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How to Grow Spirea in the Garden: The Complete Guide



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Learn how to plant, grow, and care for spirea shrubs

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

Last Updated: March 27, 2025



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Spirea shrubs are easy to plant and hard to ignore. Their high flower power brings pollinators all summer, and a hedge of spirea will be abuzz with bee activity from mid-morning until dusk.

Learn about this fast grower that provides three-season interest in our growing guide.

About Spirea

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Spiraea species are among the easiest flowering shrubs to grow. The genus has long been cultivated as ornamentals in the United States, though native to Asia. The name Spirea is pronounced spy-ree-uh. You'll often see it matched with a cultivar, like 'Baby's breath' or 'Double Play Doozie'.

These shrubs are tough, cold hardy in USDA Zones 4 to 8, and some varieties are suitable down to Zone 3. When choosing a spirea, look at the cold hardiness, but check out the foliage, flower color, and timing. Some varieties begin blooming in spring, and others do not until summer, but all are long bloomers, continuing to put up new flowers for weeks if not months. Flowers bloom in pink, white, lavender, and red. Once they finish flowering, they have small, colorful leaves that turn gold, orange, or burgundy in the autumn!



Birchleaf spirea in morning sun in October.

Credit: Traveller70

With nearly 100 unique species, there are so many gorgeous options—one is sure to fit your garden! They grow in sizes ranging from 2 to 8 feet tall. Shorter, more compact varieties make excellent plantings along foundations, at the edge of rock gardens, around a mailbox, or along a path. Taller types can be planted in rows, providing a three-season privacy hedge full of color and foliage. A spirea or two planted together make an excellent splash of color when designing modern meadows, flowing English gardens, or even brightening up a spot near the property border or back corner. With their low-maintenance needs, they're perfect for covering less-than-fertile slopes or other hard-to-reach areas.

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Deer seem to walk past spirea, although I've seen a nibbled stem or two at the end of winter when they'll eat about anything. Wondering which plants get munched the most? [See our deer-resistant plants](#). Most importantly, spirea flowers are adored by hummingbirds, butterflies, and almost all kinds of pollinator bees.

Once established, spirea tolerate dry weather and won't need much attention other than looking at their pretty blooms. Spirea stems make excellent foliage and vase flowers and last longer than most of the stems in the bouquet.

Read Next

- [How to Grow Weigela Shrubs \(The Complete Guide\)](#)
- [How to Grow Mock Orange: The Complete Guide](#)
- [How to Grow Bellflowers: The Complete Guide to Campanula](#)

PLANTING

Spireas like full sun but will do fine in partial shade; although they may bloom a bit less, they'll still flower. They aren't picky about soil type or pH as long as the site is well draining.

When to Plant Spirea



*Spirea make beautiful border shrubs. Credit:
NGB*

Spirea bushes are usually purchased from the garden center as small or medium-sized potted shrubs but can also be found online. Plant as soon as possible in spring while the shrub is still dormant. Or, in warmer climates, they also do well when planted in mid-autumn. Water them weekly (if it doesn't rain an inch), and they'll be well-established after the first season.

How to Plant Spirea

For containerized spirea:

- Loosen the soil and prepare the site, removing stones, roots, turf, and weeds.
- If the plant is in a container, remove it by squeezing the edges of the plastic nursery pot. If the plant doesn't work free, try watering it thoroughly and waiting for 20 to 30 minutes.
- Trim any circling roots, loosen the edges of the rootball, and prepare a hole twice the

size of the original pot. The hole should have sloping sides like a bowl.

- Set the plant in the hole so the soil level of the plant's rootball matches or is slightly higher than that of the surrounding ground. Dig a bit deeper or fill in as necessary. Don't leave a hard layer at the bottom of the hole—loosen it up with your trowel.
- Replace the soil you removed, applying light but firm pressure as you go to eliminate air pockets around the roots.
- Water deeply immediately after planting.
- Add a layer of mulch to keep the weeds down and the soil moisture even. Avoid piling it up around the stem.

For bareroot spireas:

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- Remove the shrub from its packaging and soak the roots in a bucket of water for 1 to 2 hours.

- While the plant is soaking, prepare the planting site. Dig a hole slightly deeper than the roots and at least 6 inches wider on all sides. You want room to spread the roots rather than leaving them in a tube shape.
- Test fit the shrub in the hole and adjust as necessary by adding or removing soil. The spirea should be planted with the crown just at or slightly higher than the surrounding ground level. Look for the stain on the stem to indicate how deep it was grown at the nursery.
- Spread the roots, trim off any broken pieces, and fill in the soil, taking care to keep the shrub upright. It's easy to plant bare-root shrubs and trees crooked!
- When halfway filled, water the shrub, then continue filling the hole, removing air pockets as you go.
- When finished, water again.
- Apply a layer of mulch. Taller bare-root shrubs may need staking for the first month to keep them upright.

GROWING

Spireas will live for years in your yard, blooming and creating happy bees and butterflies. They're pretty much maintenance-free.

How to Grow Spirea

Like most other perennials, newly transplanted spireas will need some supplemental watering for the first season. Weekly deep waterings will help them establish quickly. After the first growing season, spireas don't usually need supplemental watering except during extreme dry weather.

Spireas can also be fertilized annually in early spring with a general-purpose slow-release fertilizer. A yearly top dressing of compost around the base of the shrub will improve the soil and keep it growing well. Reapply mulch as necessary to keep weeds down.

Deadheading older varieties will keep them blooming more vigorously and keep them from setting seed, but it isn't strictly necessary. Newer cultivars may not set seed, and many don't need to be deadheaded at all unless you wish for aesthetics.

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Types

- *S. x vanhouttei* ‘Renaissance’ displays blue-green foliage in summer with white blooms. The autumn color is a brilliant reddish-orange. It’s hardy in USDA Zones 3 to 8 and reaches 5 to 7 feet tall and wide.
- ‘Double Play Doozie’ is a hybrid spirea. It’s a seedless cultivar (no deadheading needed) with deep red spring foliage that changes to a verdant green in summer. Purple flowers continue all season. It is hardy in USDA Zones 3 to 9 and reaches 2 to 3 feet tall and wide.
- *S. betulifolia* ‘Pink Sparkler’ is a birchleaf spirea modestly sized at 3 to 4 feet high. It grows in a mounded shape, with large pink blooms and burgundy wine-red autumn color. It’s hardy in USDA Zones 3 to 8.
- *S. nipponica* ‘Snowmound’ is a rapidly growing spirea with a graceful arching shape. Branches arc outwards from the center, forming a fountain covered in white blooms. Usually 3 to 5 feet in height, but can grow larger on good sites. It’s hardy in USDA Zones 3 to 8.



White blossoms of *Spirea nipponica* ‘Snowmound’ in springtime. Credit:

Note: *Spirea japonica* is an aggressive spreader and is listed as an invasive species in several eastern states, including Virginia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Georgia. If you live in those areas, consider an alternative type.

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PESTS/DISEASES

Spireas are rarely bothered by pests or diseases, making growing them even easier. *Phytophthora* or *Pythium* root rots can be a problem in poorly drained areas.

WIT AND WISDOM

- The genus name *Spirea* comes from the Greek word for wreath, which refers to the showy flowers that appear along long arching branches that can be made into wreaths.
- Spireas bloom on old wood. Prune in summer after flowering. Thin the center of the shrub to promote air flow.
- Spirea can be pruned back hard, removing half or two-thirds of the plant if it has become leggy, woody, and out of control.

SHRUBS AND TREES

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture. [Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)

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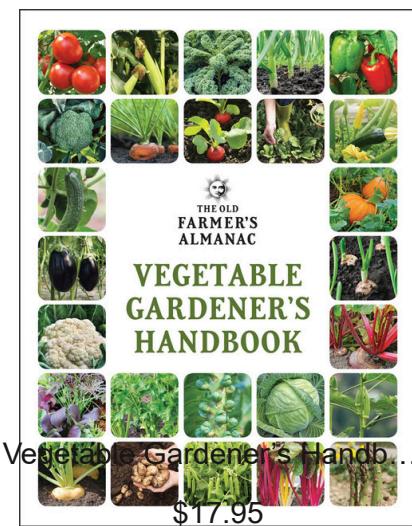
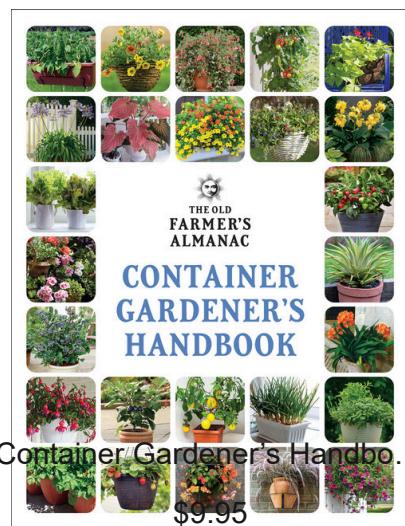
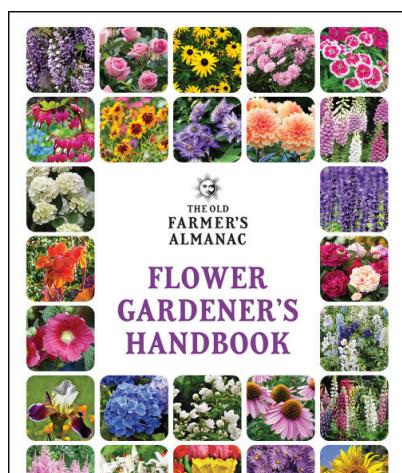
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