

## The North American Hydrangea Test Garden at Heritage Museums and Gardens

### Plant Performance Evaluation, *Hydrangea Macrophylla* – ‘Blushing Bride’ (Bailey Nurseries)

This was the second cultivar in the Endless Summer Series of reblooming *H. macrophylla* offered by Bailey Nurseries. It was also well marketed and publicized by Bailey and well accepted owing to the early success of ‘The Original’. Well sited, with afternoon shade, the Bride is a good performer on Cape Cod.

The photos below display excellent bush and blossom performance in a private garden in Wellfleet in the outer-most (east-facing) coastal plain of the Cape.



### Winter Hardiness – Plant & Bud

Genetically, ‘Blushing Bride’ is a specific cross of Endless – Original™ and Veitchii - the latter an old traditional *H. macrophylla* cultivar and although it isn’t a rebloomer, it is a strong plant boasting very clean foliage. Veitchii produces lacecap blossoms having white outer ray florets surrounding pale blue interior fertile flowers. The resulting ‘BB’ blossom is, however, a mophead of white with individual sepals accented with pink or blue. The former coloration was the intended tone but in acidic soils, with aluminum present, the ‘blue’ version is quite attractive.

At Heritage, the ‘Bride’ has been a modest bloomer and only a minimal rebloomer. All plants went in the ground in 2014 and were incorporated into the Test Garden in 2016 largely in their original locations. Their site is a good one for *H. macrophyllas* having white blossoms – filtered morning sun with mixed sun / shade exposure in the afternoon.



The above photos show the typical plant progression from the ‘brown sticks’ of early April into our normal peak blooming month of July. This growth transformation is one of the great attributes of *Hydrangea macrophylla*.



### Bloom Count & Quality

Flower development has been generally reliable but modest and develops totally on old wood. It has improved somewhat with increased plant maturity, but bloom counts have remained low with (6) to possibly (12) flowers per plant. Bloom size is good - 5" to 8", and the white blossom, with pink or blue accents, is definitely a highlight. The color white is not effected by the soil aluminum content and the level of soil acidity, however, the color 'accents' in the sepals of the florets comprising the Blushing Bride™ blooms do respond.

### Reblooming Capability

From our observations to date, Blushing Bride™ is the least potent rebloomer of the Endless Summer Series. A few flowers do develop through the summer but reblooming (on new wood of the season) in the August through October period has been minimal. The photo on the left is typical; strong plant growth, clean foliage, and few remontant blooms.

### General Growth Characteristics

A medium size plant for us, Blushing Bride™ is nominally 4 ft high and wide, and similar to Endless Summer - Original. Growth is vigorous and plants respond well to a single low volume application of a controlled release fertilizer following spring pruning in April. This is our common practice with all hydrangeas at Heritage.

### Sun Tolerance

Given the aforementioned comments, the 'Brides' at Heritage are in a favored location in terms of sun created 'flagging' (leaf wilting) in the middle of the afternoon. Overall, the afternoon shading sustains better total plant condition and helps to extend the 'visual life' of the mostly white blossoms.

### Foliage Condition

Leaf spotting is common with *H. macrophyllas* in general but we are fortunate in our region to have some resistive environmental benefit. Typically, our plants are 'clean' and 'spot-free'. Blushing Bride™ has exhibited especially clean foliage – likely an important carryover from parent 'Veitchii'.

### Disease & Pest Attack

Diseases and pests have also been comparatively minor on virtually all *H. macrophylla* cultivars at Heritage. However, and as already mentioned, Chili Thrips have created some visual havoc and the photos below show the extent of damage on Blushing Bride™ this past August through September. We are exploring possible remedial approaches and may well undertake selected trials in 2020.



### Looking Ahead

'Blushing Bride' will remain in the Test Garden owing to its reasonable cold-hardiness and bud survival. Mid-summer (July) pinching of non-flowering stems may encourage increased late season bloom development on new growth and further trials will be undertaken. However, additional plantings are unlikely as newer, more remontant 'whites' may offer better total blooming potential.

emc 191120, 191202, 200106, 200210