

A hydrangea schedule for Easter 1990

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Greenhouse forcing of hydrangea for winter and spring holiday sale is patterned after outdoor production. Six to eight weeks of winter chill is required prior to forcing. Actual forcing requires 12 to 14 weeks. Hydrangeas can be forced into bloom from early March to early May.

Hydrangea forcing has enjoyed limited popularity among growers because of the large amount of greenhouse space required and the length of the forcing period. However, the flowers are long-lasting and showy, characteristics which are attractive to consumers.

In general, hydrangea are forced in 85 to 100 days for Easter and Mother's Day and 100 to 110 days for Valentine's Day. Night temperatures of 60 to 62°F with day temperatures 10°F warmer are used. Bud

formation is faster under short day conditions. As natural day length increases, flower size will decrease and internode length will increase.

The following timing schedule can be used for forcing hydrangeas for Easter 1990. This is a 16-week schedule beginning with dormant plants. Higher temperatures can be used to shorten the forcing period. Plants forced for later holidays (i.e. Mother's Day) will require less time as will hydrangeas forced in warmer climates.

Week No.	Date	Stage of Plant Development
16	December 24	Dormant Hydrangea; Raise temperature to 50°F
14	January 7	Buds beginning to open
13	January 14	Leaves beginning to unfold; raise temperature to 55°F
12	January 21	2 to 4 leaves unfolded and opened; raise temperature to 60°F
11	January 28	6 leaves open
10	February 4	10 leaves opened and showing
9	February 11	Flower cluster may be visible
8	February 18	Flower cluster visible and pea sized
7	February 25	Flower cluster sizing
6	March 4	Flower cluster 3/4 to 1 1/4 inches in diameter
5	March 11	Flower cluster 1 1/2 to 2 inches
4	March 18	Flower cluster 2 to 2 1/2 inches; bract starting to develop
3	March 25	Bract developed
2	April 1	Bract developed and coloring
1	April 8	Bracts colored, hydrangeas hardened and cooled
0	April 15	Easter