

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
- serrated, incised, and ranging from entire to 7-lobed
- acuminate-tipped lobes
- to 12" long
- many leaves resemble Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) foliage



-mixture of green, wine, purple, maroon, and brown, with best color in full sun

-Oct.-Nov.

-in shade, often green then abscised

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