



Hydrangea Test Garden to Feature Cape Cod's Signature Plant

Hosted by Heritage Museums & Gardens, test garden will showcase new plant varieties and support research by expert growers.

Sandwich, MA – [Heritage Museums & Gardens](#) will be home to a national hydrangea test garden where, for the next five years, new hybrid varieties of hydrangeas will be planted, grown, and studied by professional growing experts from across the country. The test garden is an offshoot of Hydrangeas 2015, an international conference attended by hydrangea experts from around the world which was held at Heritage this past July. The project will make Heritage's Hydrangea Garden the most comprehensive in the United States.

Test garden partners include leading professional growers, Bailey Nurseries (creators of Endless Summer® Hydrangeas) and Ball Horticultural Company; renowned plant expert Dr. Michael Dirr and his wife Bonnie; the Cape Cod Hydrangea Society and the American Hydrangea Society. Heritage staff and horticultural interns will document and collect data on plant performance that will enable these 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 will build on Heritage's hydrangea collection of 155 species and cultivated varieties, expand and enhance its existing hydrangea garden, and showcase the depth and breadth of these iconic plants for Heritage visitors. Heritage visitors will also have the opportunity to preview new plants being readied for the gardening market.

Designed by horticulture director Les Lutz and installed in phases over five years, the expanded garden will include new hydrangeas and other plants, a new water feature, and stone walkways that will allow visitors to stroll among an unprecedented variety of hydrangeas. The test garden will afford researchers and growers easy access to test plants while offering home gardeners examples of which plants pair well together.

"Heritage founder Josiah Lilly had a vision for our institution to be '...an outreaching force for education...', and we are looking forward to contributing new knowledge to the field. It is truly an honor to be working with the top professionals in the horticulture world," said Ellen Spear, President & CEO of Heritage Museums & Gardens. "For visitors, expanding this garden will mean more beautiful and inspiring landscapes to visit and enjoy."

The test garden was conceived as part of collaborative conversations among key attendees at the three-day Hydrangeas 2015 Conference. The initiative is being led by Dr. Michael Dirr, horticulture professor emeritus at the University of Georgia and author of over 300 scientific and popular publications, in collaboration with expert growers from Bailey Nurseries and Ball, who were inspired by Heritage's existing Hydrangea Garden.

"Worldwide, hydrangeas are the most celebrated, cherished and revered garden plants," said Dirr. "Heritage, with the expanded and documented collection, will educate gardeners and scientists about the rich diversity within the genus. The garden will be the platinum standard for all who desire to increase their knowledge of this noble genus. The genesis of this expansion was spawned by the recent hydrangea conference at Heritage Museums & Gardens. The attendees' excitement was palpable; their financial commitment gratifying. "

Work on the new Hydrangea test garden is slated to begin at Heritage in spring 2016.

About Heritage Museums & Gardens

Heritage Museums & Gardens is comprised of three galleries and 100 acres of gardens located in historic Sandwich, Massachusetts. It is one of the top public gardens in New England. Its collections include thousands of rhododendrons, including the renowned Dexter varieties, and upwards of 155 varieties of hydrangeas. Other horticultural areas of interest include: holly.

daylily, herb, hosta, and heather gardens, as well as more than a thousand varieties of trees, shrubs and flowers.

About Endless Summer® Hydrangeas

The Endless Summer® Collection is the world's first and best-selling brand of re-blooming hydrangeas. With the introduction of The Original in 2004 by Bailey Nurseries, the world of hydrangeas was revolutionized with this new variety of perennial plants having the ability to bloom on both previous seasons' growth as well as the current season's growth. The Endless Summer® Collection is sold throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, and is credited for reinvigorating the consumer interest in the hydrangea genus.

Ball About Ball Horticultural Company

Ball Horticultural Company is an internationally renowned breeder, producer and wholesale distributor of ornamental plants. A family-owned business since it was founded in 1905, Ball has introduced many innovative, award-winning varieties to the world of horticulture. Through its recent purchase of Conard-Pyle, the company has expanded its perennial and flowering shrub offerings, merging its Ball Ornamentals division under the Star Roses and Plants® brand. For further information, visit ballhort.com.