

The North American Hydrangea Test Garden at Heritage Museums and Gardens

Plant Performance Evaluation, *Hydrangea Macrophylla* – ‘Twist N Shout’ (Bailey Nurseries)

‘Twist N Shout’ is a simple cross between two of our long-favored cultivars – Penny Mac and Lady in Red™. And it is a splendid blend of the best properties of both parents; excellent winter enduring bud survival from ‘LIR’ coupled with strong reblooming capability from ‘PM’. It is an easy to love cultivar as shown in the photos below taken in our garden in July. And it is the most widely planted *H. macrophylla* at Heritage.



Winter Hardiness – Plant & Bud

Twist N Shout™ provides strong bud cold-hardiness for traditional mid-summer flowering on old wood and produces later blossoms throughout the growing season on new stem growth. The blooms are classic lacecaps with color ranging from deep pink to deep purple blue tones. Add the dark reddish-purple stems, petioles, and leaf venation - and you have a total color superstar.

Early April is still the ‘Brown Stick Season’ at Heritage and the photos below – taken on April 1 - look pretty grim. In particular, do note the stem pattern, which is more pronounced on the right. Stems on Twist N Shout™ are typically long with little branching.





Like all the *H. macrophyllas* at Heritage, the 'Twists' are pruned annually in late March-early April - what we call 'Step 1 - Regenerative Pruning'. The 'After' photo on the left illustrates the effect of this early old wood and deadwood removal process. This 'Step' is best performed before any bud growth has occurred.

Plantings at Heritage began in 2014 with some relocations in 2016 and additions in 2017 and 2018. Twist N Shout™ plantings are substantial in the Garden and are en masse groups in both sunny and more shaded locations. Leaf spotting is virtually non-existent with this cultivar.

Bloom Count & Quality

Twist N Shout™ flower development has consistently been very good overall. Even following the recent series of severe winters - when stem bud survival has been challenged on all *H. macrophyllas* - the reblooming ability of this cultivar, to develop blossoms on virtually every new stem tip bud, is remarkable. 'July' flowering on old wood is quite strong with per plant bloom counts in the 15 to 20+ range. Reblooming – new wood flowering – occurs throughout the growing season – and a plant typically displays many more blooms in September than in July. The lacecap flowers are of good size and are attractive color-wise. The only downside is the blooms, like most lacecaps, don't antique very well. However, the number of accumulating, differentially aging blossoms creates a very pleasing appearance. Bloom color, owing to our adequate soil aluminum and low pH, favors the deep blue-purple tones.



Reblooming Capability

'Twist N Shout' is the most powerful rebloomer we have evaluated to date at Heritage, and we have not as yet conducted any new growth pinch pruning to accelerate reblooming. However, we will be conducting trials going forward to evaluate stem branching and overall plant form modification.

Sun Tolerance

As already mentioned, 'TNS' has prospered in a broad range of photoperiod exposure. Planting sites range from 'sunny' (6 to 8 hours of mid-summer sun) – to 'shady' (2 to 3 hours of sun, shade density of 40 to 50%). Foliage has been clean in all locations with the possible exception of one small almost full sun location where the associated general stress is reflected in less than ideal leaf surface vigor. Inadequate surface irrigation is suspect in this instance; irrigation zones must reflect specific locations for best results.

Disease & Pest Attack

Chilli Thrips are a concern as previously discussed, but their presence has been not been detected on any Twist N Shout™ plants to date.

Foliage Condition

Previous comments on leaf spotting is consistent with 'Twist'. The plant also loses its leaves somewhat earlier than most of the *H. macrophylla* cultivars.

General Growth Characteristics

Twist N Shout™ is a strong grower attaining 5 ft height and width in 4 years with surface irrigation. Plant form is somewhat random with a network of long non-branching stems of only modest density. This non-branching habit also produces low-lying stems which too easily root in the surface mulch creating 'Volunteer' plants.



While this 'feature' may seem desirable – making more plants – the retention of this new growth quickly expands the plant base and actually encourages the negative development of the random stem network. This stem development characteristic is the only negative we have observed with this cultivar.

At Heritage, we remove these 'Volunteers' annually during spring pruning. Their root development is typically strong like the parent and we routinely pot them up and grow them off for later additions to the gardens.

The vigorous growth of 'TNS' is easily sustained with a single low-level application of controlled release fertilizer following pruning.

Looking Ahead

Pruning potentially offers benefit to plant form as well as bloom enhancement. In the case of 'Twist N Shout' we will begin pinch-pruning early emerging new stems to encourage lateral stem development. These will be time-sensitive pruning trials in an attempt to increase stem branching and overall stem density to obtain a more fully formed plant.