

Hydrangea macrophylla 'Shooting Star'

Enjoy snow white hydrangeas that have been forced for the holidays. They are wonderful as companion plants with red poinsettias and/or holiday greens.

Each of the 'Shooting Star' double flowers are shaped like a bright white star within a star. The white flowers continue to bloom for four to six weeks. As they mature, the flowers often develop a greenish hue. While indoors, keep plants in a cool spot where they'll receive plenty of light. Water whenever the top 1/2 inch of soil dries out. Under good conditions (very bright light and cool to moderate temperatures) plants will stay in flower until well into May. As flowers fade, snip them off.

After enjoying the indoor display, these hydrangeas can become good garden shrubs that grow about 5 to 6 feet tall and wide. After the danger of frost has passed and temperatures begin to warm, plant in the ground or in a container. They like part shade, regular water and fertilizer when new growth starts.

To air-dry the blooms: Cut off several whole flower heads when blossoms are fully open and still fresh. Put the stems in a small vase with about 2 inches of water in the bottom. As the water evaporates, flowers will begin to dry, turning a pale lime green in the process. When fully dried (in several weeks), snip individual blossoms from flower heads.