Hydrangea quercifolia - Oakleaf Hydrangea (Hydrangeaceae)

Hydrangea quercifolia is a four-season shrub with good spring, summer, and autumn bold foliage, striking in bloom and in autumn, but very sparse in winter.

FEATURES

Form
-medium shrub
-to 7’ tall x 8’ wide
-radiating rounded
-composed of several straggly, few-branched stems in a loose arrangement
-medium rate

Culture
-full sun to full shade (best in partial shade)
-prefers moist, well-drained, rich soils
-wet site tolerant
-fruiting panicles normally left on for winter character, but may be pruned off

Foliage
-dark green
-deciduous
-opposite
-overall very broadly ovate to elliptical
-serrate, incised, and ranging from entire to 7-lobed
-acuminate-tipped lobes
-to 12” long
-many leaves resemble Northern Red Oak (Quercus rubra) foliage

Flowers
-showy white or cream sterile flowers, with green true flowers hidden underneath
-sterile flowers gradually changing to purple-pink, bronze, and finally brown
-conical inflorescences terminate most stems and are to 1’ long each
-June and persistent
-overall the many inflorescences create a showy, radiating effect of white

Fruits
-brown capsules
-not showy
-however, the inflorescence with persistent sterile flowers is quite noticeable in winter and persistent into the following summer if not removed

Twigs
-young twigs a very pubescent orange-brown

-exfoliating on older stems to reveal orange or cinnamon smooth interior bark
-buds orange-brown and pubescent

Trunk
-light orange-brown
-exfoliating

-many stems radiate from a common point at 45 degree angles

Usage
Function
-specimen, border, accent, entranceway, focal point, or foundation shrub

Texture
-bold texture in foliage, flower, and when bare
-open density

Assets
-showy white inflorescences in early summer
-exfoliating orange bark
-wine autumn coloration
-large bold foliage
-wet site tolerant

Liabilities
-need to maintain a non-straggly habit through pruning if a specimen plant
-persistent dead panicles can be an asset or liability

Habitat
-Zones 5 to 9
-Native to southern regions of the U.S.

Selections
Alternates
-shrubs that have a radiating habit from the base, early summer white flowers, exfoliating bark, or bold texture

Cultivars – Variants – Related species
-H. quercifolia 'Alice' produces long, pinkish inflorescences
-H. quercifolia 'Snowflake' produces inflorescences that seem double-flowered
-H. quercifolia 'Snow Queen' a popular cultivar having 8” long panicles of large flowers; excellent autumn color; tends to be more compact than other cultivars
-Hydrangea paniculata 'Grandiflora' - Pee Gee Hydrangea - shrub or small tree, often 10’ or less in height, or tree form on a grafted standard, prolifically blooming in Aug. with very showy white inflorescences, mostly composed of sterile flowers
-smaller ovate non-lobed foliage
-bark gray-brown

Hydrangea paniculata 'Tardiva' - Tardiva Hydrangea - shrub similar in habit to Oakleaf Hydrangea, but blooming in mid- to late-Sept.
-large ovate, non-lobed leaves
-brown stems