

Hydrangea quercifolia (Oakleaf Hydrangea)

Oakleaf hydrangea is noted for showy, pyramidal 4- to 12-in. erect panicles of creamy white flowers in late spring and summer. Larger, sterile flowers occur towards the base of the panicle; fertile flowers are creamy and fragrant and occur toward the tip. The flowers, which stay on the plant



H. quercifolia 'Snowflake' Kingsbrae Garden
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for months, fade to pink, then tan in the fall. As cut flowers they are long-lasting, and they are good dried, as well.

This upright, multi-stemmed, deciduous shrub is native to the Southeastern United States and suitable for USDA plant hardiness zones 5a -- 9b. The species name alludes to the resemblance of its leaves



to those of the oak tree (*Quercus*). Even when the plant is not in bloom, the large dark green leaves provide a striking shape. An added interest is that the leaves turn wine, orange, or mahogany in the fall. The plant's more mature bare branches have an interesting texture in winter thanks to the interesting bark that peels back along its stems.

Oakleaf hydrangea's unique features make it suitable as a

specimen, accent, foundational or background plant; massed in large open spaces; arranged as an informal hedge; used in a woodland setting or shade garden; or as an understory planting under larger trees like live oaks.

Its flowers are attractive to butterflies and other insects. Songbirds eat the seeds.

This low-maintenance plant may grow to 8-ft. tall and 6- to 8-ft. wide, so plant this potentially sprawling plant 6- to 12-ft. apart. For limited space, consider more compact cultivars like 'Pee Wee.'

Oakleaf hydrangea grows best in organically rich, well-drained soils with medium moisture. It does well in full sun to part shade, and mulch in the summer helps to keep the soil moist (but don't let the mulch touch the trunk).

Blooming occurs on old wood; if pruning is needed, do it immediately after flowering. Winter-damaged stems may be pruned in early spring.

Oakleaf hydrangea is relatively pest-resistant if cultural preferences are met, although aphids and spider mites are occasional pests. This plant is somewhat susceptible to leaf blight and powdery mildew. Two drawbacks are that it may be favorable to deer and some research sources mention toxicity potential; plant parts should not be consumed.



ABOVE LEFT: Hydrangea quercifolia Barbara Goodman [CC BY 2.0](#). ABOVE: Hydrangea quercifolia K M [CC BY 2.0](#)

By Kathryn Copley, Extension Master GardenerSM Volunteer, Brunswick County, NC. For more information on gardening in Brunswick County, please call the Brunswick County Cooperative Extension Office, 910.253.2610.

SOURCES:

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/hydrangea-quercifolia/>

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/hydrangea/>

Hydrangea quercifolia: Oakleaf hydrangea | College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences | Clemson University, South Carolina

<https://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/ornamentals/oakleaf-hydrangea.html>