



Hydrangeas are oh-so grand-
They peer through wrought-iron gates
And pose in rows on terraces
Of millionaires' estates.
So elegant and stylish,
Collected, calm and cool--
But they're really common snow-balls
That have been to boarding school.

L. Young Corretthers...The Little Book of Garden Scandal.

'Quick Fire' Is Blooming And 'Limelight' Is Budding!

We started an article series six weeks ago about Hydrangeas.

In the first newsletter we talked about [Hydrangea serrata](#) and [Hydrangea macrophylla](#) as these are the first to bloom here in zone 7. The second newsletter talks about our [Native Hydrangeas](#). [If you missed the first two get them here.](#)

By May 15, here in Zone 7 we started seeing our Macrophylla and Serrata Hydrangeas Bloom. Along with Oak Leaf Hydrangea. These continued and were followed by Arborescens...Annabelle, Hayes Starburst, White Dome and the Native Arborescens we discovered on our property here in N.W. Shelby County 20 years ago. The Panicle Hydrangeas will be blooming from Mid June (Quick Fire) through October (Limelight). It has been a Stellar Year for Hydrangeas. No late frost. Opulent spring rain.

As promised I will share with you what I know about the Panicle Hydrangeas.

I First came upon them in 1980 when I helped my Italian American Father Maintain Formal Estate Gardens on the North Shore of Chicago. The Panicle Hydrangeas Pee Gee or P.G. (*Paniculata grandiflora*) were commonly used there as "Standards" against stone posts at the entrance gates to many of the North Shore Gardens.

They were limbed up or sculpted to reveal 3-5-7 sturdy legs or branches up 3-5' and then the tops were allowed to grow at will. The P.G. have a weeping or flopping habit and this created tall cascades of White Mophead Flowers. The P.G. sold in the U.S. can reach up to 12' tall. By using this "standards" style of sculpting your P.G. we can create architecture in the garden using shrubs.

So let me begin...again...to generally describe the Species of *Paniculata* Hydrangea.

In General the Panicle Hydrangeas tend to be more woody than any other of the previous forms discussed. Woody!! I feel it is their woodiness that gives them new interest and sets them apart from the other forms.

They can be manipulated like Crepe Myrtles, which are "limbed up" or "sculpted" to form tall leggy shrubs that create focal points or vertical interest. You can Sculpt them Nov. thru Feb. and again in Midsummer if you like. Sculpt not Shear! (Shearing is cutting 3-6" from the top to produce bushy green foliage.)

They can also be cut to the ground...3-6" to create short floriferous shrubs of approximately 3'. This is sometimes called "Stooling", which means cutting a shrub or tree nearly to the ground to create multiple young branches. In this case it is done to produce the most blooms on short shrubs. I prefer to Sculpt the Panicles to create architectural interest.

They bloom on New Wood, which is the wood produced in spring, and early summer of each year. (Unlike the Mac.'s, the Serrata and the Oak Leaf Hydrangea, which bloom on the previous year's wood, (the wood produced the previous mid-summer and fall...after they have bloomed.) Whew!!! Did you get all that??!!

They can take Full Sun! For Zone 7 and South, I am reluctant to say this, always keeping August of 2007 in mind; However, I do know they can take at least 3 hours of miserable afternoon Southern Summer Sun and have grown them successfully in a full sun Western exposure. Zone 6 and North, I am confident they can take all day sun.

They Begin Blooming After All of the Others Have Finished! The first to bloom in my Garden are 'Limelight' and she has been blooming since July 7 here on the edge of the county...earlier I would suspect in the City. As you can see, by using all of the species of Hydrangea: Mac., Serrata, Oak Leaf, Arborescens and Panicle Hydrangea; you will have blooms From May thru August.

They are Drouth Tolerant! As with everything in our 5 acre Nursery/Garden, P.G. and Tardiva were planted here prior to our water system being installed, 14 years prior. So the Panicle Hydrangea as well as many of the other trees, shrubs and perennials we planted were planted in Fall, Watered by 40 inches of Winter Rain, and survived our Annual Summer Drouth for 14 years.

I have grown the following Panicle Hydrangeas In the Memphis Area for 20 years: P.G., Tardiva, and Chantilly Lace. In the last 5-7 years many more varieties have become available to local nurseries.

Their Forms include Lacy Vertical Pyramidal Panicles to Fluffy, Vertical and Cascading Mophead Like Forms. They range in height from 4-18 Ft. I feel the Panicle Hydrangea are very important in creating structure and height in the Garden and will become more popular as they are more understood.

We currently have P.G., LImelight, Quickfire, Little Lamb, Pinky Winky, Chantilly Lace, Pink Diamond, Tardiva, Kyushu, Angels Blush and a few others available. [For More info on our available varieties and to get purdy pictures and vital stats...go to.](#)

Best Wishes. Diane and Wolfgang. [GardensOyVey](#)

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