

In The Garden

Hydrangeas For Everyone

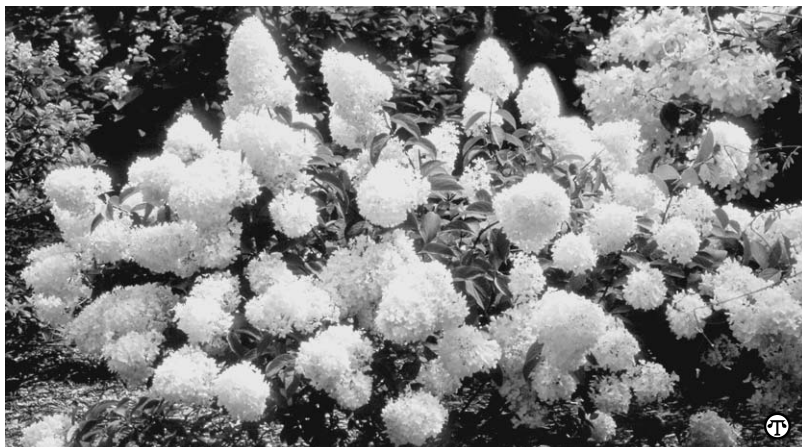
(NAPSA)—Hydrangeas are among the most popular of plants. Their huge midsummer flowers can almost stop traffic, but may be tricky to grow. However, with careful selection, virtually all gardeners can enjoy hydrangeas.

When choosing a plant, note the type of hydrangea. Big leaf hydrangeas (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) have large colorful flowers and are very popular even though they are the least hardy type. The blooms often fail because of a hard winter, an untimely frost or inappropriate pruning.

Most gardeners will find greater success with Panicle Hydrangeas (*Hydrangea paniculata*). These plants are very hardy and bloom reliably wherever you live. They can be pruned at any time and still produce plenty of fluffy summer flowers. These hydrangeas bloom every year, even after hard winters, late frosts, or overzealous pruning. Panicle hydrangeas are adaptable to sun or part shade, and tolerate most soils. Unlike big leaf hydrangeas, their blooms are not affected by soil pH.

Most panicle hydrangeas have white flowers, but newer varieties have more colors. 'Limelight' has large soft green flowers that turn pink each fall. Limelight grows in sun or partial shade. Winner of the prestigious Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Gold Medal, Limelight is a great addition to existing shrub borders, or planted en masse as a low-maintenance hedge. The flowers are perfect for cutting and will retain some green color when dried.

Quick Fire™ is another new



Flower Power—Hydrangeas can add color, depth and beauty to most any garden.

variety that blooms very early in the season. Quick Fire will open white and turn to a rich pink by midsummer. It is one of the earliest blooming hydrangeas, and is in full bloom before others have even begun to open. Plant it with Limelight for months of flowers.

'Little Lamb' has delicate florets packed into fluffy white clusters. The big masses of flowers appear to dance across the foliage like lambs in a field. Children especially will enjoy picking flowers for mother all summer long! Cold and hardy like Limelight and Quick Fire, it does not need winter protection.

Smooth hydrangeas (*Hydrangea arborescens*) are another easy-to-grow, cold-hardy type. Hardy as far north as Minnesota, varieties like White Dome® will bloom reliably every year without needing any winter protection. White Dome is a wonderful winter landscape plant, with sturdy stems that hold up

under even heavy snows. The saucer-shaped blooms are unlike other hydrangeas and have a unique, lacy elegance. They are especially lovely in dried flower arrangements. Smooth hydrangeas are adaptable to most soils, and will grow in sun or partial shade.

Hydrangeas produce beautiful flowers from mid-summer through fall. These classic garden flowers fit into almost any garden. Use a mass planting as a dramatic hedge, or incorporate them into existing perennial beds. Many varieties are good for cutting and drying, providing enjoyment year-round. If you've been afraid to try hydrangeas because they seem complicated, don't be. Just ask at your local garden center for a variety that's suited to your area. Wherever you garden, there's a hydrangea for you.

For more information about new hydrangeas, visit www.colorchoiceplants.com.