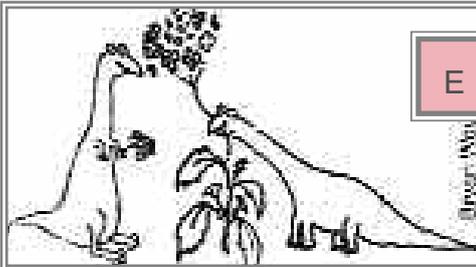


JOURNAL

Friends of the "Shamrock" *Hydrangea* Collection

Journal n° 22 - 2011

www.hortensias-hydrangea.com



EDITORIAL

by Bryan Woy, President

Dear friends and correspondents of "Shamrock", the French national hydrangea collection (www.hortensias-hydrangea.com),

It gives us great pleasure, with this Journal, to keep our pro-mise to stay in touch with you and to share our knowledge; a promise we made when some of you came to visit "Shamrock" in 2007 following the symposium on the Hydrangea genus.

Since then, the collection has continued to grow, and our research to expand, with the help of the enthusiasm and expertise of Association members in different parts of the world.

For reasons of economy we are sending you this issue of the Journal by Internet; only the French edition is produced in a printed version.

If the information in this Journal is of interest to you, and if you wish to receive past issues by Internet, please let us know.

The "Shamrock" Association is a non-profit organization. You can contribute to our continuing work of research and dissemination of knowledge about the genus Hydrangea, either by becoming a member (*), or by sending us your donations, or even articles you would like to see published in future issues of the Journal.

We hope that we will have the opportunity to see you again at



H. heteromalla Tony Schilling

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English Translation and Drawings: Bryan Woy.
Chief Editor: Corinne Mallet
Design and creation: Association Shamrock 2011
Layout: Corinne Mallet

The articles in this journal are published under their authors' responsibility.

EDITORIAL (suite)

"Shamrock", or at a forthcoming symposium.

Yours sincerely,
Bryan Woy, President

(*) *Membership fee: Private €25 or dollar or pound equivalent (€35 for a couple, €50 for support), Professionals €100*



M A N Y T H A N K S f o r 2 0 1 0

The Association thanks all members and non members who have helped make 2010 another good year for the Shamrock Collection: all those who took part in the preparation and hosting of visitors to our annual event "2000 hydrangeas for Shamrock" (2010 Edition), starting with Bérengère de Bodinat and Bruno Blanckaert for once again welcoming us to their home, "Casanova". For providing plants during this event: André Diéval, Kees Evelyns, Didier Boos, Lionel Chauvin, Henri Mercier, Emmanuel de la Fonchais, the "La Traverse" educational centre, and Jean Renault and his sons' firm; and Michel Brunet who helped with transport. Thank you to the students from "La Traverse", guided by Henri Guyomard, who created new beds and worked with vigour and enthusiasm on the 'crop circle'. Several planting sessions took place thanks to Jean-Pierre Péan and Pierre Courquin. The following members contributed in various capacities: Bernard Schumpp (all sorts of help), Andre & Martine Diéval, Marie-France Doll, Hélène Béréhouc (propagation of missing plants), Jean Cosson (repotting), Josiane and Henry Lamache (travel arrangements, public relations and work in the collection), Michaël and Isabelle Potel (conservation), Emmanuel de la Fonchais (donations of many new plants), and, on several occasions (logging, weeding and dead-heading, among other things): Delphine Debord, Claude and Mathieu Ferchal, Galia and Raymond Guillaume, Nicole Hagneré, Nicole Schumpp, Jean-Louis Dantec, Antoine Disca, Marie-Claude and Franck David, Geneviève and Michel Devaux, Martine and Andre Dieval, Denis Duflo, Daniel Kuszak, Odile Lemercier, Jean-Philippe Maillefer, Philippe Nédellec, Jeanne and Henri Pavie, Philippe Picherit, Christiane and Jean-Marie Rouet, Chantal Rousseau, Beatrice Viandier, Bryan Woy, Denis Duflo. Thank you to our correspondents abroad: in the USA: Jean Astrop, Ozzie Johnson, Lynden Miller and Alyson Breuer; and in Europe: Roger and Kathleen Dinsdale, Frank Dutra, John Gregg, Maurice Foster (research and writing articles); Harry van Trier, Yan Oprins; as well as members of the media: Julia Roberts ("Garden Illustrated" Sept. 2010). Robin Lane Fox in his recent book "Thoughtful Gardening" (Penguin books, 2010) with a chapter about Shamrock "Lacecaps under trees"

New Members 2010

We are happy to welcome these new members :

Eric & Brigitte BASTIEN
Annie-Claude BRUNEVAL
Chrisophe CANESANT
Reynald CANESANT
Gérard & Michèle CAUCHI
Rémy & Floriane DEMAREST
Paul DENOUE
Danièle DUNOGENT
Elisabeth HUET-DEHESME
Paul & Frédérique LEGROS
Bruno de GROBOIS
Marc MORON
Anny MARSAC
Henri MERCIER
Martine MERLIN
René & Jacqueline RUDI
Jona RUTTEN
Gaëlle SEYDOUX
Gilbert & Annick TESSON

Thanks to all of you for the help you bring us, indispensable for the future of Shamrock.

A GREAT FRIEND HAS LEFT US

Roland Grossi, former Treasurer of the Society. With his wife Huguette they have been present from the beginning of 'Shamrock', always ready to help with enthusiasm.



ROLAND GROSSI

A NEW COMMITTEE FOR THE 'SHAMROCK' ASSOCIATION

Following the A.G.M. on 24 April 2010, the new board is made up as follows:

**President: Bryan Woy
Treasurer: Henri Pavie
Secretary: Josiane Lamache**

Twenty years of introductions: soon LG 2000 !

by Robert Mallet

This code, which, in 2011, will very soon be allocated to the introduction of a new hydrangea in the collection, gives a good indication of the average number of plants recorded every year at 'Shamrock'. In fact, the code LG 0001 was assigned to *H. arborescens* 'Annabelle' (acquired from Peter Chappell) in 1991 when the collection was first installed on the road to the church in Varengeville-sur-Mer around the house called "La Loge", hence the abbreviated code. This year, therefore, we will have recorded 2,000 plants in 20 years*; an average of 100 per year. Even when we remove duplicates from multiple origins, and plants that have died (285), this adds up to a whole lot of plants to be potted, planted, observed and photographed; especially in view of the fact that, as far as we can see, this trend seems very unlikely indeed to stop or even slow down. Thanks to everyone who has helped with this work over the years, with everything from exploration to exhibiting the plants.

However for the sake of history (and for the opportunity to express our gratitude) it is useful to examine our main sources of supply during these years. Until 1990 new plants came from the Centre d'Art Floral nursery (1978-1990) at Bois des Moutiers in Varengeville, which was supplied by Hilliers Nurseries, Spinners Nursery (belonging to Peter Chappell) and Esveld Nursery. The hydrangea 'Grayswood' was introduced very early on from the nursery at Great Dixter. Many plants were received as gifts from Jelena De Belder (imported directly from Japan or from her selections, particularly *H. paniculata*).

After that 'Shamrock' began to be populated by entire collections: Dussine in Angers (135 cultivars rescued from oblivion by Paul), and Wisley (118 cultivars recovered from the Rosewarne experimental garden). Later, from other more or less specialized nurseries: Paradis Desjardins (43), Didier Boos (137), Bulk (21), Crûg Farm (126), Pride of Place Plants (28), E. de La Fonchais (47).

Exchanges with foreign collections were also very helpful: Louisiana Nurseries (18 cultivars in 1995), Zuschendorf Botanical Garden (84 cultivars), Maurice Foster (47), Glyn Church (34), Wilkerson Mill Garden (15) and Ozzie Johnson (10).

From breeders: K. & W. Hofstede, Marie-France Doll, van Klaveren, Jean Renault (who has contributed, amongst other things, 80 plants collected in other collections), Kees Evekens, Lionel Chauvin, Sicamus, Minier, and, recently, Katrin Meinel (19).

A large contingent of plants was brought back from Japan by Corinne Mallet during her 5 trips (92-93-94-96-2000): donations by Yamamoto-san (34), Sugimoto-san (60), and collected in nature or received as gifts (74).

* In addition to the 250 plants with other codes, introduced before 1991



labelling
(Robert Mallet)



hydrangea LG 0001
H. arborescens 'Annabelle'



Plantation
Pierre Courquin & J.-Pierre Péan

Major work in the “Jardin Céleste”



*The team from “La Traverse”
working on the Crop-Circle*



*The Crop-Circle in flower
photographed from the ziggurat*

Work and Activities on the Crop Circle

Designed by Maxence Leroy in January 2006 from an aerial photo of a geometric pattern which appeared in a field of grain on 4 July, 2002, near Stonehenge, the Shamrock “Crop Circle” (1) took shape during the following spring, financed by a grant from the Rouen Collines Rotary Club. From the time it was laid out it proved very difficult to maintain, because grass tended to cover everything up, and even its shape tended to disappear. We had to make a decision: either to forget it altogether, or to highlight it and give it a horticultural usefulness; for example by experimenting with new cultivars in a sunny location. To achieve this, a team of young apprentices from the “La Traverse” educational centre, led by Henri Guyomard, who are always ready for feats of strength, completely “cut out” the Shamrock Crop Circle, i.e. they removed the earth to a depth of 20 cm all around the design and replaced it with shredded material from the pruning of the adjacent avenue of lime trees. The Crop Circle was then planted by Shamrock members, with new plants provided by professional suppliers: Chauvin, and Hortensia-France-Production (2).

Subsequently the plan is to no longer plant actually on the branches of the Crop Circle, but between them, and to cover the branches with decorative paving. Maintenance work continued during the summer, particularly with the help of Denis Duflo, who came once with his gardener, Gérald Derrien, and another time with his daughter.

(1) for further information, read the book by Michael Glickman “Crop Circles” (Frog Books, Berkeley, 2009)

(2) cultivars have been planted alternately on each branch:

light blue: ‘Hopaline’, ‘Libertin’, ‘Coquin’ - dark blue: ‘Côte d’Azur’, ‘Fripon’- white: ‘Wudu’.



A new gazebo

Anyone who remembers the ruinous state of the old gazebo will be delighted to see how good the new one looks.

It was erected by Corinne, helped by Reynald and Christophe Canesant, two new members of the

Association.

You can see the inside of this new structure, which can be dismantled and moved elsewhere if and when necessary, in the photo, taken at the ‘Shamrock working day’ on 7 November 2010. Left to right, front row: Galia Guillaume, Nicole Hagneré, and the Association’s new Secretary, Josiane Lamache. Behind: Martine Dieval (centre), next to Henri Lamache.

On 7 November last year, members of the Association got together to carry out different jobs in the collection, including dead-heading, and pruning, lopping and logging in the “Green Dragon Wood”. In the photo you can see Raymond Guillaume and Henri Lamache at work in the Wood.



HYDRANGEA 'DOMOTOI'

Story of a plant and a family

by Roger Dinsdale

Hydrangea 'Domotoi' is a cultivar that originated in Japan, bearing the Japanese names 'Yae', 'Sekka Yae' and 'Setsuka Yae' (1), and was introduced into the United States by the Domoto brothers who came originally from Tanaka, Wakayama, Japan. The four brothers were Takanoshin, Kanetaro, Motonoshin and Mitsunoshin Domoto (they adopted English forenames to help them bed in to American society and were known also as Frank, Tom, Henry and Harry, respectively). Born in the 1860s, Takanoshin and Kanetaro immigrated to California in the mid 1880s, to be followed a little later by their younger siblings.

Kanetaro is recorded as having obtained a position as an assistant to a head gardener but before long the brothers had started a small nursery business in Oakland, California, where Kanetaro and brother Motonoshin were the driving force. By 1902 they had a 35 acre nursery at the foot of the Oakland Hills, referred to as the 'New Ranch'. There they produced not only cut flowers but also imported ornamental plants from Japan, becoming pioneers of the US nursery industry in the process. After WWII they established their Domoto Brothers nursery in Hayward, California, and were duly honored with the American Horticultural Society's Commercial Award.

The Japanese cultivar in question was introduced by them to the US in 1913 (2) and re-named 'Domotoi' by Kanetaro Domoto (according to his son, the eminent horticulturalist and nurseryman, the late Toichi Domoto). Exhibited at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, it gained a gold medal.

Interestingly, Toichi Domoto observed that the garden varieties, such as 'Domotoi', were unsuited to forcing for pot culture and that shorter, more compact varieties for that purpose tended to be hybrids sent over from the Eastern US. (From Joseph S. Merritt Inc. of Maryland, one wonders).

'Domotoi' was mentioned in the Journal of the Arnold Arboretum in 1922 as *H. macrophylla* f. *Domotoi* (Wilson) and also in UK publications in 1925 and 1930. How 'Domotoi' came to the UK and continental Europe I am not sure, but the name 'Domotoi' suggests it came via the USA. Perhaps the cultivars bearing the original Japanese names came to Europe directly from Japan (3).

- (1) The new Kawashima Index gives 'SekkaYae' (Ajisai) synonym of 'Junihitoe' and 'Taika Yae'. Another "monstrous" double form is named 'Sekka Yae Kurojiku' (with black stem).
- (2) in Toichi Domoto's interview, he states: "Importations of new plants continued and in 1913 they brought in from Japan plants of a double-flowered *Hydrangea macrophylla* (*H. otaksa*). Tom Domoto named this form 'Domotoi'.
- (3) NDLR: 'Domotoi' under its Japanese names did not appear in continental collections until much later (no mention of these names either in the Bean, nor Haworth-Booth whereas Yamamoto had sent him many plants in the fifties but no 'Yae'). Corinne Mallet was given one 'Yae' in 1994 from Yamamoto sensei in Tokyo and brought it back). It is therefore more probable that 'Domotoi' came to Europe from the US.



H. Domotoi in the Shamrock Col

News, New plants & Correspondence

Dear Shamrock.

Mission accomplished for the weekend of 31 July - 1 August. Groups arrived in regular waves. One enthusiastic couple even came directly from visiting 'Shamrock'; I gather they wanted to learn more about propagation.

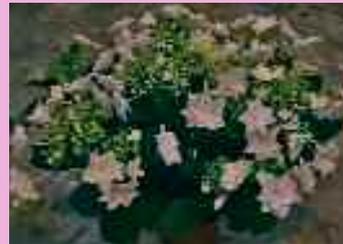
Love from Daniel



Daniel Kuzsak on his stand at Valloire, with prominently displayed 'Shamrock' poster!

From JEAN ASTROP in ATLANTA (Georgia) (Zone 7) 'Endless Summer', 'Miss Belgium', 'Taube', 'Penny Mac', 'Mini Penny', and 'Mme. E. Mouillère'.

All of these plants were well able to tolerate the last, exceptionally severe winter (2009-2010). Snow and ice for a whole week and continuous cold; most unusual for here.



The variety 'Shooting Stars' is one of the varieties from Horteve Breeding; it was a crossing sown in 2005, and selected by me in 2006. We have some new ones, with double flowers, looking even better, coming up. Kind regards,

Kees Eveleens

Hello Shamrock !

I confirm the name I want to give my new *H. serrata* (*) seedling is: *H. 'SALTYKOVA'*, (the Ukrainian village where my grandfather grew up).

Jean-Pierre Péan

(*) with red leaves and stems; it has been given a Shamrock Award. Congratulations!



A new book about hydrangeas has come out in Japan. The title is "Hydrangea Kawashima Index", published by Aboc-sha.



The new hydrangea 'Sundae-Fraise' and its creator, Jean Renault

For the second time, SHAMROCK AWARDS have been awarded to hydrangeas, grown in the 'Shamrock' garden, which are still little known, despite their deserving qualities.

WHAT IS HARMFUL, AND WHAT IS BENEFICIAL TO HYDRANGEAS

Henri Lamache

Be careful about the proximity of conifers (*Picea glauca*, *Cupressocyparis Leylandii*, for example). Conifers are "water pumpers"; moreover their very compact needles hinder the passage of rainwater and leave little chance for hydrangeas to be able to grow.

By contrast, hollies, with their centralized root system, fetch their water from deep in the ground and are thus well able to share their territory with hydrangeas.

In addition to being a wind break, they provide light shade, just enough for hydrangeas to receive filtered sunlight. Our "blues" thank us every year for this fellowship, by rewarding us with a beautiful display of blooms.

Please do not confuse: 'Shiro Gaku', 'Lanarth White', and 'Pengwin'.

'**Shiro Gaku**': sepals overlapping, pointed and slightly serrated - reddish lenticels - greenish-white fertile heart. (photo: <http://hydrangeaspassion>)

'**Lanarth White**': sepals overlapping and entire - no lenticels - blue fertile heart. (photo Shamrock)

'**Pengwin**': sepals separate and lanceolate - brownish lenticels - pinkish white fertile heart - no colours at the nodes. (photo Shamrock)

See Corinne's book ("Hydrangea", Ulmer 2004), pp. 99, 100, 101.

H. heteromalla 'Tony Schilling' (see photo on the front page)

From a sowing of seeds collected during an expedition by the famous explorer in eastern Nepal (Yelung Ridge) in 1983. It is a vigorous clone (up to 6 metres in nature) and hardy, since it was collected at high altitude. Two clones were acquired from Peter Chappell in 1997, and recorded under the codes LG 0681 and LG 0682; only the latter is truly spectacular. Having already reached the height of 4 metres, it is laden with scented flowers in early June. We named it in 2010, with the agreement of its discoverer. (sponsorship by André Diéval)

H. serrata 'Kaikyô' This quite astonishing plant comes from Japan. It was a gift from Maurice Foster in 2006. Excellent photos can be seen in the Kawashima Index (mentioned above). The plant is a dark purple lacecap, vigorous, and with a long flowering period.

H. serrata 'Hoi-no-Hoshi' (to be seen on-site) Korean plant, found by Mototeru Kamo. It has two types of very beautiful and colourful inflorescences. It was given to us by Vivaio Borgioli.

HYDRANGEAS OF MERRITT*

par Roger Dinsdale

The People

Joseph S. Merritt, Inc. was a classic example of a successful family business. Founded by Joseph Samuel Merritt in 1913, it continued under the management of Joseph S. Merritt Jr. and in the early 1980s management passed to Robert C. Merritt, Joseph Senior's grandson. Also part of the family firm was D. Stewart Padgett, the husband of Virginia Merritt (Joseph Senior's daughter).

Joseph Samuel Merritt was born in Dundalk, Maryland, USA in 1893, the ancestral family having migrated from Britain around the late 17th or early 18th century. He lived a full life as a successful horticulturalist and businessman whilst outside the horticultural sphere he was active in civil work. Merritt was both an initiator and the first president of the Dundalk Rotary Club, becoming a district governor of Rotary International and, in addition, the original chairman of the Dundalk Y.M.C.A.

His son, Joseph S. Merritt Jr. followed in his father's footsteps in both spheres, being named as Dundalk Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year in 1972 for his contributions to business and civic life. Like his father, he was a district governor of Rotary International as well as president of the Dundalk Rotary Club whilst his son, Robert, occupied the latter position and D. Stewart Padgett. The Merritts are an old Baltimore family and the name features prominently in Dundalk including a Merritt boulevard, park and shopping centre.



Joseph S. Merritt Sr.

His horticultural and business prowess saw Joseph Merritt Sr. become the leader of several florists' organisations including a period as president of the Society of American Florists. Indeed, he was so closely associated with hydrangeas that he was given an appropriate nickname, as the following reference in the *Gardeners' Chronicle of America* of 1930 shows: 'Joseph S. Merritt, better known as "Hydrangea Joe," gave a short talk on "The Better Hydrangeas of Today"'. Joseph Jr. continued in the same vein both speaking and writing papers on hydrangea culture for horticultural trade journals. Amongst these was 'Hydrangea Culture in Brief', published by Merritt Inc. which explained to customers how to get the best out of Merritt's products.

Joseph Jr. was born in 1919 and showed his flair for horticulture whilst still in High School when he won first prize of \$500 and a gold cup for his entry of azaleas in the National Flower Show in Baltimore. After graduation from the University of Maryland's horticulture program where he obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture (his son, Robert, did likewise), Joseph joined the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was called to active service in 1943, in the course of which he piloted a B17 bomber out of Deopham Green Airfield, Attleborough, in the county of Norfolk, England.

In addition to the official service decorations he also received a certificate proclaiming him a member of the 'Lucky Bastards' club for flying 35 missions over enemy territory. Lucky, indeed. Returning to civilian life in 1945, he Joseph Merritt Sr. started his greenhouse business in 1913 growing cut flowers and general nursery crops. By 1920, however, he had shifted to pot plants exclusively, before deciding, by the 1920s, to concentrate on just one type of plant - big-leaf (macrophylla-type) hydrangeas. In his view it was best to narrow the focus and specialise in one type of plant and to do that extremely well - and Merritt Inc. most certainly succeeded.

That same focus can be seen in the company's order forms as they change between 1936 and 1982 where the range of cultivars available reduces from 33 to 9 (although only six in 1978) and the range of sizes offered (over and above rooted cuttings) drops from seven to four. In fact, by 1970 the number of varieties on offer had dropped below and remained below 10, the list featuring, more or less, 'the usual suspects', with a few varieties being offered as both pink and blue, once again simplifying the operation. Merritt's business was volume floriculture, not that of a specialist hydrangea nursery; thus, as Robert explained, there was no need to offer the customer unnecessary choice - pick the best and phase out the rest. Customers tended to want plants according to colour and impressive size of bloom. The latter feature accounted for the immense popularity of both 'Merritt's Supreme' (the best seller) and 'Rose Supreme'. Reds were the most popular choice, with blue some way behind and whites a very distant third.

This business strategy certainly paid off and Merritt Inc. was considered the biggest hydrangea producer in the USA. At its peak, with its greenhouses at 1919 Hydrangea Road just east of Dundalk, it is said to have been producing over half a million plants a year. Indeed, Merritt's hydrangea farm was often called 'The Hydrangea Capital of the World' by the floral trade and was estimated at one time to have been producing about one fifth of all hydrangeas in the United States.

joined the family business becoming President of Joseph S. Merritt, Inc. in 1964, a position he occupied until he retired in 1983. In addition, he went on to become active in many horticultural organisations including being president of the Middle Atlantic Florists Association in 1955 and president of the Allied Florists Association of Greater Baltimore in 1962. *(continued page 9)*

* Not a typographical error, but a small play on words, for these are hydrangeas from

HYDRANGEAS OF MERRITT

The Merritt Hydrangeas

The following are drawn in the main from the order forms of Joseph S. Merritt, Inc.

Cultivar	Season	Colour
'Merritt's Supreme'	M	Deep pink
'Merritt's Beauty'	E	Dark carmine red
'Merritt's Blue'	M*	A good blue
'Merritt's Pride'	M	A new red
'Bobby Merritt'	M	Coral bell pink
'Jean Merritt'	M	Dark pink
'Joan Merritt'	M	A new white
'Virginia Merritt'	-	(description not found)
'Helen Merritt'	-	Deep rose (see below)

E = Early

M = Mid-Season

L = Late

* = blues easily

Several of the Merritt plants are named for family members, Helen being the wife of Joseph Senior, Virginia their daughter and Jean being the wife of Joseph S. Merritt Jr. 'Bobby Merritt' was named after the son of Joseph and Jean Merritt, while the pure white 'Joan Merritt' was named in 1951 for his their three-year-old daughter Joan Carol and which would be introduced at the National Flower Show, Washington, in March of 1952.

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RECENT INTRODUCTIONS ALL TOP NOTCHERS	STANDARD VARIETIES
<p>A. ALLIANCE, Early, Deep pink</p> <p>B. BLOSSOM, Early, Intermediate</p> <p>C. HAMBURG, Early, Columbia</p> <p>D. KUNERT, Early, Deep pink, Blue leaf</p> <p>E. LITTLE, Intermediate, Early pink, Intermediate</p> <p>F. MERRITT'S SUPREMACY, Early, Dark pink, Intermediate</p> <p>G. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>H. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>I. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>J. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>K. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>L. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>M. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>N. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>O. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>P. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>Q. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>R. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>S. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>T. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>U. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>V. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>W. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>X. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>Y. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>Z. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p>	<p>1. MERRITT'S SUPREMACY, Early, Dark pink</p> <p>2. E. G. HILL, Early, Deep pink, Intermediate</p> <p>3. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>4. LITTLE, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>5. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>6. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>7. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>8. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>9. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>10. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>11. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>12. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>13. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>14. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>15. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>16. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>17. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>18. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>19. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>20. NORTON, Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p>

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<p>1. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>2. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>3. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>4. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>5. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>6. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>7. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>8. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>9. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>10. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>11. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>12. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>13. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>14. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>15. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>16. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>17. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>18. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>19. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p> <p>20. Early, Intermediate, Dark pink</p>	<p>Hydrangeas to 4-6 inches will have as listed above from Middle Tennessee, and as listed from December 1st We can ship anywhere. Please let us know your address early so that we can get you the best material possible.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Merritt's Hydrangea Bloom 442-7878-7922</p>

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JOSEPH S. MERRITT SR. JR.

The Maryland Flower Garden

HYDRANGEA SPECIALISTS

MAIL ADDRESS: P. O. BOX F, DUNDALK 22, MD.



Aerial view of Merritt's Hydrangea Plantation
 of Dundalk (Baltimore) Maryland

HYDRANGEAS OF MERRITT

The Business

Joseph Merritt Sr. started his greenhouse business in 1913 growing cut flowers and general nursery crops. By 1920, however, he had shifted to pot plants exclusively, before deciding, by the 1920s, to concentrate on just one type of plant - big-leaf (macrophylla-type) hydrangeas. In his view it was best to narrow the focus and specialise in one type of plant and to do that extremely well - and Merritt Inc. most certainly succeeded.

That same focus can be seen in the company's order forms as they change between 1936 and 1982 where the range of cultivars available reduces from 33 to 9 (although only six in 1978) and the range of sizes offered (over and above rooted cuttings) drops from seven to four. In fact, by 1970 the number of varieties on offer had dropped below and remained below 10, the list featuring, more or less, 'the usual suspects', with a few varieties being offered as both pink and blue, once again simplifying the operation. Merritt's business was volume floriculture, not that of a specialist hydrangea nursery; thus, as Robert explained, there was no need to offer the customer unnecessary choice - pick the best and phase out the rest. Customers tended to want plants according to colour and impressive size of bloom. The latter feature accounted for the immense popularity of both 'Merritt's Supreme' (the best seller) and 'Rose Supreme'. Reds were the most popular choice, with blue some way behind and whites a very distant third.

This business strategy certainly paid off and Merritt Inc. was considered the biggest hydrangea producer in the USA. At its peak, with its greenhouses at 1919 Hydrangea Road just east of Dundalk, it is said to have been producing over half a million plants a year. Indeed, Merritt's hydrangea farm was often called 'The Hydrangea Capital of the World' by the floral trade and was estimated at one time to have been producing about on fifth of all hydrangeas in the United States.

However, to remain competitive, a business must innovate and Merritt Sr. would bring 25 or so new plants at a time to maturity in order to evaluate them. And here we come back to specialisation; Merritt Inc. specialised in mass production - the provision of new varieties he left to European breeders. A 1951 Baltimore newspaper mentioned that 'Mr. Merritt ... has imported several new varieties from Ghent, Belgium ... the same plants that were the feature of the 1950 International Flower Show in Belgium.'

A US Plant Patents publication shows the following entry:

No.	For	Patent Granted	Inventor	Assigned to	Introduction Name
415	Hydrangea	August 6, 1940	John H Kluis, Boskoop, Netherlands	Joseph S. Merritt Dundalk, Md	Virginia Merritt
276	Hydrangea	April 19, 1938	John H Kluis, Boskoop, Netherlands	Joseph S. Merritt Dundalk, Md	Helen Merritt

An entry in a German publication on American Plant Patents, dated 1940, further described H. 'Helen Merritt' thus: *'Registered on the 2nd of August 1937, patent granted on the 19th of April 1938. JOHN H. KLUIS, Boskoop, Netherlands, transferred to Joseph S. Merritt, Dundalk, Maryland. Through a cross between 'M. Foch' and 'La Marne' the new conservatory hortensia distinguishes itself through early blossom and thick flower clusters of geranium pink color. Through addition of acid to the soil, the blossom can develop a cornflower blue color. The leaves are very numerous and of especially strong constitution.'* Concerning 'Merritt's Supreme' its origin could be rather Draps-Dom in 1950. (see Frank Dutra's article p. 13)

Merritt Inc. closed for business in 1984. The causes were many: the high costs of production both for Merritt and its customers - especially heating costs; finally, in the closing years of the business, a proportion of both stock and production plants started to suffer from a severe leaf malformation which affected anything up to 20 percent of production. At the same time, the 22 acre site had become worth more as real estate than as a working business and it is now, apparently, home to a recycling centre.

Cultivars listed by year from order forms of Joseph S. Merritt, Inc.

Cultivar	Breeder	1936	1949	1950	1950	1978	Total 1936-1984
Altona	Schadenhoff 1931	X	X	X			3
Ami l'espèr	F. Mouillère 1930	X					1
Arthur Billard	L. Mouillère 1931		X				1
Banclus	Baardse 1950			X			1
Bobby Merritt			X	X			2
Caprice	Cayoux 1920		X	X			2
Cardinal (Red)	L. Mouillère 1958						2
Charm (Charme)	Cayoux 1917		X	X			2
Charming	Draps 1938		X	X			2
Deutschaard	Baardse 1921	X					1
Dèle	Draps		X	X			2
Draps Pink	Draps 1938		X	X			2
Dunbek			X	X			2
E G Hill	Lomolne 1912	X					1
E Mouillère (Mma?)	E Mouillère 1909	X					1
Engel's White			X	X			2
Enzlandom	Schinger 50						1
Europa	Schadenhoff 1931	X	X	X			3
Flambard	II. Cayoux 1928		X				1
Flamboyant	L. Mouillère 1950						1
Gertrude Liehn	Matthes 1921	X	X	X			3
Gischhorr	Wintergalen ~1930	X					1
Glory	Draps-Dum 1948						3
Gloeth	Matthes 1923	X	X				2
Hamburg	Schadenhoff 1931	X	X	X			3
Heige	Wintergalen 1921	X					1
Hollandia	Baardse	X					1
Hulstien	Schadenhoff 1928		X				2
Jean Merritt			X	X			2
Joan Merritt				X			1
Kulman	Matthes 1928	X		X	X	X	18
L'oiseau	Wintergalen 1924	X					1
Louis Sauvage	Mouillère 1928	X	X				2
Marcot's Fish	F. Mouillère 1919	X					1
Mein Liebling	Matthes 1926	X					1
Merritt's Beauty			X				1
Merritt's Blue					X		1
Merritt's Pride							3
Merritt's Supreme					X	X	14
Merveille	II. Cayoux 1927	X	X	X	X		8
Merville (improved)						X	10
Mme. Baardse	Baardse 1918	X					1
Mme. G. J. Bier (G.F.)	Draps 1938		X				1
Monic Forté Pearl	Bruggen 1945						3
Niederachosen	Wintergalen 1914	X	X	X			3
Olafsa	Siebold, von 1859	X					1
Parabel	Wintergalen 1922	X					1
Pinnacle			X				1
Pirate (patented)	Cayoux 1950						1
Præcedent II. Touchard	Draps 1938		X				1
Princess Beatrix	Draps 1945		X				1
Red Cup	Mouillère 1955						2
Red Emperor	Draps 1938		X				1
Red Star					X		5
Rhinogold	Wintergalen 1920	X					1
Regula	Moll 1934	X	X	X	X	X	19
Rosabelle	H. Cayoux 1928	X	X	X			3
Rose Supreme	(*)		X	X	X	X	18
Royal	Cayoux 1902						4
Schadenhoff's Paris	Schadenhoff 1928	X					1
Seder's Grand Thangka	Cayoux 1945				X	X	16
Sonnenruss	Matthes 1936	X					1
Southwest			X	X			2
Soleil de Mme. E. Choutard	Mouillère 1908	X					1
Splendens	Cayoux 1919	X					1
Springtime			X	X			2
Steinmetz		X					1
Stafford	(*)		X	X	X		11
Teak	Kobal, Schöler 1957				X		11
Trophée	Lomolne 1919	X					1
Waldleben	Wintergalen 1940	X					1
Willkommen	Matthes 1928	X					1

At least 88 cultivars have been offered based on the above plus the following referred to in other archive material: 'Baby Bimbenet' (Mouillère, 1910), 'Lilie Mouillère' (Mouillère, 1914), 'Helen Merritt' and 'Virginia Merritt' (John Kluis, Boskoop, patented 1938 and 1940 respectively), 'Gudrun' (Wintergalen, 1923), 'Krimhild' (Wintergalen, 1924), 'Lancelot' (Wintergalen, 1920), 'Elmar' (Wintergalen, 1928), 'Coquelicot' (Mouillère, 1922), 'Jacques C. Grönwegen' (D. Baardse, 1920), 'Souvenir du Lieutenant Chauré' (Mouillère, 1909), 'Susanne Cayeux' (Cayoux, 1919), 'Générale Vicomtesse de Vibraye' (Mouillère, 1909), 'Fantasia' (advertised in 1984!), 'Zürich' (Moll, 1947) and 'Sanctis' ('Sants' ? Wädenswil, 1948).

(*)Van Gelderens 'Encyclopedia' credits this to Swanson, United Kingdom 1950 although the 'Ball Red Book' 1985 states that it is of American origin. (**) 'Strafford' see article page 12

HYDRANGEAS OF MERRITT

The "Louisiana Nursery Connection"

When the 'Merritt' hydrangeas are listed in books on the genus, they are often credited to 'Louisiana Nursery' (now the Durio Nursery) of Opelousas, Louisiana. Whilst no longer specialising in hydrangeas, as recently as 2000 it carried a big range, amongst which were 'Supreme' and 'Beauty'. Louisiana Nursery may have been an important source of Merritt hydrangeas for both enthusiasts and some growers which has resulted in the assumption that the nursery bred them. The owners of the Nursery have confirmed, however, that they had no part in the breeding and that they understand the origin to be French.

Special thanks are due to:

. Sherry Vance and Dorothy Stiefel of the Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium, Mann Library, Cornell University, New York for copies of published articles and Merritt Inc. order forms.

. Sandra Reber, Archives and Research Assistant, Longwood Gardens Inc., Pennsylvania for copies of Merritt Inc. order forms.

. Mrs. Jean J. Merritt for copies of papers from the family archive.

. Dundalk - Patapsco Neck Historical Society & Museum, for access to their archives including the photographic images.

. Frank Dutra of Nantucket Hydrangea for his invaluable input.

SHIPPING OF PLANTS

Plants were shipped in batches of 25, bare-rooted, wrapped in moss and newspaper.

Plants were priced by the hundred, minimum of 25 per variety and, as an incentive, there was a 10% discount for orders of 10,000 plants and over!

It is recorded that Merritt filled an order for 150,000 plants from a grower selling to chain food markets although the buyer actually would have liked twice as many.

As at 1971, dormant plants were shipped in late December and January to greenhouses in 34 US states, Mexico, Canada and as far afield as New Zealand.



The 'Strafford' Story

by Roger Dinsdale

Firstly, a clarification. Based on the very limited number of references to them, I consider that the cultivar names 'Stratford' and 'Stafford' are invalid and probably all relate to 'Strafford'. It is a very easy typographical error to make and one that I have made more than once during the research.

So, whence cometh the name 'Strafford'? The answer lies in English history. Names such as Strafford, Strafforth, Stratford and Stretford all relate to places where a road (or street) crosses a river by way of a ford, thus: 'street' + 'ford' = 'streetford'.

The Strafford in our case is the one in South Yorkshire close to where lived the family of Thomas Wentworth, created the first Earl of Strafford by King Charles I around 1640. These were troubled times and the higher up the political ladder that one rose, the more of a 'health risk' it became. In the case of Thomas Wentworth it became very serious indeed and his grip on the title ended abruptly in 1641 when his head was cut off in a crowd-pleasing gesture on the orders of the King (although Charles did later 'forgive' Strafford).

Some descendents of the wider Wentworth family were also risk takers, travelling as they did to a distant land now known as the USA. Once there, they gave the name Strafford to a county of New Hampshire, a town in Vermont and, in the mid 1800s, John Langdon Wentworth gave the name Strafford to his mansion and 138 acre (56 ha.) estate on the North West outskirts of Philadelphia. This name now applies to the wider community and Strafford, Penn. is classed as an 'unincorporated township'.

It was in Strafford that the well known horticulturalist Edward A. Stroud built his Strafford Flower Farm and which he sold to the wholesale florist Alfred M. Campbell of Philadelphia in 1916. With its seven acres of glasshouses, it went on to become the largest flower growing operation on the east coast of America producing, among other things, a world-beating two million Easter lilies a year by 1927.

With others, Campbell was instrumental in founding the Philadelphia Flower Show Inc. and was still its president and director when he died in 1981 at the age of 99. His horticultural work won him many honours and he was recognised as one of the top growers in the United States. A 1981 obituary stated that 'In 1939, he bred and named the 'Strafford' variety of hydrangea, the only variety of hydrangea to win a gold medal in any American horticultural judging or in an American show'.

But just how true is this? Press cuttings state that 'Strafford' received gold medals at the New York International Flower Show in 1939 and in the Philadelphia Flower Show in 1940. The New York Show date suggests that the statement in the obituary is incorrect - if it was bred in 1939 it would not have been winning medals in the same year. And in Campbell's own advertisements in the US floristry press, he declares himself to be 'the introducer' rather than the breeder.

So, just how 'new' was it? There is no definitive statement or date concerning its breeding and we know that many of the hydrangeas available in the US at that time had their origins in Europe, as the story of Joseph Merritt's hydrangeas makes clear. An alternative origin is suggested by a reference in Tom C. Weiler's chapter on Hydrangeas in the 1980 book 'Introduction to Floriculture,' which states that 'Strafford' is, in fact, a re-naming of Cayeux's 1920 cultivar 'Triomphe'. But no document seems to confirm this hypothesis yet(see photos below).

Acknowledgements:

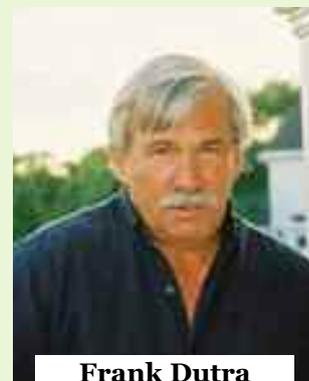
I am indebted to Laurence Hatch for identifying the Strafford Flower Farm, Pennsylvania as a possible source and to Janet Evans of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society for locating and providing the documentary evidence concerning Alfred M. Campbell.



Merritt's Reigns Supreme

by Frank Dutra

When Joseph Merritt Sr. of Baltimore, Maryland, first selected a particularly promising seedling to introduce to hydrangea growers in 1961, he could hardly have foreseen the impact it was to have on the North American potted hydrangea plant industry. 'Merritt's Supreme', first cited as being bred by Draps, circa 1950 (1), was quite possibly one of a batch of 25 seedlings that Merritt had acquired from Belgium and Holland during the summer of 1953 as reported in a 1954 article in the Baltimore Sun (2). These seedlings were mentioned again in a 1955 talk given to the Southern Flower Grower's Association (3) by his son Joseph Merritt Jr. when he stated "... we are currently testing several new varieties that show promise for being added to our list in the not too distant future".



Frank Dutra

The 1961 release date of 'Merritt's Supreme' first appears on the annually updated order form of their firm, Joseph S. Merritt, Inc., The Maryland Flower Garden, Hydrangea Specialists, Dundalk, Md, and relates well to the 5 year testing and development period described by the Senior Merritt in the previous article. The best chance of determining the exact date of breeding and, more importantly, the ancestral cross used to produce 'Merritt's Supreme', likely lies with Draps Dom, Strombeek, Belgium.

By 1980, it had topped the charts, exceeding the sales numbers of any of the other cultivars then offered by the Oregon Hydrangea Company (OHC), the leading producer of unrooted hydrangea cuttings for both the US and Canada's potted plant industry. According to Richard Yock of OHC, it has easily held that position for the past 30 years, and is only now seeing a challenge from its nearest competitor, 'Mathilde Gütges' (STEINIGER 1946). Russell Weiss of Kurt Weiss Hydrangea, currently the largest producer of potted hydrangea plants on the US East Coast concurs, estimating the total annual US and Canadian sales to be between 9 and 10 million 4-10" hydrangea plants, over half of which are 'Merritt's Supreme'. "We were totally overwhelmed by 'Merritt's Supreme' compared to some of the other cultivars we were then raising."

Back in the fifties and sixties, botrytis was the number one enemy for growers often causing major losses among the then popular, red colored varieties like 'Merveille' (CAYEUX Henri 1927) and 'Leuchtfeuer' (DIENEMANN 1962). "Merritt's had them all beat by a long shot, didn't need to be staked, and broke nicely for year round production". As Raymond Yock, OHC, puts it "When they (growers) say they want to try something new, what they really mean is they want a plant that behaves just like Merritt's with something different on top." To quote Joseph Merritt Sr. from the aforementioned newspaper article (3), "The ideal of beauty in the hydrangea world is a deep pink blossom similar in color to the "Better Times" rose. It would seem that he had found his Holy Grail, not just the perfect color, but all the other qualities highly valued by hydrangea breeders and growers alike: a colorful, free flowering plant that breaks readily, branches well after pinching, with short stature and thick stems that require little or no staking, disease resistance, and a short production period. 'Merritt's Supreme' was destined to rise to dominance in less than 20 years from its release, and would become the unrivaled legacy of the Joseph S Merritt firm just 4 years prior to their closing in 1984.

Over its reign, 'Merritt's Supreme' has given rise to several heirs that will guarantee the survival of superior genes. 'Oregon Pride' (YOCK 1975), is a branch sport discovered by 16 year old Theresa Yock, OHC, growing as a single stem amongst hundreds of established 'Merritt's Supremes'. Dark purple stems rise from the base to support the inflorescences erectly above the foliage. The sepals are similar in color and less densely crowded, with the inflorescences being slightly smaller and somewhat flatter than those of 'Merritt's Supreme'. The thick stems are retained with more elongated internodes creating a less compact plant by comparison.

A second sport ideal for the pot trade is "Ravel" (SOUSA 1996) discovered at Bay City Flowers, Half Moon Bay, California, currently the US's leading producer of potted hydrangeas. Each sepal displays 4 pigmented, fan shaped areas on a white background that range in color from a bright pink to a bit more subdued, reddish purple. A third sport, 'Snow White' (Dutra 2000) is the grandchild or third generation of 'Merritt's Supreme', discovered at Nantucket Hydrangea as a single white inflorescences growing alongside 3 normal bi-colored ones in a 4 stemmed potted 'Ravel'. It lacks any apparent traces of red pigmentation in stem, petiole, leaf or sepals which age to a mint green without the red flecking or blushing typical of other white flowering cultivars. Both 'Ravel' and 'Snow White' are similar to 'Merritt Supreme' in size, form, flowering behavior, and resistance to disease, making them ideal candidates for the trade, with 'Oregon Pride' being a bit too tall for some growers tastes. All three share the cold tenderness of their ancestor and as such are best grown in the more favorable locales

Merritt's Reigns Supreme

Unfortunately, a perfect pot plant does not a perfect landscape plant make. The tendency to readily break dormancy at the first sign of rising temperatures early in the spring that is so valued by growers, is the bane of gardeners in warmer areas subject to late frosts.

The same traits desired by the pot trade, compact growth habit with thick, pithy stems and short internode spacing, are also often times the hallmark of susceptibility to winter dieback and loss of terminal buds. Gardeners in the more Northern climes, expecting the beautiful, free flowering shrub they saw in nursery catalogs are, thus, frequently disappointed with the poor flowering often experienced after a cold, harsh winter. In North America, 'Merritt's Supreme' is often seen offered for sale by nurseries located in USDA Hardiness Zones 5b - 6b (-20 C to -24 C average minimum temperature) where it has almost no chance of flowering even after a moderate winter. In Zones 7a and 7b (-12 C to -15 C), it may occasionally flower with proper siting and some refuge from cold winter winds. Parts of the Southern United States, the Pacific Northwest, and other temperate coastal regions in zone 8 and 9 are perhaps the only areas where one could expect to see 'Merritt's Supreme' flowering reliably each year.

Part of Merritt's continued dominance is sheer habit, with growers knowing what to expect on the bench." Russell Weiss notes "I still grow more Merritt's than anything else but have begun branching out more and more with some of the newer cultivars coming in from the Hydrangea Breeders Association and other European breeders". Although Joseph Merritt Sr. and Jr. are gone, their legacy can be found across the USA, in the flowering hydrangeas originally received as a nameless and long forgotten Easter or Mother's Day gifts. Their work with Kluis or Draps in seeking the qualities desired for the pot trade, and the importation of established cultivars directly from the benches of Lemoine, Mouilliere, or Cayeux have resulted in nearly 100 cultivars with many still visible on American coasts. With their vivid range of colors and their subtlety of form, they will continually reward the discerning few willing to look beyond the ordinary.

1. Introduction to Floriculture, Thomas Weiler, 1980, pp
2. "Hydrangeas for 1955", "Merritt Hydrangea Theory: Specialization is Always Best", Joseph Merritt Jr, 1955, from the address give to the Southern Flower Growers' Association on March 2-3, 1955, and transcribed in the Southern Florist And Nurseryman, date of publication unknown
3. Down Dundalk Way, The Hydrangea Capitol of the World", Robert G Breen, The Baltimore Sun, April, 1954

'Merritt's Supreme' has given rise to several heirs : 'Oregon Pride', Snow White', and 'Ravel'



H. 'Merritt's Supreme'



H. 'Oregon Pride'



H. 'Snow White'



H. 'Ravel'

Another American Mystery

Frank Dutra's letter to Roger Dinsdale, on the subject of Hydrangea 'Dundalk'

Dear Roger,

I have attached a low resolution photo of a hydrangea colloquially referred to as the "Dundalk Hydrangea" which reportedly thrives in the area surrounding the old Merritt farm (Hydrangea Road!) and is held in high esteem by the locals as being a superior strain. It is reputed to have been handed down from Joseph Merritt Sr to a florist for the local trade sometime after 1930 when Merritt decided to specialize in hydrangeas. It should be noted that Joseph Merritt Jr was the principle involved during the Hay Day of the Merritt Farm's hydrangea business (1/2 million plants annually during 1950-1960) after the retirement of his father in 1950. I have a specimen received as Hydrangea 'Dundalk' from Oregon Hydrangea which could well be the same plant, though based on this one photo, I am unable to verify. I plan on visiting the Dundalk area next season armed with secateurs, notebook and newspaper clippings, and a list of contacts including Joseph Merritt Jr's widow. The farm was lost to development during 1984. I was hoping to publish my findings on the website but would much prefer a collaboration with yourself and Corinne if agreeable. The new (to me) information you have provided about the cultivars assigned to Joseph Merritt lends an air of international detective work and cooperation that could make for some good reading on both sides of the Atlantic. Best

Frank



French plants imported by Merritt

Arthur Billard	Mouillère 1931
Baby Bimbenet	Mouillère 1910
Caprice	Cayeux 1920
Flambard	Cayeux 1929
Flamboyant	Mouillère 1950
Louis Sauvage	Mouillère 1928
Merveille	Cayeux 1927
Rosebelle	Cayeux 1928
Suprême	Cayeux 1926
Sœur Thérèse	Gaigne 1945

information communicated by Roger Dinsdale

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THE INSPIRING TALE OF PIERRE BERECUT, WHO INVENTED AND FINANCED THE FAMOUS HYDRANGEA SITE IN LOMBARD STREET, SAN FRANCISCO

In 1905 this 17-year-old native of Magnac Bourg (87), in Limousin, had already learned to "handle a knife" in the hope of earning a living as a butcher (*). When working as a trainee in a Neuilly butcher's shop, he was noticed by an American customer who promised a bright future in the United States, even offering to pay for the trip. Sixty years later, joined by his four brothers, his family controlled a business empire, with 4 major buildings on the waterfront, a slaughterhouse and several successful businesses (including "The Great Market") related to the products of cattle breeding (meat, leather, etc..). From the height of his success, Pierre (or Peter) Bercut convinced the San Francisco municipal authorities to border Lombard Street, where he lived at No. 1010, with hydrangeas (plants that he was particularly fond of, belonging to a family that had always "genetically" been devoted to gardening). The result is fascinating and draws crowds of tourists who are amazed by the plants and also by the boldness and originality of this winding road. Fully funded by its inventor, including the road works, this garden carried a plaque in his memory in 1971, when a group of breeders of the Limousin breed of cattle, led by Louis de Neuville, was magnificently received by the whole family, who had still remained French at heart (they had created a French style restaurant for themselves). This winter we were able to see for ourselves the healthy state of the hydrangeas grown in this exceptional site, a few steps from the port of San Francisco. It is true that the climate is suitable for growing plants of the Hydrangea genus (poorly represented elsewhere, it seems, except for the eternal 'Otaksa'). Today the descendants of the Bercut family include many artists: a painter, a composer, and actors (**). Eliane Lust, the well-known pianist, lives a few yards away from the family home, on the corner of Lombard Street.



(*) According to the story given to us by Louis de Neuville, whose grandfather (of the same name) guided the young Pierre towards this career and even gave him some English lessons, which proved very useful to him later.

(**) We thank Mme. Jacques Hourlier (of Boisseul) for this information. She is the descendant of Louis Bercut (brother of Pierre) and keeps track of this large and talented family.

HYDRANGEA HARDINESS

HARDINESS OF "TELLERS" and other hybrids (Strasbourg)

... I promised to share my experiences with you about how hydrangeas resist the cold. This winter (2009-10) we had more than our share (7 weeks of freezing temperatures, fortunately never lower than -8°C). Here are the findings: the "Tellers" with 'bird' names do particularly well in my collection. 'Blaumeise' (over 1m80) a beautiful blue, 'Gimpel' has been healthy and free-flowering for over fifteen years... and this in spite of a reputation for not being very resistant to cold. Equally fine are: 'Eisvogel', 'Elster', 'Fasan', 'Flamingo', 'Libelle', 'Nachtigal', 'Pfau', 'Papagei' (weakest of the bunch), 'Rotdrossel', 'Rotkelchen', 'Rotschwanz', 'Zeisig' and 'Zaunkönig'. I lost 'Mücke' and 'Grasmücke' from the first winter, but I had already been warned about their fragility when I went to get them from Wädensvil. For hybrids of *H. macrophylla* that are said to be fragile, 'Albrechtsburg' was not a problem this winter; 'Frillibet' resisted, but is not strong. 'Mariesii', exposed to the wind and very often forgotten when watering, has resisted for at least 20 years. 'Merveille' presents no problems whereas 'Merveille Sanguine' is capricious and produces few flowers. I have problems with 'Nigra' (which comes from MC David, whose climate is even harsher than ours!), which has frozen down to the ground for 3 winters, but still survives, though with no flowers. Its stems are so dark that I can't help loving it! 'Seafoam', that is supposed to prefer oceanic climates, likes it here. 'Love You Kiss', deemed fragile, has been living in a pot for several years, producing plenty of flowers in season, healthy and vigorous.

By contrast, in the "S" series, only 'Sandra' (potted) is not a problem. I lost 'Sabrina' and 'Selina' in their first winter. In the "You and Me" series, which I bought in its entirety, only 'Romance' has survived. I also lost, despite several attempts, 'Belladonne' and 'Green Shadow'. With the *H. arborescens*, 'Annabelle' is superb, while 'Hayes Starburst' has failed to grow. Few surprises with *H. aspera*. 'Macrophylla' *H. Sargentiana* and 'Spinners' do very well. For *H. involucrata*, 'Hortensis' presents no problems. Likewise with many *H. quercifolia*, except with 'Little Honey', which died in its first winter. Curiously 'Snow Queen' which for years bore cone-shaped inflorescences, had ball-shaped ones last year (10-12 cm in diameter)! I'm curious to see what the flowers will be like this year. The hydrangeas that are most popular among visitors and which are superb, I must admit, are 'Blue Deckle', 'Prolifera', 'Graciosa', the sublime blue 'Renate Steiniger', 'Mathilda Gütges', 'Gimpel', with enormous sterile florets on long stalks, and 'Madame Emile Mouillère' collapsing under the weight of its flowers. Although little noticed, I really like 'Hills of Snow', which richly deserves its name. 'Oamacha' disappoints me every year, with few flowers, small leaves and an ugly colour. It is true that is planted under a huge spruce tree with extensive roots. So there you are: I've shared my world of hydrangeas with you, and look forward to seeing it once again this summer.

Christiane Lefftz

Note: *Christiane has informed us that the complete collection of "Tellers", direct from Wädensvil, is located in the Basel Botanical Garden in Bruglingen (outside the city).*

During one of our winter trips to Landschloss, I discovered a very specific technique, used by Matthias Riedel for protecting, in the best way, plants that are planted in the ground at the German collection:

Lots of sawdust and wood chips (which acidify the soil) are distributed one metre around the base to a depth of 10cm, and, on the plant itself, a network of interlocking soft-wood branches (fir, larch) in two or three rows - the wood part planted in the ground forming a teepee to avoid crushing the plant and to provide more resistance if there is a thick layer of snow.

In this way, the collection planted in the ground can withstand temperatures of -37°C (winter 2009).

Because of the severity of the frost, this part of the collection produces flowers in a ring around the plant; there are no flowers on the top of the plant.

Bernard Schumpff

HARDINESS IN GERMANY (north-west)

[...] We are lucky to be able to find enough space in our small garden for us to grow hydrangeas in a sheltered location, protected by the house, the hedges, under the trees and shrubs, where they enjoy a favourable micro-climate, for instance beneath the rhododendrons, camellias, pines, cryptomerias, behind a wall or near a pond. All the plants are planted close together, but the soil is so humiferous and rich that there is no need for us to feed them. [...]

Now a few words about last winter (2009-2010) (a long, cold one) and how it affected our hydrangeas. The *H. arborescens*, *H. anomala* and *H. paniculata* caused no problems at all. *H. quercifolia* 'Bridu' was not at all affected and flowered abundantly. *H. aspera* 'Bellevue' (a small specimen planted in July of the previous year) is growing vigorously in the shade of a Paulownia, and has already produced its first flower. It has been, however, the *H. macrophylla* hybrids which have suffered worst. *H. 'Libelle'* and 'Hanabi' froze down to the ground, but have since revived, but without flowering of course. *H. 'Jogasaki'* was quite badly damaged, but is now growing strongly again and has produced a few flowers. The same goes, more or less, for *H. 'Bavaria'*, 'Ayesha', 'Trebah Silver', 'Harlequin', 'Eternity' and 'Together'.

The hybrids which have not been affected by the cold and which have flowered normally are the following: *H. 'La France'*, 'Ave Maria', 'Mme Emile Mouillère', 'Kardinal', 'Endless Summer', 'Otaksa', 'Hopaline', 'Mirai', 'Le Cygne', 'Love You Kiss', 'Mariesii Perfecta' and the *H. ssp. yezoensis*. Most of our *H. serrata*, although only 3 years old, are in very good condition and are flowering well. They seem to appreciate long, cold winters. Our favourites are: *H. 'Shojo'*, 'Shinome', 'Fuji-no-Taki', 'Thunbergi Plena' (alias 'Yae-no-Amacha'), 'Hime-Gaku', *H. ssp. angustata*, 'Mount Aso', 'Chishima', 'Balladona' and 'Blue Bird'. One notable exception: *H. 'Kerlot'*, which froze down to ground level but flowered again on the current year's growth.

We had no particular problems with the *H. involucrata*: *H. 'Viridescens'*, 'Hortensis' (smaller leaves, but that year's drought also has to be taken into account). *H. 'Yōraku'* is in fine health but has no flowers. The maple *Acer 'Aconitifolium'* may be giving it too much shade; I will prune it.

This year we have found many new plants, which we are going to test this winter.

Oh yes! ...I mustn't forget to tell you that we don't give our plants any special protection. We don't like the materials used for this purpose, as they don't look very natural.

When we take hydrangea cuttings, we plant them directly in the ground (not in pots). We have a 70% success rate (for *H. macrophylla* and *H. serrata* hybrids), in spite of the cold. We place them between evergreen shrubs on the west and north sides of the house. I think this makes the plants that survive become hardier.

Elwira and Meinhardt Röder de Ochtrup

Hydrangea hardiness in Denmark

by Poul Hagedorn (1)

My 60 different Hydrangea are so hardy, that they don't die of low temperatures. The hardiness I will tell about in this article is more demanding. It tells about how well the species/cultivars flower.

Winter frost

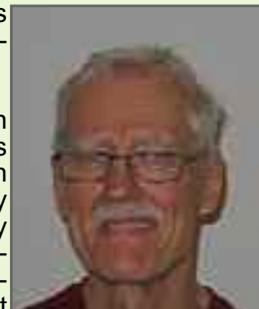
During the last 10 years my Hydrangeas have mostly grown in the H8-zone (min.-12°C), but in January 2010 it suddenly turned to H7 with -14°C and -17°C. Two different temperatures because I have Hydrangeas in two places. In our garden in the town Tarm 24 km from the North Sea and in a little field in Borris 32 km from the North Sea. These min. temperatures probably do not frighten the Americans. According to Michael Dirr is eg. H. 'Mme Emile Mouillere' very hardy in Georgia. But in Denmark is H. 'Mme Emile Mouillere' not especially hardy. It is probably the result of a short growing season and a little sum of warmth, which means bad ripening. The growing season in Denmark is approx. five month (last frost approx. 15/5, first frost approx. 15/10).

Spring frost

As most Hydrangea enthusiasts has learned, the spring frost is at least as dangerous for the flowering as the winter frost. During the last years, mild temperatures in March-April-May have tempted the flower buds of the branches to burst. When the new shoots come out, only minus 1-2°C will spoil the flowering in the coming summer.

Four suggestions to help the flowering:

- 1) Choose between the best species/cultivars. Within the H. macrophylla-serrata-complex you choose cultivars with at least 50% serrata genes. Besides winter hardiness the cultivars have to be slow to develop the new shoots in the spring.
- 2) The developing of the new shoots in the spring can be delayed by covering the soil under the Hydrangeas with 20 cm wood chips. The wood chips delay the warmth to reach the roots, and the shoots are delayed for a week or maybe more. In lucky coincidences the frost is gone, when the shoots come out.
- 3) On sloping hills the cold, heavy air rolls down the hill. Plant the Hydrangeas on the hill, where it is never going to be so cold as down the hill.
- 4) Use the umbrella effect, which counteract radiation of warmth in cold nights without clouds. Plant Hydrangeas close to buildings, (evergreen) bushes and under trees. Covering the plants with close fishing net or branches from Picea and Abies does also help and counteract also drying.



My experiences with some species/cultivars

10 = Most inflorescences 1 = Fewest inflorescences

<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i> & <i>Hydrangea paniculata</i>	10
<i>Hydrangea</i> 'Bouquet Rose'	08
<i>H. ssp. yezoensis</i> , <i>H. 'Hallasan'</i> , <i>H. serrata</i> 'Mont Aso' & <i>H. 'Preziosa'</i>	07
<i>H. serrata</i> 'Blue Bird' & <i>H. 'Générale V. de Vibraye'</i> (*)	06
<i>H. 'Endless Summer'</i> (**)	05
<i>H. 'Altona'</i>	03
<i>H. 'Blauweise'</i> , <i>H. 'Lanarth White'</i> & <i>H. 'Mariesii Lilacina'</i>	02
<i>H. 'Grasmücke'</i> , <i>H. 'Mme Emile Mouillère'</i> & <i>H. 'Mariesii Perfecta'</i>	01

*) *H. 'Generale Vicomtesse de Vibraye'* has been good most years in the field in Borris, but not in our garden. I think, that it don't get warmth enough in my garden, where the plants are close. In the field the plants are lined up in rows. There are four m and bare ground between the the rows. When the sun is shining on the dry soil the environment will be warm because of a minimum of evaporation.

**) *H. 'Endless Summer'* (*H. 'Semperflorens'*) flower well in the garden, but not in the field, and none of the places it remounts. I don't think that the summer is hot enough for a later flowering.

An educational year

After a hard winter 2009-2010 with temperatures down to minus 17°C, I couldn't enjoy myself with many inflorescences the following summer in the field in Borris. But as I say: "You always learn something". The *H. arborescens* and *H. paniculata* cultivars flowered well. Also *H. 'Bouquet Rose'* flowered well, but not the rest of the macrophylla-serrata-complex. *H. 'Preziosa'* and *H. serrata 'Hallasan'* (and its childs) flowered a little. The last are low plants and they were covered with fishing net. Home in our garden most of my 50 different species/cultivars flowered well after a January with minus 14°C, but cultivars as *H. s. 'Beni Temari'*, *H. s. 'Kurohime'*, *H. 'Generale Vicomtesse de Vibraye'*, *H. 'Hamburg'*, *H. 'Rotschwanz'* gave only one to three inflorescences and *H. 'LK 49'* and *H. 'Mariesii Perfecta'* gave none.

A pink future for hydrangeas

I am convinced that genes existing in *H. macrophylla* and *H. serrata* have a potential of many hardier cultivars than the one we can dispose of today. I am impatient to discover some new ones as the Danish climate specially on the coasts is favorable for this genus. Flowering is twice as abundant as in the more southern parts of the country and hydrangeas in Danemark do not experience insects nor mildew.

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Hydrangea hardiness in the USA

Hydrangea hardiness in Connecticut

by Lynden Miller

author of "Plants, Parks and People", W.W.Norton Books, 2010



The only *H. macrophylla* hybrid that seems to keep coming back and blooming without special techniques is *H. m.* 'Endless Summer' (or as I told you we call it, 'Endless Promotion'). It seems to do better the more sun it gets but it isn't one of my favorites. We may have a completely different result this year. We have 3-4 feet of snow that has been there since before Christmas. More is forecasted. We are in Zone 5b which is pretty cold in the winter. Despite the cold and late springs, *H. serrata* 'Blue Billow' is one of my favorites and the most reliable along with 'Preziosa'. They don't mind the winters at all.

As far as the other *H. macrophyllas*, in October we dig them up, wrap the rootballs in black plastic and lay them on their sides on the ground in a special area behind the garage and cover them with layers of lattice for air circulation and layers of black plastic bags filled with dry leaves. The picture below (left) shows what I call the "Sacred Burial Mound". This technique was contrived by our gardener Don Garren who is a *Hydrangea* nut like me.

The *Hydrangeas* are way underneath all these black bags which are filled with dry leaves. In the spring, we peek in sometime in April but usually don't bring them out until mid May, sometimes later. The leaves are quite white at first and the plants are covered with buds and turn green as soon as they get put out unto the fresh air. After all chance of frost, we either put them in the ground for the season in the borders or in the woodland or in decorative pots on the terrace until October. We pick all the flowers and I make arrangements and wreaths with them which are beautiful.



The "Sacred Burial Mound"



The garden in summer



Hydrangeas in top form

Protecting plants and shrubs from extreme cold

By Alyson Breuer, from Chicago (Zone 6)



Living in Chicago (Zone 6), one is awash in war stories about beautiful plants that have been lost over the years. At first, I thought that it was the severity of the winter cold that caused their demise; after all, normal ambient temperatures range between 20F to -20F (-7C to -30C), with the occasional heat wave, when it can reach to above freezing. But it was borne in on me with one unusually early spring that it was not the cold, per se, that killed the plants but indeed, the constant thawing and re-freezing of the ground! It seems that if there is an early extended period of thawing, the plant is deceived into thinking the winter is over and preparations for spring renewal kick in. When the thermometer drops back to below freezing again, the sap is frozen and the plant shuts down, only to have its cycle of renewal interrupted. As alternate icing and thaw set in, the plant struggles between dormancy and revival and can often lose the battle. That particular year with an early "false" spring, everything suffered (...)

At the beginning of autumn, all experts here discuss the many activities involved in "winterizing" the garden, the main - and simplest - advice being to mulch around each plant to a depth of 2 to 3 inches (5 to 7 cm), without smothering the actual stems. We are constantly reminded in this area that snow, when it comes, and particularly when it stays put for long periods, is nature's perfect insulator, so that additional mulch (shredded leaves, compost, weed-free grass clippings, bark chips and even shredded newspaper) is like the extra insurance of a belt AND braces (suspenders)! Styrene cones are available for their further protection, the cone being inverted over the plant and tethered to the ground so that it does not blow away. For larger shrubs, it is advised to build a burlap (or landscaping fabric) cage around stakes driven into the ground around the plant, the fabric held away from crowding the branches and the space inside being filled with lightweight shredded leaves. Plants vulnerable to wind burn - even some evergreens where the branches can dry out and become brittle in the cold - have burlap screens built around them. Specimen plants, like beautiful and costly Japanese maples, are often given this special TLC, because so expensive to replace. (...)

If in your more moderate growing zones, you are experiencing a Chicago-style winter, complete with heavy snow, cold, dry winds and extended periods of frozen earth, I would be delighted if some of the defensive strategies above could help preserve your beloved plantings - up to and including interring them! This is what are doing every year our neighbors with a figtree which once replanted, is giving figs again! *

* note from editor: this method is also used at the Dresden Botanical Garden, where plants in pots are piled on in a pit and then covered with isolating material.

H. longipes & others

by Maurice Foster



I looked into the longipes question this morning and am persuaded that the three white flowered plants here are true longipes. Wilson introduced it in 1901 and Sargent (*Plantae wilsonianae*) says it differs from glabripes in that it has broader strigose leaves, strigose branchlets, longer



Hydrangea longipes



Hydrangea robusta

petioles and white flowers. Glabripes has a densely villous underside and a glabrous petiole. Bean has a full description which conforms to my plants in every particular, notably in that the flowers are 3/4 to 1. 3/4 inches across (large!) and white, with white fertiles. Under the lens it is clearly strigose, not villous.

Farall is a puzzle as it conforms to strigosa. HB gave it to me as strigosa macrophylla (sic) but the style of the flowers and the early flowering time do not conform to strigosa which is usually very late. Perhaps it is just an aberrant strigosa, selected in the distant past for the beauty of its flowers.



Hydrangea 'Farall'

I am happy that the big plant in the top garden is the genuine robusta. Its vesture is villous, not strigose which means it cannot be confused with longipes, its fertile flowers are coloured, and its leaves of notably thicker texture.

Davidii I need to check with Franchets description. He described it and Wilson introduced it from Mupin (Baoding) where I first saw it. Sargent does not give a full description. Whatever it is, it is a distinct entity as I now have collections from 3 different collectors and 4 provenances and the foliage, black stems, mainly 3 petalled flowers are very distinctive. I'm not sure about stylosa either



Hydrangea Davidii

The more I look at it, the more convinced I am that McClintock overdid the lumping, based as her analysis was on dried herbarium material.

Bestest, Maurice

A new hydrangea collected in Vietnam

According to my trip log this purple leafed hydrangea was located in northwestern Northern Vietnam in Lao Cai Province, near Seo Me Ti at 5600'. When we have grown seedlings of this purple type they have been very intolerant of our heat and humidity (Atlanta, Georgia, USA) and do not grow off well. They seem to prefer cooler night time temperatures, and the dark purple is more of a lighter tone with more green in the leaf. It would be of great interest to me if some of our fellow hydrangeaphyles who live in a climate more favorable to this plant would do some hybridization with more heat tolerant species so we could enjoy this beautiful attribute of deep purple coloration not to mention the highly contrasting pure white sterile flower against the intense blue fertile ones in it's lacecap. **Ozzie Johnson**



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SHAMROCK FESTIVAL

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"2000 HYDRANGEAS FOR SHAMROCK"
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VARENGVILLE SUR MER, ON
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AND SATURDAY MORNING,
AND OTHERS TO TIDY UP
AGAIN ON MONDAY.

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YOU!

PREPARING THE 2011 SEASON

Friends of "Shamrock" can come with their secateurs to give us a hand during the coming weeks. Give us a ring on 02 35 85 14 64, to make an appointment to come, whether at the weekend or on a weekday. There is still a lot of work to do in April and May to get the collection ready. All help will be most gratefully received.

VISITORS' IMPRESSIONS IN 2010

*"Majestic! I have tears in my eyes; a fairyland of colours."
"An enchantment of hydrangeas, it is pure bliss."
"Incredible! We felt almost drunk when we left."
"This is the 'Stendhal' (or 'Florence') syndrome."*

Indeed, we have seen just this type of reaction this summer at "Shamrock" among some visitors, who were forced to sit down, in the grip of strong emotion and dizziness. It is probably an accumulation of multicoloured impressions that provoke this particular feeling, making you feel as though you are floating on air. The faint of heart should take note!

Special Thanks from Corinne Mallet, Chief Editor of this Journal

Corinne Mallet would particularly like to thank our members Roger Dinsdale, who has proved to be our star investigative journalist, and André Dieval, our top reporter/photographer.

She would also like to give warm thanks to Frank Dutra and John Gregg for their help with, and participation in, this new edition of the Journal, as well as to Bérange de Bodinat for reading and correcting the text.