

Smooth Leaf Hydrangea

- Smooth hydrangeas (*Hydrangea arborescens*) are the **most versatile** in the hydrangea family.
- **Arborescens** means tree-like. This species grows into a loose, wide branching deciduous shrub.
- Common names include **Wild Hydrangea, Smooth Hydrangea, Smooth Leafed Hydrangea, 7 Bark Hydrangea and Snowball Hydrangea.**
- Their preferred growing areas are between U.S. Department of Agriculture zones 3 and 8, which accounts for their popularity in both Northern and Southern regions. Here in Napa it is USDA Zone 9b, place in full shade with regular water.

The **Wild Hydrangea** native area spans from New York south to Florida and west to Iowa, Missouri, Oklahoma and Louisiana.

- It grows 3-5' and as wide.
- Ovate serrated leaf, delicate almost flat white cluster blooms June-Sept
- Attracts butterflies
- Has year-round interest: In the fall the leaves turn yellow, interesting seed capsules hang after flowering and the bark peels.
- Useful in natural, woodland gardens.

The most popular cultivar has been **Annabelle**

In 1910 Harriet Kirkpatrick was horseback riding along a wooded trail outside of Anna, Illinois. She noticed a wild hydrangea with large, more robust snowball-like blooms. She dug it up and planted it in her garden, sharing it with her friends over the years. 50 years later and only 20 miles away, it finally was brought to the attention of JC McDill, a noted horticulturalist in urban Illinois. He propagated it in a nursery for 2 years and studied it further before releasing it to the public. He initially wanted to name it Ballerina but decided that the honor needs to go to the Belles of Anna who discovered it. Hence, the name **Annabelle**.

It was the 1970s when **Annabelle** really soared.

- It is a very showy specimen with pure white nearly round flower clusters up to 8-12"
- Best at being cold hardy.
- Useful in cottage gardens and has become synonymous with Snowball.
- It is important to see your Annabelle in bloom before you purchase it to insure it isn't another wild form under that name.
- 2010 the first pink Annabelle was made as **Invincible Spirit I** and later **II**. This adds rich color in summer gardens and is excellent in native, mixed borders or perennial beds.
- 2009 (four years after the Incredible Movie came out) **Incrediball** name was trademarked. This is slightly larger shrub at 4-5', Has 4 times the number of flower clusters in it and has Stronger, thicker stems (Annabelle was getting a reputation for flopping over in the rain). As such, Incrediball is useful as a hedge and foundation planting.

Parting Note:

The name 'Snowball' is used for another plant, the Viburnum . This 'Snowball' plant also has nearly round, pure

white flower clusters but thrives grows in sun.
