

CAPE COD HYDRANGEA SOCIETY

Winter 2016



Photo by Joan Harrison

Hydrangeas can take on a lacy look in winter.
A plant for all seasons!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

On January 21st, I held my first CCHS Board Meeting. Attendance was very good considering the time of year and all officers and committee chairs contributed to provide their respective plans for 2016. Here are a few of the highlights.

Treasury - Ginny McCabe

After almost all expenses have been paid, our bank account is solidly positive.

2016 Spring and Fall General Meetings - Harwich Community Center

May 14 is confirmed and September 10 is our requested date pending HCC's 2016 schedule approval due early in March. Do save these Saturday 10:00 am dates on your calendars.

Vice-Presidential Duties - Martha Harrison

Martha is now responsible for getting speakers for our general meetings. She will welcome your recommendations about speakers you may have heard at other garden related events that you think may have a good story to share with our audience. Martha will also act as a general member of the Ways & Means Committee helping with various functions of this important group.

Membership - Emily Woudenberg

The dogged determination of Emily and Ginny and helpers has resulted in us now having 144 **paid** members! Congratulations to all!

Hydrangea Festival 2016

As I mentioned in our fall newsletter, Dean Joan Brazeau has done an absolutely superb job of organizing Hydrangea University - a mainstream all things hydrangea event to be held in the Knight Auditorium at Barnstable High School on July 8. It will be the major 'opening act' of this year's Festival and attendance should be very strong. All systems are a go for Hydrangea U so do save this date also. Our speakers will be sharing all sorts of great info you just might want to hear first-hand.



Further on the Festival Project

My Mary Kay has stepped forward to be the CCHS Garden Tour Organizer for the Festival. Her recent letter outlined the program and the target plans for having (6) CCHS member gardens open for a single day tour during the July 9 to 17 time slot. Three gardens have been committed and MK will be delighted to hear from a few more of you.

The CCHS Display Garden at Heritage - Betsey Godley

Given our Maintenance Team's very successful 2015 program, this year's schedule will continue in like manner and extend the bi-weekly sessions into the fall. Further plantings and re-plantings are in the mix too so be prepared to join in for these special digging - and learning - work sessions.

Further to the Display Garden

Heritage is scheduling a busy Festival week of their own and the CCHS Garden Docent Team will be asked to provide in-garden 'walk & talk' sessions each day of the Festival. Betsey Godley will be a contact person along with Pat Vigliorolo who has taken charge of scheduling our Docent Team for all Festival events. Here's a great opportunity for CCHS members to become involved and enjoy talking about our exceptional hydrangea plantings in a wonderful setting.



CCHS Website - Judy Bartha

Despite recent back surgery, Judy was on hand to share the great work she's been doing with the website. She has mastered the data input chore very well and is coordinating effectively with the

external web design team. We now have a Facebook link which could become a vehicle for specific hydrangea cultural exchanges between members.

Propagation - Tom Bartha

Given this past year's successful 'work & learn' trials via advance sign-up, Tom - and Judy too - want to continue this practice of scheduled work events involving all aspects of making more plants - from propagation via cuttings to potting up mature, saleable plants. And they are planning to have plants available for our Spring Meeting.



Judy Bartha



Tom Bartha

2016 should be another exciting one for the CCHS. Our membership continues to grow, our website is developing nicely, and Festival presence is now major. Overall, the 'Word is Out' about us. So do join in and participate; there are lots of interesting hydrangea related things doing. And we'd love to have you be a part of it!



~Mal

SAVE THE DATES

May 14
July 8
September 10

Spring Meeting
Hydrangea University
Fall Meeting

Mal's Corner

As I type this Winter 2016 segment of 'Mal's Corner', Mary Kay and I are semi-midway in our long air journey to New Zealand - the Promised Land for our beloved hydrangea species, *H.macrophylla* - and definitely one of my most favorite places on this good earth.

We departed Boston early this morning (February 1st) and are now in San Francisco for an extended downtime before our overnight flight on to Auckland. After a total transit time of 27 hours, we will arrive very early tomorrow morning (the 3rd, local NZ time) having lost a day crossing the international date-line. But even at 6:00 am, the sun will be up, and being in the southern hemisphere, we'll enjoy August-like weather and day-length.

Yes, it is a very long journey - and that's one of the reasons it's such an extraordinary place. The climate is superb, much like our Cape Cod weather in spring, summer, and autumn (the local translation for 'fall'). Winters, however, are very mild by contrast - just occasional morning frosts before dawn with mid-day temps rising into the mid 40's, low 50's. Given this very temperate climate, *H.mac* blooming is totally predictable, brilliant and extensive.



We've been to this part of the world many times and it never fails to pull us back one more time. We'll be visiting several longtime grower friends - most of whom produce *H.macrophyllas* as cut flowers for Asian and Western European floral markets. Bloom quality is breathtaking, plant growth is remarkable, and several of our old reliable US varieties remain popular choices for the cut flower producers - 'Heinrich Siedel', 'Renate Steiniger', 'Masja', and 'Holstein'. Blue was the dominant bloom color for many years but pinks and reds have become especially popular with Asian markets so 'Pink Bouquet', 'Holstein' as a pink, and 'Masja' as a red, are now produced in quantity. More recently, local 'sports' and open-pollinated hybrids are lovely additions to this higher pH production and we are looking seriously at adding a couple of these new cultivars to our production. Cut-flower plant culture is quite different than our normal landscape plant production and we always look forward to learning and better understanding some of these practices to see if they have potential in our nursery.

We'll be commenting more on our hydrangea travels in future editions of this 'Corner'. Now let's share some garden chores you can be undertaking very soon on the Cape.

Winter Weather - 2016 so far

The science community's predicted El Nino weather pattern seems to be holding court - moist but not cold. By my quick numbers analysis, January temps were very mild - much like our last easy winter of 2013 and the preceding 6 years. Hopefully this current trend will continue. Based on this hopeful scenario, here are some interesting thoughts for you.

Winter Pruning

If the current weather pattern continues, you may well get some nice days later in February and pruning activities can be a very worthwhile undertaking in late winter. If you didn't get a chance to address your paniculatas or arborescens in the fall, this may be an opportune time. Watch the weather forecast; pick a decent sunny day that the winds are tolerable, dress warmly and carry an extra pair of gloves inside your outer jacket for switching off when your fingers get too cold. You can also address your larger *macrophyllas* too - especially the 'biggeys' that haven't had an interior purging in a few years as you can see into the plant's base more easily now. Just concentrate on removing the old canes showing exfoliating (peeling) bark, remembering to sever the canes as close to the ground as possible.

But do remember to postpone your top stem pruning of your *H.macs* until bud swell is clearly evident - typically at least to late March. Also keep those old bed sheets and blankets folded in a pile near the back door for quick installation when an April freeze is predicted and you need to spread them quickly over your earliest varieties to break bud.

Winter Protection

Here's a little variation on our continuing technique improvement practices - this time applied to the fig trees we've planted this fall. Didn't get to do this until we returned home mid-January but here's what our work looks like. Yes, it is a bit 'over the top' but what can you expect from a scientific gardening madman - who loves freshly picked figs enough to make this work for a plant that is just marginally hardy in our climate.



So far this winter, our unprotected *H. macs* look pretty comparable to their well protected neighbors. But we only expand our knowledge by moving ahead with trials dedicated to learning more about what we're doing. And we will be reporting further later this year on our technique modifications in the Display Garden and at home.

So do pick a nice day later this month and get out in your garden for a little special pruning. It's a great break from being house-bound in winter. And your hands won't get very dirty either.

All my best,

Mal Condon Feb.1, 2016

REPORT: HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

Mal and Mary Kay Condon hosted a holiday open house on December 1st. Guests were treated to a fun gathering where the roar of conversation attested to what we already know: Cape Cod Hydrangea Society members enjoy getting together, especially in lovely surroundings with excellent food and drink. Thank you, Mal and Mary Kay for a truly enjoyable evening!



Pat Vigliorolo and Judy Bartha bedecked themselves festively for the party.



Judy Deal (left) and Elizabeth Payne (right) with Elizabeth's sister Christine and brother-in-law Ray. They had just surprised Elizabeth by flying in for a visit from England. Good timing!



Clearly guests entered into the holiday festive spirit.
Left: Pat Vigliorolo with Linda Coven.
Right: the charmingly color-coordinated Peter and Judy Berrien.



Ginny McCabe, Joy Bogstad, and Barbara Dunn



Celine Federici and Donna Laemmler

Just think, all of us were brought together by our mutual love of hydrangeas, but look at the bonus: all the wonderful friendships that have developed over the years. We have been blessed!





Everlasting™ Revolution
Photo from Wayside Gardens online catalog

Joan Harrison will speak at Hydrangea University on

Plant Selection: New Varieties and the Tried and True.

One of the new ones she will cover is Everlasting™ Revolution, pictured above.

A recent (2/22/16) article in *The New York Times* online (“New York Today: Power to the Flowers”), mentions hydrangeas prominently. The first section dealt with flower sellers having a tough time with low demand between Christmas and springtime. “The shops sell freshly cut blooms, potted plants and arrangements of artificial flowers to designers, hotels and restaurants, or to people buying hydrangeas for loved ones.” (Editor’s note: **hydrangeas** are the only plant mentioned by name.)

Later in the article, hydrangeas got more coverage: “While our state flower is a rose, we in the city apparently have a thing for hydrangeas.” This statement was followed by a few details about macrophyllas and the climbing hydrangea, petiolaris. “Perfect to block out that neighbor who’s always peering in your window.”

Someone was quoted as saying, “People love, love, love hydrangeas.”

(But of course!)

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