

# Hydrangea arborescens

## Wild or Smooth Hydrangea

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic

Wild Hydrangea is a fast-growing shrub with large handsome leaves and large, flat to dome-shaped heads, comprising hundreds of small fertile flowers, sometimes edged with showy, sterile flowers. It is common throughout much of the Mid-Atlantic Region\* except for the Coastal Plain.



Shrub	May Shrubs, June Flowers***
Height: 3–6 feet	 
Spread: 3–5 feet	
Bloom Color: White	
Characteristics	
Fast-growing, mound-shaped, <a href="#">deciduous</a> shrub	
<a href="#">Opposite</a> , large, toothed, ovate, green leaves (pale green below) on unbranched <a href="#">stems</a> turn yellow in fall	
Mostly small, fertile, white flowers in large clusters (corymbs) bloom on new wood May to June then sporadically to Sept. turning to green and brown	
<a href="#">Dehiscent</a> ribbed brown <a href="#">capsules</a> July-September	
Attributes	
Tolerates <a href="#">clay</a> soil, wet soil, shallow-rocky soil, & Black Walnut; intolerant of drought (foliage withers); no serious pests or diseases (susceptible to aphids, mites, and scale and mold, rust, and powdery mildew); tolerates rabbits; <a href="#">deer</a> may browse stems/leaves	
Can grow 3–5 feet tall in a single season	
Attracts** native bees, wasps, syrphid flies; <a href="#">larval</a> host for ~10 <a href="#">lepidopterans</a> , incl. Hydrangea Sphinx	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
<a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Average, well-drained	<a href="#">Buddleia davidii</a> - Butterfly Bush
<a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Partial Shade, Shade	<a href="#">Hydrangea macrophylla</a> - Mophead Hydrangea
<a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Moist	<a href="#">Rhodotypos scandens</a> - Jetbead
To promote strong growth and maintain shape, prune stems near to ground late winter, otherwise cut out old and damaged stems early spring	<p>*It is <a href="#">native</a> to DC. In DE, it is rare to extirpated in the Piedmont and absent in the Coastal Plain. It is scattered in MD and is present throughout PA. In VA, it is common in the mountains and Piedmont and infrequent in the Coastal Plain.</p> <p>**In 2019 and 2021 during a 5-year <a href="#">Mount Cuba trial</a>, wild hydrangea attracted more pollinator visits than all but one of the 28 other taxa of hydrangea observed.</p> <p>***Bees are probably Halictid (sweat) bees.</p>
Bundle removed stems for bee use as nesting site	
Use for erosion control and in rain garden, mixed shrub border, or woodland garden	
<a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 3a–9b	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Elaine Mills, private garden, Arlington, Virginia