



CAPE COD HYDRANGEA SOCIETY

SUMMER 2020

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www.thecapecodhydrangeasociety.org

Summer 2020

In the year 2020...no one could have predicted this year's events as they have transpired. We do, however, persist at acclimating and doing our part during this unprecedented time of our lives. For starters, we cancelled events that would have unnecessarily exposed our membership to COVID-19, including our general membership meeting in May and our annual summer "Wine in the Garden" party.



We will have to wait and see what September brings with respect to future planned events, but at this point we are going forward with our "Lunch Bunch" gatherings, starting August 12th.

The Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival went on as planned. While attendance and sponsorships were down for Hydrangea University, our first attempt at a virtual presentation was well received. Thanks to coordinator "Dean" Joan Brazeau; procurer of sponsors Cathy Sampson; speakers Joan Harrison, Stacey Hirvela and Mal Condon; and Heritage's Elizabeth Fort who was responsible for the mechanics of this year's virtual seminar.

Hydrangea Festival garden tours brought in \$9,710 this year as compared to \$4,910 in 2019! Thanks to all involved, including coordinator Mary Kay Condon; homeowners Carol Condon, Mary Kay and Mal Condon, Linda Coven, Gail Watts, George and Marcia Chapman and Dan Pessoni; all our members who acted as docents; the artists who painted in our lovely gardens and our treasurer Rick Murray.

Thanks also to Emily Woudenberg, our hard-working membership chair, who reports as of August 1 our membership stands at a healthy 186 individuals.

Finally, good news for those of you who missed out on ordering CCHS branded clothing last year—our on-line store will re-open from August 10th-24th with delivery of merchandise by September 13th. We are very pleased to announce that this year you can order personalized permanent name tags in addition to an increased selection of clothing.

Stay well,



Linda Coven
Co-President



Pat Vigliorolo
Co-President

Member in the Spotlight

by Pat Daly



Jan Kasper... Not Sitting on the Sidelines

Jan Kasper was born and raised in Greenfield, MA and attended the University of Vermont where she majored in mathematics. Upon graduation, she worked for IBM as a systems analyst in Burlington, VT, and as a systems engineer in Rochester, NY, where she and her husband, George, settled and raised their two children.

It was her children's sports interests that sparked an unexpected development. Their 5- and 6-year-olds' soccer league needed referees. Jan volunteered, literally jumping in with both feet and eventually officiating elementary, high school, and collegiate level games. In addition, she participated in an official capacity at an international demonstration soccer event between Mexico and Brazil. This willingness to help where and when needed broadened when she moved from Rochester to Cape Cod.

Arriving on the Cape in 2001, Jan and George planned to purchase a house with adequate land for flower and vegetable gardens, but they ended up building. Initially they put in a 50' x 35' vegetable garden which Jan admits has grown somewhat smaller as the years have grown longer! However, there's still always plenty of raspberries to make homemade jam!

Jan's gardening efforts haven't been limited to her own property. She has served as a volunteer docent at Heritage Museums and Gardens, brought gardening into local classrooms, and conducted horticultural tours for adults. She's a Master Gardener and organized the annual Master Gardener plant sale in Falmouth from 2016-2019. She also helps to maintain the CCHS display garden at Heritage and is an active member of the Sandwich Garden Club.

Gardening isn't Jan's only skill. Among others, she is an accomplished seamstress. In most years her efforts can be found at the First Church's annual fair in Sandwich. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, she refocused her sewing skills, supplying masks for her local garden club, church members, and Falmouth Hospital.

Have a need? Jan is willing to help. "Not sitting on the sidelines," is clearly her game! ■



*"Life is too short.
Buy the hydrangea."
—twowomenandahoe.com*





Creating a Hydrangea Symphony in Your Garden

by Peg Black



Most hydrangea enthusiasts appreciate the blue, purple, pink, white, and red flowers that decorate our gardens from early summer into fall. Some years are more spectacular than others, owing to Mother Nature's capricious ways on Cape Cod when a warm spell in late winter is often followed by a cold snap that destroys the tender *H. macrophylla* buds. This year, that did not happen, resulting in a stunning show in nearly every yard.

Glynn Church says in his book *Complete Hydrangeas* that "with the possible exception of roses, hydrangeas flower for longer than any other group of woody plants." In addition to beautifying our gardens, their cut flowers grace our tables in summer and dry nicely for fall wreaths and arrangements. For many reasons, hydrangeas continue to grow in popularity as exciting new varieties are introduced.

Each of our gardens is different with variable growing conditions and microclimates. What is happening in gardens in Chatham may not be the same as gardens in Brewster. It seems worthwhile, however, to try to mark time spent in our gardens by when the hydrangeas bloom, making us more aware of the seasonality of the plants we are tending and providing us with a closer connection to our gardens. No matter where you are growing hydrangeas or what cultivars you have, we want them around for as long as possible.

What can we do to have hydrangeas in flower from early summer into fall? A guiding principle is to plant hydrangea cultivars throughout your garden that bloom at different times. We want some that are early bloomers, followed by those that bloom in mid-summer, and, finally, late season bloomers. As one type of hydrangea declines, another starts to flower and continues the show for a much longer period of time. In a way, you become the conductor of a hydrangea symphony.

CONT'D

Early Season Bloomers



Schizophragma hydrangeoides 'Moonlight'

In my garden the very first hydrangea to bloom in June is always the climbing hydrangea, *H. anomala* subsp. *petiolaris*. It began this year on June 12th and peaked around the end of June, but its huge flat-topped flowers continue to add interest more than six weeks later. Alongside it on the same trellis grows a close cousin, *Schizophragma hydrangeoides* 'Moonlight' that starts to bloom several weeks after the regular climbing hydrangea with very large, open white flowers that are still in flower in late July. Instead of three weeks of climbing hydrangea blooms on the trellis, I have more than six weeks of flowers.

The first *H. macrophylla* to bloom this year in our garden was 'Nantucket Blue,' starting around the middle of June. At the end of July, six weeks after the first blooms opened, it is definitely at its peak, but still going strong and beautiful.

H. macrophylla 'Endless Summer' and 'Nikko Blue,' our old standbys, were among the first to open in late June, but were the first to crash in the intense heat of late July. By the end of July, they still have some blue color remaining, but they are way past their peak as of this writing.

The 'Let's Dance' series of *H. macrophylla*, including 'Rhythmic Blue' and 'Blue Jangles' has done very well this summer. 'Bloomstruck' and 'LA Dreamin' were fully open by late June and have just now reached their peak at the end of a hot, windy, and dry July. Because of the remotancy in their genes, I fully expect them to carry on with some flowers into the fall.

Mid-Season Bloomers

The 'Tuff Stuff' series is an amazing line of mountain hydrangeas (*H. serrata*) that live up to their name. They have been blooming for more than a month, but still look good in spite of the heat. Tuff Stuff 'Ah-Ha' is just as beautiful in late July as when it opened in late June.

Another exceptional line of hydrangeas has been the 'Cityline' series. I have 'Berlin,' 'Rio,' 'Mars,' 'Venice,' and 'Paris'—and they are extraordinary. This is the best year the 'Cityline' series has had in a long time because of our mild winter.

At the end of July, the 'Forever and Ever' series is still going strong. They are the last of the *H. macrophyllas* to bloom in our yard. 'Forever and Ever Together' is a gorgeous shade of double purple flowers that cover the shrub with blossoms. It is my most successful rebloomer.

This spring I considered removing 'Forever and Ever White Out' because they have had sparse blooms for the past four summers. 'White Out' simply does not have the bud hardiness that 'Together' has. Fortunately, I did not remove them and they have been truly spectacular. Because they are white and get full morning sun, their blossoms are just now beginning to antique before fading away in early August. 'Together', however, will soldier on well into the fall with gorgeous flowers that turn a deep red in September.

Lace caps have also had a good run, especially *H. macrophylla* 'Blaumeise' and 'Diva.' They have bloomed non-stop since the end of June and still look quite good, especially those planted in partial shade. 'Zorro' has become one of my favorite hydrangeas because of its strong, red stems and long-bloom time.

H. arborescens (Smooth Hydrangea), like every other hydrangea I have mentioned here, has also had a superb year. 'Incrediball' has the largest green to white flower heads I have ever seen. Because of the number of blossoms as well as their size, they had to be staked to keep from flopping over. They started blooming towards the end of June and a month later are not even thinking of stopping. 'Haas Halo' is another *H. arborescens* with huge, flat white flowers that attract a million bees.

The only oak-leaf hydrangea (*H. quercifolia*) in our garden is 'Alice', a Dr. Michael Dirr introduction that blooms earlier than most *H. quercifolia*. Huge cone-shaped white flowers have covered it for nearly six weeks and are now beginning to turn pink.

The large, oak-shaped leaves have started to turn red, but will be a beautiful burgundy color by Labor Day. It is a very large hydrangea so make sure you have enough room for 'Alice'. If I could find space for another Oakleaf, it would be the double flowered 'Snowflake' that should win 'best of show' if we have an in-person CCHS fall meeting.



H. macrophylla 'Blaumeise'



H. quercifolia 'Alice'

"We might think we are nurturing our gardens, but of course, it's our gardens that are really nurturing us."

—Jenny Unglow



Late-Season Bloomers

At the end of July, as the *H. macrophyllas* are beginning to wind down, the *H. paniculatas* start their show. The first of the *H. paniculatas* to bloom every year in our garden is 'Quick Fire.' It has beautiful white panicle flowers that bloom without fail and their red stems are eye-catching. 'Limelight,' 'Little Lime,' 'Vanilla Strawberry,' and 'Bobo' are just beginning to open at the end of July and will take over the spotlight in early August and carry through until after Labor Day. Because of their winter hardiness, much work is being done with *H. paniculatas* and they seem to be getting better every year.

Often underestimated is the antique color of late summer *H. paniculata* flowers. When they open in late July the flower is a lovely greenish-white color. Very soon the flowers will be pure white before turning a lovely shade of pink and sometimes red as the temperature drops after Labor Day.

If you are just learning about hydrangeas, make multiple visits to the hydrangea display garden at Heritage to see the progression of blooms throughout the summer and early fall. Whenever you can, visit other gardens where hydrangeas are growing to learn more about bloom time. Most important, take note of when hydrangeas are blooming in your own garden and then plant some new ones that bloom at different times. You too can become the conductor of your own hydrangea symphony. ■



H. paniculata 'Quick Fire'



H. paniculata 'Limelight'

On-line CCHS Logo Shopping Begins August 10!

Watch your inbox for details about the expanded clothing line and the professional-looking, permanent name tags that will be available!





The Tool Shed

by Linda Coven



Here we are in the dog days of summer with little or no rain forecast for the foreseeable future. That means watering, watering, watering. Are you tired of lugging around heavy hoses that always seem to kink, making watering a real back-breaking chore?

A kinked hose can drive one to distraction. Fortunately, there are many new kink-free garden hoses to choose from.

My favorite is the Flexi Hose which is lightweight and both expandable and collapsible. You don't need to wind it up as it is easy to store in a bucket. It features both $\frac{3}{4}$ " solid brass fittings and a double latex core and is rot, crack and leak resistant. I have used this hose for the last three years. It comes in 50', 75', and 100' lengths and is available from Amazon.

My second favorite is the Zero-G, lightweight, ultra flexible, durable, kink-free garden hose. It is abrasion, leak and puncture resistant. While it does not expand or retract, it is available in 3 sizes. I have a 100' Zero-G which I use in a Suncoast Aquawinder 125' Wicker Garden Hose Reel. I appreciate this lightweight portable hands-free water powered retractable hose reel because I dislike winding hoses. My hose box is 10 years old and my hose is 5 years old. Both are available at Home Depot, many local garden centers and from Amazon.

To make watering even easier you need a good watering wand. I like the Dramm 30" Colormark Rain Wand with 8" foam grip. This wand is equipped with a one-touch brass lever to stop water while moving from one plant to the next. The 30" length means no bending for low shrubs or plants and makes it easy to reach hanging baskets. This wand also features a gentle, full flow for quick watering and comes with a lifetime guarantee. It is available on Amazon or at many local garden centers.

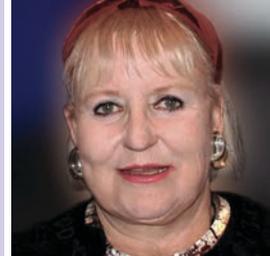
I am also a fan of Orbit Brass Hose Quick Connect sets which I have on all my hoses. The Quick Connect sets eliminate constant screwing on and off. These easy-to-use connectors make it super simple to change hose attachments. Just screw on once and then click them together. These sets are great for those with arthritis or limited hand mobility/strength. Available at Home Depot or on Amazon.

Since changing to a lightweight hose, the Dramm waterwand and Quick Connect sets, I've found watering so much easier and less time consuming. Hopefully, you will find these suggestions helpful and the items above readily available and not impacted by pandemic-related supply chain disruptions or increased consumer demand. ■



Hydrangeas & Groundcovers

by Sarah Dunbar



When I was just a novice gardener, I had enormous disdain for groundcovers. I thought they were all dull and boring—plants that little old ladies used in their dull and boring gardens. In fact, I even fired one of Boston’s premier landscape gardeners, who suggested that we plant all our patio beds with hostas and English Ivy. In those long-gone horticultural days, ivy was one of the foremost, frequently used groundcovers.



The problem then was that people were not interested in groundcovers as a creative element of or for the garden. Groundcovers were strictly used to fill vast empty areas when a gardener didn’t know what to plant there but wanted low maintenance. And the horticultural intelligentsia promoted dull, boring ground covers.

My, how times have changed for the better! The horticultural world has gotten on board the groundcover movement, finding all manner of interesting plants that can be promoted as groundcovers. And I have definitely learned the error of my ways! “Lived and Learned,” I now realize that groundcovers, along with mulching, are the gardener’s best friends. Not only do groundcovers increase the horticultural interest in

any area where they are used, they suppress weeds (an enormous aid especially without an extra pair of helping hands in the garden) and can make the area they are used in look finished, i.e. neat and tidy and well-groomed. Of course, these are not your grandmother’s groundcovers: *ajuga*, *pachysandra*, English Ivy, et al. I urge you to be creative in your choice of plants to use and to think outside the box, remembering that it is your decision to use whichever plants fill your need(s), even though they may not officially be called “groundcover plants” (more about this to come) by the nursery folks.

I would also admonish you not to use the same groundcover throughout your garden; this is simply too boring. To create further interest, groundcovers can be inter-planted for a more impactful look. Ask yourself what you would like your groundcover to accomplish: do you want blooms or foliar color and design? And, what conditions might they grow in?

Because we are dealing with groundcovers for hydrangeas, we must be aware of the conditions under which hydrangeas flourish, each species having its own needs and requirements. *Hydrangea macrophyllas* like semi-shaded areas with moist well-drained soil; *serratas* take shade; *quercifolias* like a sunny spot with good, well-drained moisture; *paniculatas* need full sun, but are not fussy about their soil, accepting what they are planted in, although they must have water, of course. Most of the newer *macrophyllas*, which bloom on new wood can take lots of sun, although their water needs are similar to other *macrophyllas*. Remember that foliar interest of groundcovers will remain all season long, making up for the limited flower bloom time of hydrangeas.

CONT’D

Many more plants can be used repeatedly in a planting as groundcovers than are actually promoted as "groundcovers." The following is a list of various plants that can be used as ground covers, most of which can make attractive edging for a hydrangea planting.

These are just a few of the hundreds of plants which can be used with hydrangeas as groundcovers. My hope is that this article encourages you to further explore the use of these plants to enhance your garden. ■



Sweet Woodruff

This is a low-growing, charming (3"-5"), adorable white flowering plant with interesting cut-leaf green leaves. It blooms July through August, so its bloom time coincides with hydrangea blooms. It likes lots of water.



Lily of the Valley

We inherited many of these on our Chatham property and although they bloom in springtime, before hydrangeas, they make a wonderful low-spreading groundcover with a most glorious scent, which I would not want to be without!! Their green leaves are glossy and dagger-shaped. There are also variegated white-edged as well as yellow-edged Lilies of the Valley.



Carex

I understand from reading various garden magazines that California designers are now using low-growing Carex grasses as groundcovers. I imagine they are using the foot-high varieties. Some varieties are drought tolerant; others require moist conditions.



Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'

Commonly known as black mondo grass, this is a low-growing, evergreen, black-toned thin grass which would look absolutely divine and unique underneath a grouping of pink or red or even white hydrangeas. Slow growing, it takes shade and likes well-drained soil.



Ardisia

Comes most recently from Japan (via Joy Creek Nursery, Oregon) is green and yellow variegated, grows to about 6-8" and has a lovely leaf. It would be wonderful with blue hydrangeas. As I've just bought it, I don't know about its flowers. It likes shade and is ignored by rabbits.



Ophiopogon japonicus

A spreading evergreen perennial, this works well in shade as a groundcover. Short growing grass, like its brother *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens.'



Pulmonarias

These are one of the loveliest spring bloomers, about 1' tall, a bit more in bloom. They are usually planted as edging but could easily be planted with hydrangeas as they enjoy the same soil and light requirements. They have quite spectacular silver green-colored leaves that are patterned or spotted, depending on the cultivar, which also determines the color of the flowers: red, sky blue, pinks, and whites. One of my favorite cultivars is 'Majeste.'



Lamium

This is a lovely low groundcover; a cultivar named 'Purple Dragon' has light pink flowers over a beautiful silver leaf. It can take sun or shade. My personal favorite cultivar is 'White Nancy' which sports a beautiful patterned silvered leaf and white flowers. This plant flowers in spring to midsummer. There is also a most handsome yellow lamium, which can be hard to find, but would be a great groundcover for bright blue hydrangeas!



Nepata

'Little Titch' is a dwarf catmint growing to 8"-10" and 15" wide, which has wonderful bright purple flower stalks. It spreads quickly, blooms for a long time in late July into August and would make a good ground cover around shorter hydrangeas.



Cornus canadensis

This plant grows 4" to 9" tall and has delicate white flowers and rich red to purple fall color. It blooms in late spring with lovely green leaves, likes part shade and well-drained soil, but does not want to dry out.



Beesia calthifolia

An evergreen groundcover with beautiful yellow and green patterned foliage, but unfortunately inconspicuous flowers.

Photo Gallery

Can you name these volunteers?

In spite of the Covid-19 pandemic, CCHS display garden maintenance and garden tours went forward as usual this spring and summer. How many of these stalwart, hard-working masked volunteers can you identify? (You'll find their identities on page 18). ■



Family Owned and Family Run... Agway of Cape Cod

by Emily Woudenberg



"Hydrangeas have always accounted for a large chunk of Agway's nursery plant budget as well as for our available space," says Jessica Wile Thomas, since 2017 Agway's third-generation owner with her brother Josh Wile. "We fit in as many hydrangeas as space permits and we feature over 100 varieties sourced from dozens of growers."



Early in November we begin formulating our hydrangea list for the coming summer and analyzing trends. The list is reviewed weekly and special orders are welcome; come in early to pre-order. Cape Cod Hydrangea Society members can receive a 10% discount upon showing their name tag."

This local business opened in 1960 when Roger Wile, the patriarch of the family, founded his Northboro, MA farm and feed store. The enormous 12-foot rooster statue which stood at the entrance is still admired as a local landmark. In 1993 Roger's son Peter and his wife Susan moved the business to Orleans and then expanded to Chatham and South Dennis.

"Growing up, my brother and I worked all the positions," states Jessica. "My first job was deadheading hundreds of powdery-mildewed geraniums after a wet spring. To this day I can't face a geranium!"

Today the three Agway stores employ 50 year-round workers and 100 in the summer. The focus is on lawn, garden, hardscape and outdoor living, as well as pet and farm supplies. Animal-lover Jess is directly involved in the pet center.

"Chickens are a popular Cape hobby," says Jess. "You can find plenty of poultry and equine feed and supplies, plus a large selection of items for our other beloved animal companions." Agway of Cape Cod's charitable foundation sponsors Paw Palooza, a two-day Cape Cod festival for dogs and their human companions with donations going to help fund local animal welfare organizations.

This year's biggest challenge, notes Jess, has been coping with the Covid-19 pandemic and business restrictions. You can find their most recent Covid-19 updates on the company's web site: www.agwaycapecod.com. ■

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of features on local Cape Cod family-owned and operated nurseries which carry a large variety of hydrangeas that perform well in our climate. Suggestions for future articles can be emailed to suzanneboas@gmail.com.

The Wile Family





A Symphony of Light in Carol Condon's Garden

by Mary Bowker



An architectural designer by profession, Carol's skill and vision are evident in her hydrangea garden in Yarmouth Port.

Carol Condon is hydrangea royalty in these parts and her artful hydrangea garden in Yarmouth Port is a testament to the way she lives the family legacy. The daughter of Mal and Mary Kay Condon has lived and worked closely with her parents, first at their hydrangea farm on Nantucket and now on the Cape. Oh, she has side gigs of her own, like the "cottage colony" she runs in the Bahamas, but the family's shared interest and passion is on display in the garden she designed around the cottage she bought in 2015.

An architectural designer by profession, Carol's skill and vision are evident in the profusion of hydrangeas she selected for the small lot surrounding her home and most spectacularly, the white garden she created in a walled oasis at the rear of the house.

Carol is very good at coaching beauty out of the mundane. She took a humble cottage,

unloved for 23 years, with a swampy backyard, installed drainage, lowered the level of a hill and created a two-tiered back yard that showcases her plants and encourages human interaction with the garden. There are 30 varieties of hydrangeas on the property.

Next to the Nantucket-inspired ribbon driveway of shells and grass, the newly renovated cottage is charming with its grey shingles and gleaming white trim. Set on a knoll, it greets the visitor with profusely blooming pink and blue *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Penny Mac' and snowy white *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Incrediball.' Flanking the front door are purple-blue *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Matilda Gutges' and a profusion of white *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Anabelle.' Tree-form *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' with their slightly greenish tinge are tucked behind.

It is in Carol's more secret garden at the rear of the house, though, where her artistry truly shines. Surrounded by a grey-washed fence, the two-tiered area is lightly shaded by an ash tree and has a deep green hedge as a backdrop. On the upper tier, defined by a curved wall of flat stones, Carol has planted white hydrangeas that shine in the dappled sunlight and glow in the evening. Some of her favorites are *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Sister Therese', 'Wedding Gown,' 'Limetta,' 'Princess Juliana' and 'Zebra,' the last a mop head with frilly petals and near-black stems.

Elevated through white hydrangea magnificence is a wooden obelisk supporting a dreamy 'Henryi' clematis, noted for its colossal white flowers. White roses poke out through the hydrangea foliage.

Nestled at the base of the ash tree, Carol has created the perfect area for morning coffee or an afternoon cocktail where one can lounge in peace and meditate on the details of the garden: shapes, sizes and contrasts of leaves and blooms. At the base of the hydrangea plantings, marking the transition from the upper garden to the lower

area, Carol has created a border of white that moves the eye from the hydrangeas to a grassy circle she has planted in the lower level. In this border, she has cleverly installed socket pots that she changes as the season progresses. Tulips give way to peonies, then impatiens and lastly Montauk daisies.

Carol's backyard maximizes outdoor living. The greenery, comfortable furniture and seclusion create a special gathering place for family and friends. Her skill at designing spectacular settings is further on display after dark when the garden lights up. The ash tree is illuminated, as are espaliered apple trees on the fence. Lights among the plants give the garden a dreamy quality that invites visitors to linger and relax.

Carol Condon's garden does just what she planned. It serves her family and friends well May through September after which she heads back to the Bahamas. This year well over 350 garden tourists marveled at her garden's beauty during the Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival, which showcased the versatility of the gardener and Cape Cod's iconic plant. ■



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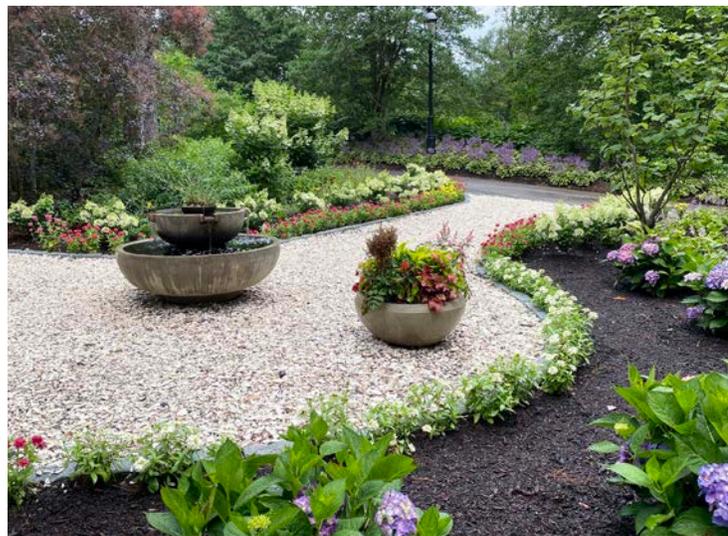
Heritage Hydrangea Display Garden....A Festival Star

by Suzanne Boas



The CCHS hydrangea display garden at Heritage Museums and Gardens is always a highlight of the Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival, but this year it was a real star. Significant recent hardscape enhancements; the addition of a fountain and a number of large planters; a roaming flautist; and abundant macrophylla and arborescens blooms at their peak turned the area into quite a showplace.

Thanks go to Paula Rushworth and her maintenance team who worked diligently to get the garden in pristine condition in time for the festival. Linda Coven coordinated the hardscape efforts with the Heritage staff and selected the fountain and planters. If you didn't get to the garden during the festival, make sure you visit soon. As one visitor exclaimed, "I think this must be what heaven looks like." ■





Do-it-Yourself Surface Drip Irrigation

We have all been just overjoyed this summer with the wonderful blooming on our much beloved *Hydrangea macrophylla* cultivars in our gardens and literally almost everywhere. It has been grand and much appreciated after the inconsistent and often disappointing bloom production over the last six consecutive summers. Clearly, 2020 has been the best blooming year since 2013!

Major credit for this flowering excellence goes to the overall mild winter without major temperature spikes. Winter cold was nicely balanced with equal spells of above freezing conditions. Central and western inland areas of our Cape did have a couple of frosty



Drip irrigation linked network

mornings in April, but the resulting winterkill proved to be minor. Rain was plentiful most of April and well into mid-May and this always has a positive effect on the all-important growth month of June.

Temperatures were cool, even downright chilly, for much of the Cape Cod spring. *H. macrophyllas* don't mind this cool period which has become a weather standard for the Cape over the last 10 years. Early growth may be slowed initially, but by June hydrangea plant growth is strong with flower buds developing almost daily. The late June weather continued into early July and our gardens looked so good for the 2020 Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival.

But much has changed over the last two weeks and we are now in the very beastly "hot and dry"

of summer. The hot has been very hot with much humidity, making even modest garden chores a serious sweat-producing event. And the dry has been extreme with near zero rainfall during the entire month of July. Unwatered plants are looking terrible and some, quite sadly, may not recover. The extended weather forecast shows the current pattern will be continuing.

You have heard me say in the past that the difference between a good hydrangea plant and a 'WOW' specimen is the five-letter word W-A-T-E-R. At this time of the year, a good rain is better than any fertilizer!

Sadly, we can't control the weather. The rain will come eventually but will the parched hydrangeas be alive to drink it in and recover? All you can do during this extended dry period is to drag your hoses around and try to keep your plants as turgid as possible. And that's almost a daily exercise at the moment.

But there is, however, a much better way to satisfy your plant's thirst—install surface drip irrigation! I covered this subject initially in my 2016 summer "Mal's Corner" and many more installations have been placed in service since then. This is definitely a major DIY project for the home gardener; the installation is not physically difficult. Components are readily available, and techniques continue to improve. For the past three years I've been teaching an irrigation class at Heritage as part of our Hydrangea Success Series and our Volunteer Teams now have several qualified "Installers." So, let's look at what's involved for you to provide this marvelous benefit for your hydrangeas.

The photos that follow show what a typical irrigation network looks like. Quite simply, it's a network of rings of emitter tubing placed around each plant and linked together to provide precise low water application directly to the immediate near surface area of the plants. As a result, virtually all of the applied water goes directly to the plant's root system.

My assessment is the best major supplier of components is the Israeli company Netafim™. They are longtime producers of well-designed irrigation products as their

part of the world grows produce very effectively using precious little water. Their website (<http://www.netafimusa.com>) is worth visiting.

Their 17mm diameter tubing with internal emitters on 12" spacing is the most widely used thin-walled tubing. A good range of fittings is available to complete the rings and associated connections. In the heat of summer, the fittings can be simply pushed into the tubing to form a leak-proof connection and distribution network. During cooler weather, a small propane torch helps to warm the tubing to facilitate assembly. Plain 17mm tubing (no emitters) is used to connect the rings and cover the non-irrigated spaces. Both tubing types are available in 100 and 250 ft. lengths; they are lightweight and very easy to work with.

My most common ring size contains five emitters and is approximately five feet in circumference or about 19" in diameter. One or two "tee" fittings complete the ring and the center stub of the tee(s) connects via plain tubing to the adjacent ring or to the supply line loop which encircles the garden bed. Two irrigation networks can be used. The loop network is simply a plain loop of tubing encircling the interior of the planting bed with each individual ring connected to it via a single tee.

With the linked network shown, each ring contains two tees and is connected to an adjacent ring. I prefer this system as it provides total water flow-through, and with an installed drain (shut-off) valve, the network can be easily flushed clean of debris and entrained air.

Each emitter is rated for 0.9 gallons of water per hour at 40 psi water system pressure. For the five-emitter ring, each plant will



MODEL # TLDL9-12 (0.9 GPH - 12" SPACING)**
1.54 GPM FLOW PER 100 FT.

LATERAL (ROW) SPACING	STATION RUN TIME (MINUTES)						
	12"	14"	16"	18"	20"	22"	24"
TIME TO APPLY ¼" OF WATER	10	12	13	15	17	19	20
APPLICATION RATE (IN/HR)	1.48	1.27	1.11	0.99	0.89	0.82	0.74

Use with Netafim 17mm dripline fittings. For additional product or design information, go to www.netafimusa.com/landscape

MADE IN THE USA
 © 2012 Netafim Irrigation, Inc.

MAXIMUM LENGTH OF A SINGLE LATERAL (FEET)	
20 psi	225
25 psi	250
35 psi	290
45 psi	320

receive approx. 4-4.5 gallons of water per hour. You can adjust the watering run-time frequency and duration to suit your site and weather. For instance, running your surface irrigation every other day—say Monday, Wednesday, Friday—for 40 minutes per event will provide the plant with approximately 8-9 gallons of water per week. This volume will sustain most hydrangeas in very good form. But hotter and drier conditions, like we're presently experiencing, may dictate longer run times or adding an additional watering day.

Your irrigation network can initially be connected manually to a nearby hose bib on the exterior of your home. The attachment can be via plain tubing or a standard garden hose for longer distances. Operationally, there are many options to choose from. You can simply turn your faucet on and off manually; install a simple mechanical timer; or use a battery-operated control valve that will totally automate your watering. And this new irrigation "zone" can also be added to your existing irrigation system.

This is a great DIY project which is very satisfying and long-lasting. And your hydrangeas will love it! ■



Quiz Answers *from page 11*

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Judith Shay | 8. Barbara Marsala |
| 2. Mary Kay Condon | 9. Joyce Halpert |
| 3. Peter Berrien | 10. Suzanne Boas |
| 4. Rick Murray | 11. Joy Bogstad |
| 5. Mal Condon | 12. Andrea Lee |
| 6. Tom McCabe | 13. Tom Miller |
| 7. Ginny McCabe | 14. Wendy Miller |

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

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Chris Chevalier
Sandwich, MA

Joan Biddle
Flourtown, PA

Bobbie Bowman
W. Yarmouth, MA

Susan Callan
Falmouth, MA

Laura & Frank Davin
Centerville, MA

Nancy & Bruce Dexter
Cummaquid, MA

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S. Chatham, MA

Patricia Lake
Duxbury, MA

Carolyn & Robert Lintz
Centerville, MA

Natalie Marrino
S. Dennis, MA

Kathy Mattson
Dennis, MA

Christine Meyer
Eastham, MA

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Carmen Torres Rodriguez
W. Barnstable, MA

Tracy & Mark Sullivan
Sagamore Beach, MA

Terry Soares
E. Falmouth, MA

Mollie & Tom Tucker
Sagamore Beach, MA

Anne Tufts
Brewster, MA

Jane Yunginger
Mashpee, MA

2020 UPCOMING EVENTS

Lunch Bunch

Date: August 12
Time: Noon-2 pm
Where: Mary Kay and Mal Condon's home
181 Thacher Shore Rd.
Yarmouth Port
Topic: Drip Line Irrigation

General Members' Meeting

Date: September 19
Time: 10 am
Where: TBD
Speaker: Suzanne Mahler
Topic: Great Public Gardens of New England

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