and picotee-edged hydrangeas fantastically popular at present, there is a whole range of dangerous and dissolute-sounding blooms to create a garden-party vibe, should one so desire. These include outrageous, fuchsia-toned French Cancan and seductive Love You Kiss.

Hydrangea macrophylla 'Cocktail'

Height 4–5 ft 3 in

Spread Up to 5 ft

Flower size Medium

Habit Makes a substantial bush

Colour Fresh white flowers with fringed cerise margins

Preferred situation Partial or dappled shade in a spot that does not get too cold

Hardiness USDA Zones 6–7

In the garden An interesting new addition

As a cut flower Pretty in an arrangement with dahlias and old roses, perhaps with cosmos, Gypsophila or Panicum grasses to soften the effect



Wedding Gown (PBR)

syn. Doppio Bianco, Dancing Snow

This newer variety has almost everything you could ask for: neat and compact, it is ideal for containers and for modern and smaller gardens. It cuts well for posies. The rounded leaves are a handsome summer-green before turning gold in autumn.

But the flowers are the thing. And what flowers they are! Every stem bears a bloom that is lush and lavish, each a bouquet in its own right. Every bloom is a perfect, fully double star, opening gradually from green to chartreuse, and finally to pure white. As more and more florets unfold, they unite to create a dramatic white dome, at the same time exceedingly restrained and utterly fabulous.

And as a final bonus, it takes the legendary ability of hydrangeas to bloom over a long period and knocks it into a cocked hat. This is a plant that can be in full and exquisite flower from May to October, which, let's face it, is longer than the duration of some marriages.

Hydrangea macrophylla 'Wedding Gown'

Height Up to 40 in

Spread Up to 40 in

Flower size Medium

Habit A compact and rounded shrub

Colour Glorious, fresh white

Preferred situation Partial or dappled shade, somewhere not too chilly

Hardiness USDA Zones 6–7

In the garden A good container specimen, it also works well in small gardens

As a cut flower Excellent and elegant; perfect as part of a bridal bouquet and makes a refined table arrangement

Star Gazer

For those who have a passion for the exotic things in life, who hanker for something out of the ordinary and who favor frills and furbelows, Star Gazer is a must-have plant.

Its picotee-edged flowers are fully double, a lacy frill of stars nesting inside stars, which gives each floret a layered, three-dimensional quality, like the upturned tutu of a ballerina engaged in some unusual inverted maneuver. The central boss of pink or blue pearls, meanwhile, matures to a pleasing, complementary froth of stamens.

Being a macrophylla hydrangea, the color can range from sky blue to candyfloss pink and the flowers are borne on strong stems that keep them proud, even after rain. Like many of the more modern hydrangeas, it has been bred to repeat-bloom for a long flowering period, and it also has good resistance to mildew.

Hydrangea macrophylla 'Star Gazer' syn. 'Kompeito'

Height 36 in–4 ft

Spread 36 in–5 ft

Flower size Medium

Habit A slightly spreading, medium shrub

Colour Clear pink or blue, depending on soil type

Preferred situation Part-shade or dappled light under trees

Hardiness USDA Zones 6–7

In the garden Unusual and rather glamorous

As a cut flower Lovely and delicate; try with rosebuds and lilies for a formal bouquet or experiment with flowers and foliage with a steel-blue tone, such as Eryngium or eucalyptus



Rembrandt Vibrant Verde

Gardeners have an insatiable lust for the new and glamorous. Fresh color breaks, different forms, twists in the tail – when you are tired of gardening you are tired of life.

Yet with hydrangeas it might be easy to think that one has achieved an elegant sufficiency. A pleasing collection of species and forms that fulfill your every horticultural need, without tipping over into a state of full-blown addiction.

And then along comes the Rembrandt series. They are clearly named for the notable artist, or more specifically to evoke the myriad hues that might spring from his palette, and they drive the point home by morphing gaily throughout the season.

Thus, Rembrandt Vibrant Verde is a compact and versatile little shrub, pumping out small, arsenic-green flowers with enthusiasm until the whole plant is smothered. The center of each floret starts off white before turning pink. This rather idiosyncratic look lasts just moments, however. The pink stain wells up dark and dominant to flood the flower and finish the year ruddy and ensanguined.

While this shrub will perform well in the garden border, its attractions are such that it is better used as a container subject on a deck, balcony or patio, where it will thrive in a shady spot.

Hydrangea macrophylla Rembrandt 'Vibrant Verde'

Height Up to 40 in

Spread Up to 40 in)

Flower size Small

Habit Compact and bushy

Colour Snake-green flowers with a white eye

Preferred situation Partial or dappled shade; avoid severe cold

Hardiness USDA Zones 6–7

In the garden Great in containers and tumbling onto the patio in pride of place

As a cut flower Eye-catching, especially when teamed with purples and oranges; dries well

