

## Hydrangea

(*Hydrangea* spp.)

Hydrangea is a showy, deciduous flowering shrub prized for large blooms and lush foliage. In Colorado, hydrangeas do best with **morning sun / afternoon shade**, **consistent moisture**, and **mulch** to keep roots cool. Most problems show up when plants are **drought-stressed**, **heat-stressed**, **overcrowded (poor airflow)**, or **watered overhead**.



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### Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | ☀️ Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Aphids	Insect	Spring–Early Summer	🌸 ☀️
Spider mites	Mite	Summer (hot/dry)	☀️

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Powdery mildew	Fungus	Summer–Fall	☀️ 🍃
Leaf spot (Cercospora/other)	Fungus	Summer–Fall	☀️ 🍃
Botrytis blight (flower/leaf blight)	Fungus	Cool, wet periods (spring/fall; after rain)	🌸 🍃
Leaf scorch / drought stress	Environmental	Summer	☀️
Winter dieback / bud kill	Environmental	Winter–Early Spring	❄️ 🌸

## Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

### 1. Aphids

#### Symptoms:

- Clusters of soft-bodied insects on new growth
- Curled/distorted leaves; sticky honeydew (sometimes ants)

#### Treatment:

- Strong water spray knocks them off
- Insecticidal soap/horticultural oil if persistent
- Usually cosmetic unless new growth is heavily distorted



## 2. Spider Mites

### Symptoms:

- Fine yellow stippling/speckling on leaves
- Bronzing/dull look; leaf drop in heat
- Sometimes fine webbing (heavy infestations)

### Treatment:

- Hose undersides of leaves during hot spells (reduces mites + dust)
- Reduce drought stress (deep, consistent watering + mulch)
- Miticides only if damage is spreading and mites confirmed



### 3. Powdery Mildew

#### Symptoms:

- White/gray “powder” on leaf surfaces
- More common mid–late summer with warm days + cool nights

#### Treatment:

- Improve airflow (thin/prune, don’t crowd)
  - Avoid excess nitrogen (pushes tender growth)
  - Fungicides optional—often cosmetic on established plants
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### 4. Leaf Spot (Cercospora/Leaf Spot Complex)

#### Symptoms:

- Round to irregular purple/brown spots
- Yellowing and premature leaf drop late season

#### Treatment:

- Rake/remove fallen leaves (key)
  - Avoid overhead watering; water at base
  - Fungicides rarely needed for homeowners unless severe yearly defoliation
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### 5. Botrytis Blight (Flower/Leaf Blight)

#### Symptoms:

- Brown, water-soaked blotches on petals or leaves
- Flowers “melt” or brown rapidly during cool/wet weather

#### Treatment:

- Remove spent blooms and blighted flowers promptly
- Improve airflow; avoid wetting blooms when watering
- Fungicide only if it’s a repeating issue during prolonged wet periods

*(Generic blight photos vary widely by host; best field rule is: **wet + cool + rapid browning = suspect Botrytis, then sanitize.**)*

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## 6. Leaf Scorch / Drought Stress

### Symptoms:

- Browning/crispy leaf edges or tips
- Wilting during heat; foliage may look “burned”

### Treatment:

- Deep, consistent watering (not frequent light watering)
  - Mulch 2–3" (keep off stems)
  - Afternoon shade helps a lot on hot exposures
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## 7. Winter Dieback / Bud Kill

### Symptoms:

- Dead stem tips in spring; delayed leaf-out
- Bigleaf types may leaf out but **not flower** if buds were killed

### Treatment:

- Wait to prune until spring green-up (so you don't remove live wood)
  - Prune dead stems back to healthy buds/wood
  - Winter watering during warm/dry stretches; mulch roots
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## Treatment Timing Calendar – Hydrangea (Colorado Front Range)

Icons: 👁 Scout | ✂ Prune | 💧 Water | 🌿 Treat | 🧽 Sanitation

### March–Early April ( 🌸 )

- 👁 Check for winter dieback; wait to prune until you see bud swell
- 💧 Water during warm/dry spells if soil is dry

### Late April–May ( 🌸 )

- 👁 Watch new growth for aphids
- ✂ Light thinning for airflow (don't shear)
- 🌿 Treat aphids only if distortion builds

### June ( 🌸 ☀ )

- 💧 Keep moisture consistent as heat ramps up
- 👁️ Begin scouting for early leaf spot and mite stippling

### July–August (☀️)

- 💧 Deep watering + mulch (critical)
- 👁️ Watch for spider mites, powdery mildew, scorch
- 🧴 Treat mites early if stippling spreads; mildew sprays optional

### September–October (🍂)

- 🍂 Rake/remove spotted leaves; discard diseased debris
- 💧 Deep watering before soil freeze

### Winter (❄️)

- 💧 Winter water during warm spells (especially exposed sites)
- 🚫 No pesticide treatments needed

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### When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

#### 🔴 When to Worry (Action Needed)

- Repeated severe **spider mite** damage with defoliation
- **Major early leaf drop** from leaf spot year after year
- Significant **winter dieback** (large sections not leafing out)

#### 🟢 Mostly Cosmetic (Monitor Only)

- Light aphids with minimal distortion
- Mild powdery mildew late summer
- Small amount of late-season leaf spotting