

# Shrubs Native to the US That Grow Well in WNY- Including Two Hydrangeas

by Lyn Chimera

Yes, there are some hydrangeas that are native! Here are three shrubs that I just love.

**Smooth hydrangea** (*Hydrangea arborescens*) can be found in our area and in the southern part of the state. It is also native in Ohio and south to Oklahoma, and Georgia. It often is found growing on shaded slopes but will tolerate sun if the soil is moist. Smooth hydrangea has a wide growing zone 4-9.

This shrub is 2-3 feet high and 3-10 feet wide. It spreads by suckers and can get weedy in its natural habitat. In my garden (I've had it for 5 years) it has expanded through suckers to be a lovely compact shrub. The white flowers bloom in early summer. They are not round but almost flat and smaller than the hybridized shrubs we are used to seeing in nurseries. The blooms resemble lace cap hydrangeas

Smooth hydrangea blooms on new wood. It propagates through suckers and seeds easily. It's recommended to cut it down each fall. This helps prevent some of the suckering.

**Oakleaf hydrangea** (*Hydrangea quercifolia*) while not native this far north it does well here. It prefers sun to light shade, zone 5 to 9, and can get 10 feet tall and wide. This variety has "oak like" leaves and pyramid shaped white flowers up to 12 inches long that fade to pink then brown for the winter. The leaves, if grown mostly in sun, turn various shades of purple and red. It's often suggested as a native alternative for burning bush for fall color. This is a shrub that gives visual interest all season with brown exfoliating bark in winter.

The one I have in my garden is a cultivar named "Pee-Wee" which stays 3-4 feet high and wide. It's much easier to fit into a smaller garden space. Even though it is a cultivar it is utilized by pollinators so has a benefit for nature.

**A note on deer damage to hydrangeas:** In my garden in East Aurora deer have never touched my smooth hydrangea (maybe I shouldn't have put that in writing), however Oakleaf is a favorite and needs spraying or protection.

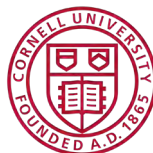
**Bottle brush buckeye** (*Aesculus parviflora*) is another shrub not native to our area but grows well here, zone 4-8. The first ones I ever saw were at the Cornell Plantations and it stopped me in my tracks. It can get quite large if grown in the sun, 4-8 feet tall and 6-15 feet wide. It spreads through suckers so this shrub needs room.

One of the amazing things about Bottle brush buckeye is that it grows in the sun or shade. I've had mine for over 15 years in dappled light and it blooms amazingly (see photo). The blooms look just like white bottle brushes and are about a foot long! These are followed by buckeye type nuts. Since mine is growing in shaded conditions it has not grown much larger. In shadier areas it doesn't get its pale-yellow fall color.

If you have a large sunny area that needs a big shrub or a shady area for a smaller one, give bottle brush buckeye a try.



Photo by Lyn Chimera



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