




MAHONEY

ASSOCIATES, LLC

A FULL SERVICE LANDSCAPE FIRM

A close-up photograph of numerous blue hydrangea flower clusters, filling the background of the page. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, showing vibrant blue petals with some white centers. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the foreground flowers.

# Treat your hydrangeas this fall to ensure vibrant blue color next season

Hydrangeas' gorgeous blue color is dependent upon two specific factors in soil chemistry which must be continuously managed with soil additives.

1. To make hydrangea flowers blue, aluminum must be present in the soil.
2. To make the aluminum available to the plant, the pH of the soil should be acidic, pH 5.5 or lower.

Adding aluminum sulfate to the soil around the hydrangeas addresses both factors. It provides the aluminum hydrangeas need, and lowers the pH of the soil so the plants can use it.

Soil must be continuously conditioned with aluminum sulfate to maintain hydrangeas' blue flower color.

Mahoney recommends aluminum sulfate applications in both fall and spring to ensure hydrangea plants have sufficient nutrients when buds are developing.

Multiple applications of aluminum sulfate are typically required to make East End soil acidic enough for blue hydrangeas.



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Hydrangea flower color can be changed by adjusting soil pH.

If you prefer pink, lavender or lilac shades of hydrangea, bloom colors can be managed by altering soil pH and the availability of aluminum.

- ◆ For blue flowers, soil pH needs to be in the acidic range of 5.0 to 6.5.
- ◆ Pink flowers will occur in alkaline soils with pH between 6.5 to 7.5.
- ◆ Mixed colors or purple flowers happen in neutral soils with pH between 6.5 to 7.5.

Transitioning from pink to blue flowers or blue to pink may take a year or more to adjust the soil pH to support the desired color.



## Fast facts about hydrangea colors:

- ◆ White flowering hydrangeas will always have white flowers.
- ◆ The genetics of a hydrangea variety determines color intensity. Pale pink flowers can transition to pale blue, but not a deep blue hue.
- ◆ Hydrangeas planted near concrete foundations or sidewalks will likely be affected by lime leaching out of the concrete, making the soil highly alkaline and difficult to achieve blue flowers.



## When to prune hydrangeas? It depends.

The Hamptons have several distinct varieties of hydrangeas which require pruning at different times of the year. Timing depends on whether new flower buds form on old woody stems or on new growth.

If your landscape has multiple hydrangea varieties, recommendations may include:

- ◆ Pruning in late winter/early spring before new growth or bud break
- ◆ Pruning immediately after flowering in mid-summer
- ◆ Fall pruning or caning

## Caning hydrangea encourages flowering, improves air flow, and reduces disease.

Overly dense hydrangeas benefit from a more robust pruning practice called caning.

To rejuvenate mature plants, up to 30 percent of the stems are removed. This increases air circulation which helps reduce fungal diseases, and encourages abundant blossoms.



**Contact your account manager today** to confirm fall services for your hydrangeas and other flowering plants.