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PLANT CORNER

Welcome to another year of the Plant Corner, a series of profiles of STAR PERFORMERS among perennial garden plants from the folks at Chaska Farm & Garden.



Hydrangea arborescens **'Incrediball'**

Hydrangea 'Incrediball' makes our Plant Corner this week. It is a shrub and shrubs too are perennials, of course.

To begin, most of us will be familiar with snowball type hydrangeas and specifically 'Annabelle' hydrangea. This tough, versatile and shade-tolerant shrub boasts huge flat-round white cluster of flowers in June. They look like popcorn balls, a coarse yet stunning element in any landscape. These flowers eventually turn a light-limey green color and stay beautiful all summer, if picked green they dry to a splendid dried flower.

So far so good, but always bigger is better, que the new *Hydrangea 'Incrediball'* with even larger flower heads. Larger flowers on the same 4–5 ft. plant, 'Incrediball' was bred from the 'Annabelle' to produce stronger stems to eliminate flop. The flower heads got bigger too, now as big as your head!

The word hydrangea comes from hydra (water) and hydrangeas do like a moist soil. 'Incrediball' will tolerate full sun if watered well but not extra-hot spots. This type of hydrangea will take a drier site in shade, which makes them so useful. This plant is a real problem solver.

I like to let the dried, brown hydrangea heads stand through the snowbanks in winter, they do provide some welcome interest then. Then cut this shrub down to less than one foot before spring growth, the new shoots will come from near-ground level. This hydrangea needs no winter cover or soil acidification. (The blue hydrangea 'Endless Summer' does turn blue with acid soil.)

We will have starter plants of 'Incrediball' for the first time this summer, so don't miss out on this exciting new intro.

One other exiting new hydrangea this year is 'White Diamonds' a compact *Hydrangea paniculata* with pure white heads and dark green, leathery leaves.

Hydrangeas are definitely front and center these days with good reason, we just thought you should know.

— Tom

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