

LAKEWOLD GARDENS

An Inspirational Experience

Pruning Hydrangeas

Following December's early snowfall, several of our herbaceous shrubs, such as the Hydrangea, proceeded to flop over and were looking a mess. We decided to use the dry, clear days that followed as a pruning opportunity and went to work pruning many of the hydrangeas.

Garden literature indicates that macrophylla varieties of Hydrangeas are to be pruned in mid-spring. I chose to cut ours back once they became unsightly – usually in the fall of each year. However, if new growth flushes early and is damaged by a late spring frost I will need to follow-up with some additional trimming.

If you have an established plant, you can cut the previous season's growth to its lowest pair of healthy buds and remove any lifeless stubs. It can be pruned as low as ten

inches, but as I was taught, cutting back to knee height is a good guide. This is very helpful for those who do not garden with tape measures. A few less flowers will be produced next year, but the flowers will be more significant.

Plants that need a significant amount of rejuvenation can be cut back further to create a new, healthy framework. They will still respond favorably, however, may not flower in the coming spring. You may have to wait an additional year to see that Hydrangea splendor.

Whether you chose to prune in the fall or spring, your hydrangeas will respond well with regular pruning. For those who enjoy a tidy winter garden, I feel it is worth the extra work. This may be the only time of the year when you feel you have control of your garden and we all know that your to-do list will grow as you look ahead to spring.

