

CAPE COD HYDRANGEA SOCIETY

Spring 2016

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mary Kay and I had another great New Zealand - Australia vacation this past winter. Hydrangeas, as always, were a central focus, especially in NZ. Good weather with more normal summertime rainfall than our previous 2013 and 2014 visits painted the NZ country-side a very lovely green. *Hydrangea macrophylla* blooming was very good and we spent time with several of our cut flower grower friends and visited a couple of hydrangea-centric container growers too. Trout fishing was also excellent - with possibly some of my best successes ever in this exceptional and very uncrowded place.

Not quite the same temperate growing conditions in Australia but we did spend several days with good friend and horticulturalist Don Schofield at his superb 'Winterwood' garden in the Blue Mountains about 75 miles WNW of Sydney. Some of you may recall Don attended the Hydrangeas 2015 Conference at Heritage last July. Don's garden likely contains the largest hydrangea collection in Australia and his 3300 ft. elevation provides a better climate for the *H.macs*.

But we're happy to be back home on the Cape and getting ready for a very busy hydrangea summer. Here's a quick rundown on the major events the CCHS is involved with.

Hydrangea Festival 2016 - Hydrangea University

Dean Joan Brazeau and her committee have Hydrangea University progressing very well. This all things hydrangea event will be the major 'opening act' of this year's Festival. It will be held in the Knight Auditorium at Barnstable High School on July 8 beginning at 8:00 am. Full program details are featured on our Society Website.

Hydrangea Festival 2016 - CCHS Member Garden Tours

Mary Kay Condon and her helpers have arranged a great selection of members' gardens for this portion of this year's Festival. Return gardens from last year include Peg Black, Jan Kasper, Dan Pessoni, and Yours Truly. Newcomer gardens are those of Gloria Buxbaum and Linda Coven. My special thanks to all - it's great to have such strong support! Garden details and location directions will soon be posted on our website and similarly on the CC Hydrangea Fest site.

The CCHS Display Garden at Heritage

Betsey Godley and her dedicated and growing Maintenance Team have already begun the 2016 program in the Display Garden with very successful efforts on April 22nd and 29th. Bi-weekly sessions will continue into fall with an occasional call for special help - like final prep prior to the start of the Festival. Further plantings and re-plantings are in the mix too. You can learn much from these special digging - and learning - work sessions.

Heritage has scheduled a full complement of hydrangea activities for the Festival; this info is available in the program guide on their website. This will be an excellent opportunity to join the CCHS Docent Team and become involved with telling the good story about our wonderful Display Garden. Betsey Godley will be a contact person along with Pat Vigliorolo who has taken charge of scheduling our Docent Team for all Festival events.

CCHS Website - Judy Bartha

Judy continues to do a super job of maintaining our website in tip-top fashion. Our presence on Facebook and now with PayPal is an example of her commitment to this important segment of our Society's presence. We have initiated this trial with PayPal to facilitate on-line registration for Hydrangea U and handle CCHS membership renewals. Do go online and become familiar with the available info on our site. We'll be posting more details - those critical cultural 'secrets' every hydrangea gardener wants to know.

Summer 2016 looks to be another exciting one for the CCHS. As I have mentioned before - it all looks very good for us going forward. So do join in; there's lots of interesting hydrangea related things happening. See you all soon.

~Mal

Mal's Corner

It's May 2 as I type this edition of my 'Corner' and Spring on the Cape still appears to be a long way off. And it's been much too dry as well for April; hopefully we will get some much needed rain this week. As always, we gardeners can usually find something disappointing about the weather and this past month has given us plenty of reasons.

January through March was a much more moderate winter than the previous two years and the predicted El Nino pattern did prevail for the most part - good moisture and no sustained cold except for a few mostly singular bitter days. April, however, started very badly with wet snow on the 5th followed by a very profound spring freeze on the 6th. Temps on the Cape dropped as low as 20 degrees - it was 22 at Heritage and remained well below freezing for several hours. Consequently, some serious freeze damage occurred on those *H. mac* cultivars prone to early bud-break and located in more open areas. The unfurling leaves of the new basal stem growth were particularly vulnerable and damage was severe on far too many plants.

April remained downright chilly overall and continued growth has been very slow. Even the next 10 day forecast predicts daily highs only in the mid 50's with nighttime lows dropping into the low to mid 40's. Not exactly spring-like conditions.

Winter Protection

We were very optimistic that the material and technique improvements we utilized in the Display Garden at Heritage back in December would boost *H.mac* bud survival substantially this winter. Removal of our covered plants was delayed until April 22 - well past the early freeze last month. The results were not dramatic; in fact, several of our unprotected *H. macs* looked quite comparable to their well protected neighbors. Tip bud survival overall was poor and stem bud retention was not dramatically improved either. So we're back to the drawing board for some further analysis, knowing well that trial & error is essential to finding better ways to protect our most tender and very loved cultivars. We will report further at our Fall Meeting in September.

Pruning - there's still time

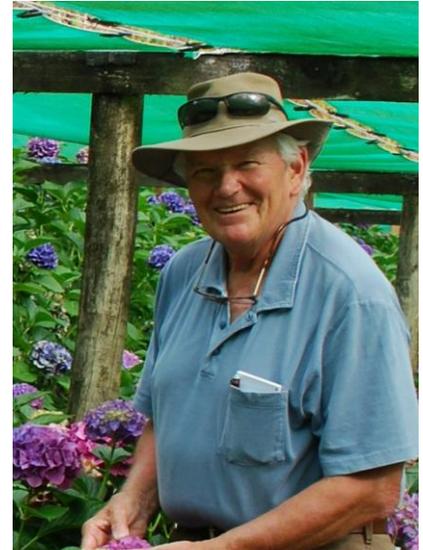
The prolonged chill has, however, provided a small plus - we still have a little time remaining to complete our *H.macrophylla* pruning. Buds along the stems are opening now and in a few days they will open more progressively. When this happens it will be more difficult to reach down inside the plant to remove dead wood without knocking the buds off. So, do try to complete your 'internal' pruning asap. You can, of course, delay your 'final' upper stem pruning until bud swell is clearly evident - which may well be mid-May this year. Remember also the other spring pruning time plant maintenance chores you should be doing - fertilizing and pH control for bloom color adjustment.

What about the Other Species

The *anomalas* (climbers), *arborescens*, *quercifolias*, *serratas*, and *paniculatas* all look great everywhere I've examined them this spring. I've noted these species in order of their respective bud break - and the order for you to keep in mind pruning-wise. *Macrophyllas* are typically the first to emerge from winter dormancy - and given their inherent fragility - they always consume the largest percentage of our available garden maintenance time. Fortunately, we have the other five players that are much hardier and require far less attention. I love them for these significant reasons and am pleased to report they all look good this spring. We should enjoy another excellent blooming season - an almost 'guaranteed' prediction every year. It says a lot about what hydrangea species we may wish to add to our home gardens in future.

Mulching

You've heard me before on this subject. Mulch is an important positive contributor to plant health but when added excessively, the accumulating deposit creates a problem. The increased depth begins to cover the plant's base, eventually shutting out sunlight and ceasing the development of new basal growth. Concurrently, the



major upright stems that form the framework of the plant often develop independent root systems (a process called ‘stooling’) and often become a group of weak fragmented sections while the central core of the plant’s base eventually dies, buried under the accumulated mulch. The resulting plant is but a poor relative of the original.

Best Practices: Apply 2” to 3” of mulch tapering this depth to zero at the plant’s base. Never push mulch under the plant. Add ONLY enough mulch annually to maintain this 2” to 3” depth. With proper plant to plant spacing, only a minimal amount of the mulched surface should be visible at flowering time. And isn’t it the blooms we want to see – not the mulch!

My best for good flower development over the next 2 months from all your hydrangeas.

‘Mal’s Corner’ - Hydrangea Farm
Mal Condon, May 2, 2016

Display Garden Pruning

Pruning sessions were held in the display garden on April 22nd and April 29th. It was great to see a good number of volunteers turn out each day. On the first day Mal, assisted by Linda Coven, showed everyone how to unwrap the winter protection, and sent volunteers off in pairs to remove the protection and then do the spring cleanup. The first two photos below show the garden before and after the two-hour session.



Cheerful volunteers: Nancy Warren, Emory Anderson, Gail Johnson, Linda Coven, and Marie Gates.



The Barbara Team: Barbara White, Barbara Marsala, Barbara Spillane



Lots of learning opportunities with Mal on the scene!



The following week (a chillier day) this team completed the job. Thanks, everyone!

Display Garden Volunteer Dates for 2016

Betsey Godley who coordinates work sessions in the garden wants everyone to know there are plenty of opportunities to work in the garden this year. Every time a member volunteers it adds to the cumulative effort that keeps the garden in good shape. Says Betsey, *“I’m sure everyone knows that the CCHS Display Garden will be an important part of Hydrangea Fest. I’m grateful that many members signed up to volunteer in the display garden, however we want everyone to have a chance to help out. This is our opportunity for “hands on” work and learn in the garden. We work closely with Mal to learn the latest in hydrangea cultivation. He might not be in the garden for every work session, but he will often come by to help, teach, and guide us. Below is a list of dates...We are generally in the garden from 10am-noon, but occasionally switch or cancel due to weather. All you need to bring are your favorite pruners, weeding tool, gloves, and a willingness to help out! This is a great way to meet and socialize with the other CCHS members. Please email me if you would like to sign up. Thank you in advance!”*

Betsey <betseygodley@gmail.com>

May 20 June 3 June 17 July 1 July 15 July 29 August 12 August 26 Sept 9 Sept 23



Betsey Godley

This is a new feature in the newsletter. It has been added because many of us have noticed how much better we get to know each other when working together on various CCHS projects. And when we know each other better we enjoy spending time together on projects. The one reinforces the other. This feature will be one more way to get to know fellow members. One of the reasons we are thriving as a club is that we don't *have* to work together; we *want* to work together.

This feature will focus attention on people who have made great contributions to the hydrangea society, often behind the scenes.

Betsey does wonders in the display garden as she nurtures both plants and volunteers. With her calm and gentle manner she makes work in the garden more like *play* in the garden.

Betsey is co-chair with Roberta Gough of our display garden at Heritage. This coming year will be her third year in that position where they work closely with Mal to coordinate the volunteers for the garden maintenance work sessions. As Betsey says, "Mal provides a superior level of expertise. We provide the willing hands to complete the tasks. In the past years we have done everything from weeding and pruning to the installation of the new drip irrigation." She wants members to know that work in the garden is really a labor of love. "We don't ask people to do more than they feel comfortable with. Some members may have physical or other limitations, but everyone is welcome. We would never expect people to dig trenches or spend the whole morning on their knees, although many members are happy and able to do those tasks. Most of our garden mornings are spent in happy companionship while we work together on light chores. Any day that we plan a heavy workload, we'll advise the volunteers in advance, and we understand if people need to change their schedules."

Betsey is a twelfth generation Cape Codder with ancestors who lived in Sandwich. Some are buried in the ancient graveyard on Grove Street so she feels a deep connection to that land. "I might be dipping my hands in the same soil where my ancestors gardened or hunted. Further, as a small child, my parents brought me to the woods off Shawmee Road to picnic and enjoy the Dexter rhodies." She said there is no part of Heritage that doesn't give her joy and that it's always a pleasure to share the garden with our volunteers and also with the Heritage visitors.

She became a member of the hydrangea society when her friend and neighbor, Geri Anderson, invited her to join so she could go on the garden tour. "I was impressed with the gardens we saw, and even more impressed by the kind and generous hosts. I was hooked!"

Betsey grew up in Hyannis and has been married for 36 years. She and her husband John met in elementary school. They have one daughter who is a budding gardener. Betsey has degrees in sociology and anthropology and spent most of her working life as a rural route letter carrier. "Now that I'm retired," she says, "it's nice to be able to pursue my own interests and continue to learn and grow. Working in the display garden has really improved my garden skills. I'm also a volunteer and member of the Academy of Lifelong Learning where I take classes in literature and history."

She describes her personal garden (in Marstons Mills) as "a bit messy! My home already had some interesting gardens when I moved in about 10 years ago. I've tried to keep the original owner's design while I added my own touches. I'm a big fan of daylilies (pun intended!) The first tree purchase for my current home was a fringe tree (*Chionanthus Virginicus*), because I've always loved the one by the administration building at Heritage! I also love wildflowers, especially the ones that attract and nurture wildlife. My garden has common milkweed, goldenrod, and stinging nettles among the flowers. Bees, butterflies, toads, turtles, and salamanders are always welcome. I can appreciate the high standards of a lovely public garden like Heritage, but my own garden is much more relaxed; a place to read or daydream."

Betsey says she is interested in the natural world and is always happiest outside. She is an active member of her local lakes group. ("We work to preserve the ecology of our lake environment.") She counts herring, hikes conservation land and beaches, kayaks, and observes and photographs birds and insects. "My husband and I enjoy travel, especially off the beaten path. Our last long trip was traveling up the Amazon River. I also own two parrots or, rather, they own me!"

Betsey's photography skills are impressive. (See following page.) We are lucky to have such a talented, interesting, and dedicated person among us. If you choose to volunteer at our display garden at Heritage you get a bonus; you get to spend time with Betsey.



BETSEY
GODLEY
PHOTOGRAPHY



CCHS Spring Meeting – May 14, 2016

Despite the general busy-ness of May, conflicting events (like the Master Gardener Plant Sale), and the beautiful weather luring us outside to the garden, the meeting at the Harwich Community Center was well attended. Those present got to enjoy a presentation by Jeanne Branson of Pine Tree Nursery in Chatham, a preview of coming attractions during the business portion of the meeting, an excellent assortment of refreshments, the pleasure of catching up with fellow members, and, to top it all off, a door prize drawing of C.L. Fornari's latest book, *The Cocktail Hour Garden*, donated by Mal and Mary Kay Condon.



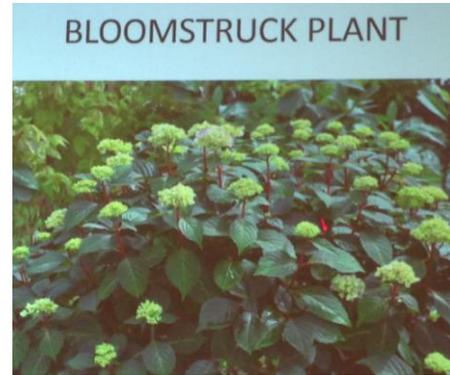
Jeanne Branson
Pine Tree Nursery & Landscaping
200 Route 137
South Chatham

Hydrangeas!
How to Keep the Love Affair Going Strong

Jeanne Branson provided lively and interesting commentary about hydrangeas with details about individual varieties and some quite lovely photos of hydrangeas used to good effect in the landscape. (See photos below.) She brought a handout detailing free workshops held at the nursery and when this was mentioned some audience members said they had attended some of the workshops and that they were very well done. (Go to www.pinetreenuresery.com for a list of upcoming workshops.) Jeanie Gillis also had positive comments about this nursery.



It was helpful to see this flower in different colors based on the soil.



Reddish-purple stems were noted.



Jeanne noted a trend toward green flowers. 'Everlasting Jade' flowers are green and cream. A bonus with this variety = red edges in the fall as the plant matures as shown above.

VANILLA STRAWBERRY

- Paniculata
- Red stems
- Can be pruned as standard
- Creamy white to pink to dark strawberry
- 6' tall and wide

INCREDIBALL

- Smooth leaf
- 4-5' tall and wide
- Up to 12" flowers
- Creamy white
- July to Sept

Jeanne encouraged questions and comments during her presentation. 'Vanilla Strawberry' provoked a discussion of *Hydrangea paniculata* varieties used as standards (shrubs made to look tree-like by letting one or more strong stems form the "trunk" of the plant). 'Incrediball' has sturdier stems than 'Annabelle'. Mal's comment was that it is "a good plant for its habit".



A sampling of the lovely pictures showing hydrangeas used in the landscape.

The Business Meeting

Hydrangea University

Joan Brazeau

Hydrangea University is the “Kick Off” event for the 2nd annual Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival. Hydrangea University is a seminar that will both inspire and educate gardeners on the genus hydrangea. It will be held from 8:00 am-12:00 noon on Friday, July 8, 2016. Hydrangea University will register participants and serve a continental breakfast beginning at 8:00. The cost of attending is \$45.00 per person. Tickets are available for sale only through our website thecapcodhydrangeasociety.org. You may use a credit card or PayPal. Knight Auditorium at Barnstable High School will be the setting for this comprehensive learning experience. Mal Condon, plants man, will educate participants about the care and planting of hydrangeas in his talk, “Success with Hydrangeas”. In her talk, “Designing with Hydrangeas”, landscape designer Peg Black will teach the best ways of incorporating hydrangeas into your garden. Joan Harrison, author, will identify which hydrangeas to consider for your home garden in her talk, “The Best of the Best: New Varieties and Old Favorites”. Each participant will receive a “goodie bag” and a small hydrangea. This event promises to be the highlight of the Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival. I am counting on the support of CCHS as always.

CCHS thanks the following companies for sponsoring Hydrangea University: Agway of Cape Cod and South Dennis, Brick Kiln farm, Green Spot Nursery, Gregory Lombardi Design Inc, Parterre, and Crocker Nursery.

Evening in the Garden

Joan Brazeau

Evening in the Garden will be held on July 26th from 6:30-8:00. (Rain date July 27th) It was brought to our attention that we did not have a social event where our spouses or significant others were included. Evening in the Garden is just such a social event. A time for our members to get together, enjoy and socialize. CCHS will be picking up the tab for wine, lemonade and appetizers. Every member may bring their spouse or a guest. The get together will be held at the Brazeau Garden in Yarmouth Port. There will be an opportunity to RSVP as the date gets closer. Please save the date!

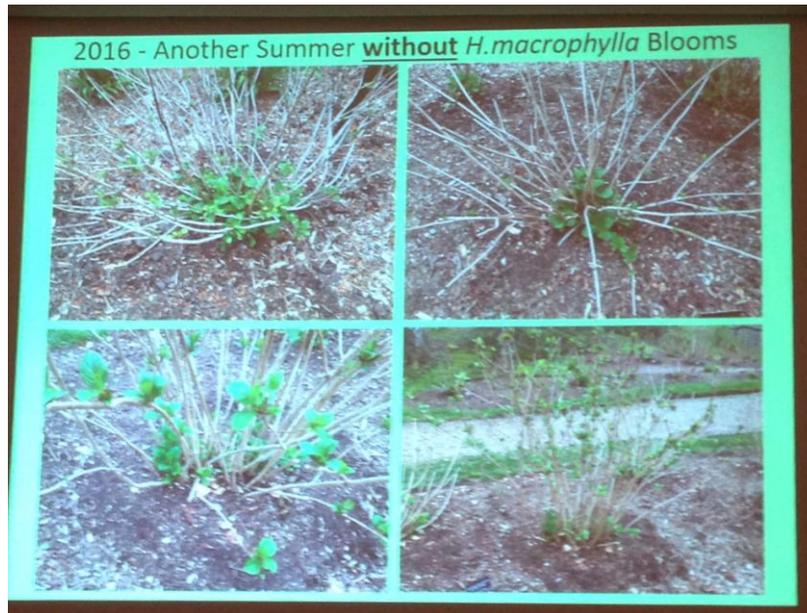
Save the Date Events

Lunch Bunch	June 14	Donna Robinson’s garden, 404 Harwich Road, Brewster
Propagation Workshops	July 6 & 20	Bartha’s, 110 Lookout Road, Yarmouth Port
Hydrangea University	July 8	Barnstable High School
Evening in the Garden	July 26	Brazeau Garden, 17 Thacher Street, Yarmouth Port
Potluck Dinner	August 24	King’s Way
Fall Meeting	Sept. 10	Harwich Community Center

Mal Condon's Report

Mal shared the news that in addition to his position as Curator of the CCHS garden at Heritage, he has taken on additional duties as a consultant for Heritage for all the hydrangeas on the property. The hydrangea garden expansion is a central focus (it was described by Heritage in a recent mailing as the "North American Hydrangea Test Garden") and Mal showed pictures of some of the hardscaping now taking place. The garden expansion will take place over five years. Our club is supporting this effort financially and in return Mal has worked out a wonderful benefit for CCHS members. On the 4th Thursday of the month from April-October CCHS members will be admitted to Heritage Gardens free. Please note, you must show your membership badge for this benefit, and only members are admitted free, not non-members who may be accompanying members.

That was the good news. The bad news is that 2016 is not likely to be a good year for hydrangeas. Mal showed photos of what many hydrangeas are looking like now (see below) and then commented on the likely causes.



Even though the past winter was mild, there were two very cold events with damaging results. The first occurred in February with about four consecutive nights with freezing temperatures. This probably weakened the plants as they may not have gone completely into dormancy considering the mild winter that preceded it. Then came April 6th when overnight temperatures were freezing from 11pm to 8am. (That night 22° was recorded at Heritage.) So, a double whammy. April's average temperature was 43°, about 5° below normal. Mal urged everyone to use a cautious approach in cutting back stems as their growth is likely behind schedule, but by Memorial Day it should be clear what's going to grow and what isn't. His conclusion? Grow more paniculatas!



Welcome, New Members!

When new members were asked to stand at the meeting we were delighted to see about ten people standing. Welcome! We hope you enjoy our hydrangea society as much as we do!

New member, Nancy Warren.

Hydrangea Festival July 8-17, 2016

Details are available about the second annual hydrangea festival at the website of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.capecodchamber.org/hydrangea-fest>). Lots of information about the festival is available on our own website (www.thecapecodhydrangeasociety.org) including the gardens our members will have open for the benefit of the CCHS. The gardens of the following members will be on the tour: Mal and Mary Kay Condon (July 9, Yarmouth Port); Gloria Buxbaum (July 12, South Harwich); Jan Kaspar (July 14, Sandwich); Linda Coven (July 15, West Yarmouth); Peg Black (July 16, Chatham); and Dan Pessoni (July 17, East Orleans). See our website for garden details and directions.

Speakers during Hydrangea Festival 2016:

July 8	Mal Condon, Peg Black, Joan Harrison	Hydrangea University Barnstable High School
July 9	Jeanie Gillis	"High on Hydrangeas" Snow's Garden Center, Orleans
July 10	Mal Condon	"Hydrangeas in Containers" Highfield Hall, Falmouth
July 16	Joan Harrison	"The Colorful World of Hydrangeas" Soares Garden Center, Falmouth

Newsletter Editor: Joan Harrison joanofma@hotmail.com

Cape Cod Hydrangea Society
P.O. Box 681
South Dennis, MA 02660