

Hydrangea Festival Self-Guided Tour

The maritime climate of Cape Cod makes it the perfect place to grow hydrangeas. To start the tour, **proceed along the main pathway past the Flume Fountain to the two Hydrangea Gardens** and look for circular numbers attached to the green signs in the gardens that correspond with the “stops” on this tour.



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- 1 Begin your tour at the entrance to The Cape Cod Hydrangea Society Display Garden.** This garden was created as a partnership between Heritage Museums & Gardens and the Cape Cod Hydrangea Society in 2008. The garden now boasts a hydrangea collection of over 155 species and cultivated varieties. This garden was designed to preserve and showcase the six major species of hydrangea that you'll explore on this tour, as well as to educate the public about these plants' growth habits and needs. Featured here are a large variety of older, traditional cultivars of hydrangeas, 60% of which are "legacy" varieties no longer in production, along with iconic varieties that take center stage in many Cape Cod backyards. We are grateful to the Society's members, who continue to care for the garden throughout the seasons.
- 2 On the left side of the entrance to this garden, you can find the species *Hydrangea arborescens*,** one of the oldest varieties of hydrangeas, which is native to the United States. This species is known for its large, showy, heavy, white blooms that stand very tall but tend to fall over in heavy winds or rains. It is best to plant them tightly in groups to give each other support. They are very cold hardy and their color is not affected by soil pH levels. Learn more about *Hydrangea arborescens* by reading the green sign "Old Time Favorites" located in this part of the garden.
- 3 Look to your right, or behind you** and across the paths, to find the tall variety with cone-shaped blossoms, *Hydrangea paniculata*. This species is extremely cold hardy and long-lived and these plants almost always reliably bloom from mid-summer to mid-autumn. One of the most popular varieties is 'Limelight' which can be seen along the pathway by the garden's entrance. Many of these varieties grow to be quite tall, usually between 8-15 feet; therefore, many newer varieties have been bred to be smaller dwarf hydrangeas such as the popular 'Bobo.' Learn more about *Hydrangea paniculata* by reading the green sign "More Deserving" nearby.
- 4 Walk down the stairs** and look for a white arbor on your left, where you'll find the young and graceful climbing *Hydrangea anomala*. In general, climbing hydrangeas are the earliest hydrangeas to bloom with large, white lacecap flowers. Learn more about climbing hydrangeas by reading the green sign "Climbers" located here. Additional climbing *Hydrangea anomala* can be spotted in the Hart Family Maze Garden.
- 5 With the arbor on your left, look to your right and follow the path toward the back right corner of the garden.** On your left, you will find another hardy variety, the *Hydrangea serrata*. This mountain hydrangea can thrive without much human attention and will almost always flower regardless of its care. Lacecap varieties feature a set of smaller, inner fertile blooms and larger, colorful, outer petals. Bloom color is affected by the pH levels in the soil and can change accordingly, varying between blue to purple to pink. Learn more about *Hydrangea serrata* by reading the green sign "Delicate But Hardy" located nearby in this part of the garden.



Hydrangea arborescens



Hydrangea paniculata



Hydrangea anomala



Hydrangea serrata

- 6** **Continue up the hill, toward the back of the garden.** Under the pines, you will find another hydrangea species native to America, *Hydrangea quercifolia*. Oak-leaf-shaped leaves, leggy growth habit, and cone-shaped or "panicled" blooms characterize this hydrangea species. These hydrangeas prefer to grow in filtered light beneath tall pine trees and often do not require much pruning. Learn more about *Hydrangea quercifolia* by reading the green sign "Oak Leaves" at the top of the hill.
- 7** **Walk toward the arbor, returning onto the crushed shell path.** Looking to your right and left as you follow the path through the center of the garden, you will find the most well-known and beloved type, *Hydrangea macrophylla*. The most popular varieties of this species are characterized by large, mophead flowers. They generally grow well in sunny sites along the New England coast where the naturally acidic soil enhances the blue colors. The color of these varieties is affected by the pH levels in the soil. Cold hardiness is a serious issue with this species, because they form their buds in the fall and must survive winter and spring's winds and low temperatures, which will often affect the bloom production. These plants should never be pruned in the fall for fear of cutting off forming flower buds; instead, prune these plants in the spring, once new growth can be easily identified. Learn more about *Hydrangea macrophylla* by reading the green sign "Charmers" found here.
- 8** To learn **tips for hydrangea care**, including pruning and fertilizing, look for a green sign called "Hydrangea Care" on your right. Another important care tip is to keep your hydrangea plants well-watered. Curator of Hydrangeas, Mal Condon, recommends surface drip-line irrigation, rather than aerial spraying. Scan the QR code on this sign for videos where you can learn more about Mal's favorite hydrangeas and how to care for them.
- 9** **Continue following the crushed shell path through the center of the garden, until you reach the bowl fountain. Turn left to reach the paved path. Turn left again and look for two stone pillars on your right.** Enter the **North American Hydrangea Test Garden** through the pillars. Designed by Horticulture Director Les Lutz and opened in 2016, the addition of this garden made Heritage's hydrangea gardens the most comprehensive in North America. Along with being beautiful, this garden serves an important purpose as a plant test site for new cultivars and hybrids. Learn more about the research that goes on in this garden laboratory by reading the introductory panel located in this garden. Here you will be able to spot examples of companion plants, those that pair well with hydrangeas in a garden setting, along with the 240+ hydrangea varieties being evaluated.
- 10** **As you walk toward the fountain** to your right, look for a green sign on your right to learn more about **hydrangea bloom color**. Enjoy the vista from the Grand Staircase, looking toward the lawn ahead of you. This staircase is lined with various cultivars of *H. paniculata* and *H. arborescens*, as well as complementary companion plants.
- 11** **At the square fountain, turn right and follow the serpentine shell path.** Installed in 2020, this section of the garden is planted with a variety of new-to-market hydrangea cultivars, along with complementary companion plants. The plants in this garden are evaluated for bloom count and quality, reblooming capability, sun tolerance, foliage conditions, and general growth characteristics. Detailed research findings can be found on our website. A particular favorite in this garden is the powerfully remontant, or reblooming, 'Lady in Red.' Scan the QR code near this plant to watch Curator of Hydrangeas, Mal Condon, discuss why this cultivar is one of his favorites. In addition to this cultivar, you'll find along this pathway cold-hardy 'Tuff Stuff' and 'Tuff Stuff Ah-Ha' - examples of the newer varieties of *H. macrophylla* that have been hybridized with *H. serrata* - along with varieties of *H. arborescens*, *H. quercifolia*, and *H. paniculata*.
- 12** **At the end of the path, turn left and cross the Wing House Lawn to another crushed shell path on the left.** This is the newest addition to the Hydrangea Test Garden - the South Expansion - featuring a two-tiered fountain and new test varieties of hydrangeas.



Hydrangea quercifolia



Hydrangea macrophylla

During the rest of your visit, look for more hydrangeas in other areas of the grounds - check the festival map for locations. If you have questions about these wonderful plants, look for volunteers in the gardens or ask any Heritage staff member to help you get in touch with our horticulture team. Visit our social media pages and website for more hydrangea content! **Thank you for visiting Heritage Museums & Gardens for the Hydrangea Festival!**

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