Hydrangeas at Heritage

The North American Hydrangea Test Garden

Heritage Museums & Gardens is home to a national hydrangea test garden where new hybrid varieties of hydrangeas are being planted, grown, and studied by professional growing experts from across the country. The North American Hydrangea Test Garden is the most comprehensive collection in the United States. Hydrangeas are typically in bloom from early July – end of September.

Heritage staff and horticulture interns document and collect data on plant performance that enables growers to perfect new hydrangea varieties and gauge how these varieties perform in New England, one of the country’s largest markets for hydrangeas. The test garden continues Heritage’s collaboration with the Cape Cod Hydrangea Society, begun in 2010 when 155 cultivars and species were planted, and showcases the depth and breadth of these iconic plants for Heritage visitors.

Designed by Horticulture Director Les Lutz and installed in phases beginning in 2016, the expanded garden includes new hydrangeas and other companion plants, a fountain, and cobble-lined shell walkways that allows visitors to stroll among a variety of hydrangeas. The garden affords researchers and growers easy access to test plants while offering home gardeners examples of which plants pair well together.

The North American Hydrangea Test Garden was created in association with by Dr. Michael Dirr, horticulture professor emeritus at the University of Georgia and author of over 300 scientific and popular publications, and in collaboration with expert growers from Bailey Nurseries and Star Roses & Plants, who were inspired by Heritage’s existing Hydrangea Garden. Garden sponsors are Bailey Nurseries (creators of Endless Summer® Hydrangeas), Star Roses & Plants, and Proven Winners; renowned plant expert Dr. Michael Dirr and his wife Bonnie; the Cape Cod Hydrangea Society and the American Hydrangea Society.

Cape Cod Hydrangea Garden

Begun in 2010, this garden is a partnership with the Cape Cod Hydrangea Society. The garden is a showcase of about 155 species and cultivars of Hydrangeas. The dominant species is Hydrangea macrophylla with Hydrangea paniculata and Hydrangea serrata also well represented. The Garden has grown each year and includes many ‘historic’ cultivars that are not commonly available.

Hydrangea macrophylla is a species found mainly in coastal regions of Japan. As such, they do well in our maritime climate and have become the signature plants of Cape Cod.

In the rear of this garden are several significant trees including several large Halesia carolina that date from the 1920s.

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