



## First Editions® Strawberry Sundae™ panicle hydrangea *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Rensun' PPAF

**P**anicle hydrangeas are prized for their late summer burst of flower color in our Minnesota landscapes. Breeders across the world have been working to improve the species, and in the last 10 years, many new cultivars have been introduced through the nursery trade.

Traditionally, *Hydrangea paniculata* have been large, imposing plants in the landscape. Even PeeGee hydrangea has been known to grow to 20 feet in height, and while it is a good hedge plant, it is too large for modern landscapes, especially foundation plantings. Newer hybrids have been improved significantly with more diminutive mature heights, many in the 7- to 8-foot range and, more recently, dwarf hybrids in the 4- to 5-foot mature height range.

Strawberry Sundae™ is a new introduction for 2014 in Bailey Nurseries First Editions® program. It is a compact form of Vanilla Strawberry™, a 2010 introduction.

Ultimately reaching a mature height of 4 to 5 feet and spread of 3 to 4 feet, Strawberry Sundae blends beautifully into foundation plantings. The cone-shaped flowers start to form in July and are proportional to the plant size, so there is no need to worry about oversized flowers flopping on this plant. When the flowers emerge, they are creamy white in color but will start to take on hues of pink and, finally, strawberry red as they mature through August and into September. The color first appears at the bottom of the cone and works its way up the flower. The color on the flower is very much affected by nighttime temperatures. When evenings are cooler, the red is more intense. (Summer 2013, for example, was a great year for panicle hydrangea color because of the cool nights in August.)

The foliage is bright green and a bit coarse in texture. You'll notice a vibrant



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With a mature height of 4 to 5 feet, Strawberry Sundae™ is a good choice for foundation plantings.

red stem color on this variety—all the newer hybrids with red in the flowers have red stems, an added bonus of color early in the season. Fall leaf color is yellow. All panicle hydrangeas are best grown in full-sun sites because they need at least 6 hours a day of full sun to thrive. They are not particular about soil but will not tolerate extremely wet or extremely dry sites. There are no major pests or diseases that affect panicle hydrangeas. This variety works in all areas of Minnesota as it is hardy to USDA Zone 3.

Flowers are produced on the current season's growth, so pruning is best done in early spring while the plant is dormant before it leafs out. It will be easy to keep this plant in check as it is naturally compact, but some shaping, as a young plant, will be helpful.

You'll find Strawberry Sundae in local garden centers. It adapts well to fall planting, provided it gets adequate water during establishment. **ng**

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