

# Happy hydrangeas are great for Mother's Day

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Puzzled about what to get Mom for Mother's Day on May 9?

You can never go wrong with a happy-looking hydrangea.

She can plant it in her garden or place it in a pot on the front porch and then dry the blooms to enjoy in arrangements for fall and winter.

This year, the hydrangea family welcomes two new members.

The new hydrangeas — Invincibelle Spirit and Incrediball — are offspring of Annabelle, a well-known version of the native *Hydrangea arborescens*, a smooth-leaf hydrangea.

Though wildly popular and attractive in gardens everywhere, Annabelle features two limitations. First, its large flower heads flop to the ground during heavy rain because they fill with water and can't stand straight under the weight. Second, Annabelle only comes in white.

Now, thanks to breeding by Proven Winners, Annabelle's garden woes are solved with its new cousins.

Invincibelle Spirit is the first pink Annabelle hydrangea. It is a continuous bloomer, producing flowers on new wood early summer until frost. Its flowers remain pink, regardless of your soil's acidity levels. It grows 3 to 4 feet tall. Its story started after a graduate student discovered a pink-flowering, lace-cap hydrangea *arborescens* while hiking in the Blue Ridge Mountains. He brought back

the discovery to a research facility in Asheville, N.C., where it was crossed with Annabelle. There is also a fundraising effort associated with the pink flower — \$1 from every plant sold will be sent to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

Incrediball is called the "Annabelle on steroids" because it has the biggest flowers — bigger than a basketball, its makers claim — and strongest stems of any Annabelles. Blooms open to a pale shade of green, and mature to pure white. It, too, flowers all season. The plant is compact, standing 4 to 5 feet tall fully grown.

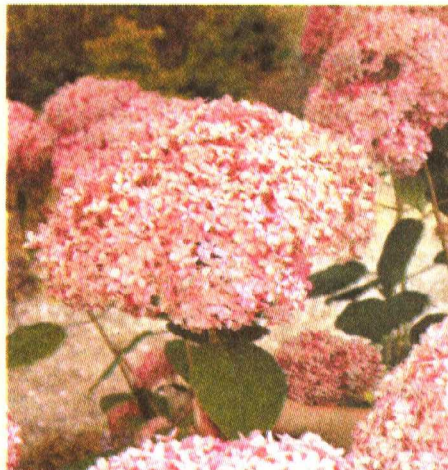
You can find the new hydrangeas at local garden centers, including Smithfield Gardens in Suffolk, Anderson's Home & Garden Showplace in Newport News, McDonald Garden Center in Hampton and Ken Mathews Garden Center in York County.

## Happy hydrangeas

- All hydrangeas thrive in morning sun and afternoon shade — heavy shade is a no-no.
  - Plant hydrangeas in well-drained soil. Add a little pine bark mulch to the planting soil to improve drainage and soil fertility.
  - Place a hydrangea where it gets plenty of moisture; supplemental moisture during drought is crucial the first few years of root development.
  - Plant at the same depth that the hydrangea was planted in the pot.
  - Transplant a hydrangea in late fall, when leaves have dropped; plant new hydrangeas in early summer or late fall.
- For more tips visit [www.hydrangeashydrangeas.com](http://www.hydrangeashydrangeas.com).

**Left:** Incrediball hydrangea is an improved white Annabelle breed with a stronger stem and four times the flowers.

**Right:** Invincibelle Spirit hydrangea is the first pink-flowering form of Annabelle.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PROVEN WINNERS COLORCHOICE