



# The Mid-South Hydrangea Society In Bloom!

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May 2006

## From the President:

Thanks to so many of you who attended our wonderful April 10 event at the Memphis Botanic Garden featuring Dr. Michael Dirr. (And a "very sorry you missed it!" to those of you who weren't able to attend). We sold out our event at 425 tickets, and had quite a full house with the vendors attending also. I believe we could have sold 600 tickets if we'd had a venue that size. Members and guests attended from Ohio, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and a large contingent from Arkansas, some who came on a bus and were spotted the next day at Dabney Nursery and Trees by Touliatos. We had seven vendors selling hydrangeas and other plants, a bounteous buffet from our members that was organized and overseen by the capable and much appreciated **Brad Dantone**, door prizes donated by generous members and nursery sponsors, a plant raffle with more great hydrangea items, book sales autographed by Dr. Dirr, and an auction of two pre-market 'Blushing Bride' hydrangeas also donated by McCorkle Nursery in Thomson, GA. (We'll want to hear more about how those plants are doing later this summer!) I can't wait to get my own 'Blushing Bride' and hope the local independent nurseries will have them in stock as soon as possible. We appreciated all the kind comments of the attendees and are happy you enjoyed the evening. A sincere thank you goes out to all of you who volunteered to help and brought food. We couldn't have done it without you! I don't know how or if we can top this event, but Linda Orton, VP and Program Chairman is already working on it, and she is getting some wonderful speakers and programs lined up for the future.



Our next eagerly anticipated event is our 2nd Annual Garden Tour, scheduled for the morning of June 17 (see Anne Riordan's article on page 2). We have some wonderful gardens on the list and it looks like it will be another great year of beautiful blooms for our favorite genus.

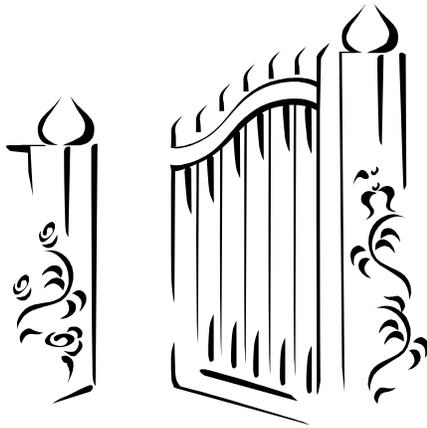
I'm definitely planning to attend the American Hydrangea Society garden tour on June 10 in Atlanta. They have eight exciting gardens on the agenda, including founder, Penny McHenry's, and this may be the last chance we will have to see her lovely garden. You must be a member to attend. More information is available at [www.americanhydrangeasociety.org](http://www.americanhydrangeasociety.org).

I hope to see you all at our Tour in June.

Linda Lanier



And thanks to Linda for coordinating an outstanding event!!!



## 2nd Annual Garden Tour Mid-South Hydrangea Society

Saturday, June 17, 2006

Join us for a look at 4 special gardens . . .

### Garden of Alex & Karen Wellford

This charming garden was recently featured in Mid-South Magazine and was on the local Garden Conservancy Tours. Features sculpture, changes in levels, garden ornamentation, and more. Find exceptional ideas for your own garden.

### Garden of Tommy & Buff Adams

Scheduled to be on tour during the American Boxwood Society Conference, this garden uses many varieties of boxwood to add structure formally and informally with a bit of whimsy thrown in. Don't miss it.

### Garden of Tom & Lucy Lee

Designed by renowned landscape architect, Ben Page, the Lee's garden boasts exceptional use of plant materials including a wide variety of hydrangeas, espalier fruit, climbing vines, and more. Don't miss this special opportunity.

### Garden of Jerry & Anne Riordan

This garden developed on the property surrounding the old parsonage for Mullins Methodist Church was recently featured on Volunteer Gardener on PBS. Developed into "rooms" in the English style, it includes roses, a parterre, vegetable garden, and more. A small selection of hydrangeas will be available for sale at Jerry and Anne's garden.

Watch for our next newsletter in early June for maps and tour details. Carpooling is encouraged.  
Each member is allowed to invite one guest.

For additional information call Anne Riordan at 683-7458 or e-mail [mailmanann@bellsouth.net](mailto:mailmanann@bellsouth.net).



## UPDATE . . .



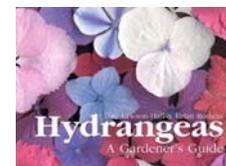
This was our second year to participate in the **Memphis Area Master Gardeners Spring Fever** event held on Saturday March 11<sup>th</sup> of this year. We had a very good response to our booth and signed up many new members and sold tickets to our April Durr event. Our president, Linda Lanier, was one of 5 presenters for the event. Her program was a broad overview of hydrangeas and had over 130 attendees.

The Mid-South Hydrangea Society also had volunteers in the Memphis Botanic Garden tree and shrub area of the **Spring's Best Plant Sale**. Our society supplied and sold around 125 4" pots of hydrangeas along with promoting and selling many other hydrangeas, trees, shrubs and vines in our work area. Twenty-five percent of our sales went to support the Memphis Botanic Garden. Thank you to Diane Solomon, Joanne Watson, Gwen Jones, Alice Moore and Anne Riordan for volunteering and to Caroline Brown who worked in the pouring rain on Friday! Also thank you to Kennon Hampton for delivering our plants and helping to set-up our sales area.

Participating in these events helps the society support and meet its' mission and goal to promote interest in and knowledge of the genus hydrangea.

## Toni Lawson-Hall at Aldridge Gardens

Linda Lanier, Caroline Brown, Anne Riordan and Linda Orton attended Toni Lawson-Hall's hydrangea presentation held at Aldridge Gardens in Hoover, Alabama on February 15. Toni Lawson-Hall, author of Hydrangeas: A Gardener's Guide spoke about her development of a national collection of hydrangeas at Holehird Garden in Windermere, Cumbria, UK. The collection contains over 250 hydrangeas. Mrs. Lawson-Hall is a self taught hydrangea expert and showed slides on a number of hydrangeas she helps grow at Holehird and her observations on them. It was a beautiful day for February and the Alabama Hydrangea Society and Aldridge Gardens were gracious hosts. A number of American Hydrangea Society's board members from Atlanta were present, which gave us the opportunity to exchange notes on what our respective organizations were doing. I want to encourage our members to consider attending future programs at Aldridge Gardens, which is an easy 4-hour drive from Memphis. See [www.aldridgegardens.com](http://www.aldridgegardens.com) for upcoming events.



## Decorative Arts Trust Sponsors Garden Symposium

I feel quite fortunate to have attended a very special gardening event at the Brooks Museum on March 11. Focusing on two of my favorite topics, English gardens and garden design, I was instantly hooked.

Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, horticulturist, garden designer, and head gardener of Hampton Court Palace, took us on a historical tour of this famous royal garden and gave us a glimpse into his recently published book, *The Gardens and Parks of Hampton Court*, and of course charmed us as the English do with pictures of his own garden.

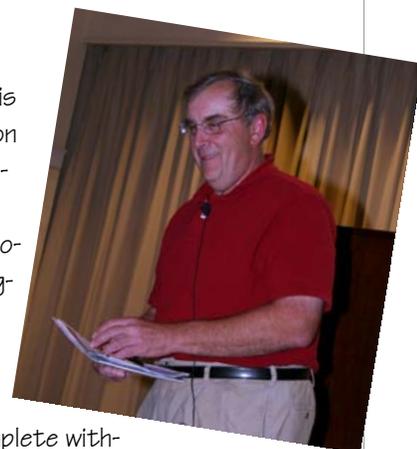
Following a sumptuous lunch at the Brushmark, Ben Page, renowned landscape architect, shared his personal experience in the business and held us spellbound with photos of his work. His beautiful gardens seem to have endless budgets and impeccable taste. His love and understanding of the use of the genus hydrangeas in the garden was obvious. (See one of his gardens on the 2nd Annual Mid-South Hydrangea Society Garden Tour, June 17).

Although I was not familiar with the Decorative Arts Trust (they have been around for 25 years plus), the membership was as warm and engaging as the program was educational and a highlight of the season. Hats off to Mid-South Hydrangea Society member, John Tackett, who chaired this exciting event.

Anne Riordan

## Hydrangeas for American Gardens

Dr. Dirr, recognized as the foremost expert in the United States on woody plants, started his program for us with an overview of certain species and cultivars of hydrangeas that flower on new growth such as *Hydrangea arborescens*, *involucrata* and *paniculata*. Some varieties highlighted were *H. arborescens* 'Annabelle' and 'Hayes Starburst' and *H. paniculata* 'Tardiva', 'Chantilly Lace' and 'Limelight'. He then followed with recommendations of *H. aspera*, *H. macrophylla*, *H. quercifolia*, and *H. serrata* that are dependent on old wood to flower. He made suggestions for *H. macrophylla* based on his observations and evaluations. A sampling of some mentioned were 'Lanarth White' (lacecap), 'Frillibet' and 'Lilacina'. You can review the complete listing of the "Best of the Best" in his book, *Hydrangeas for American Gardens*.



Of course, the night would not have been complete without hearing some history on the recent introduction of reblooming *H. macrophyllas*, 'Endless Summer', 'Penny Mac', and 'Blushing Bride'. Many may be interested to know that there are other remontant types also available. They are 'David Ramsey', 'Oak Hill', and 'Decatur Blue'. All are mopheads visually indistinguishable from each other. However, they are all separate and unique based on DNA analysis. The newest remontant introduction, 'Blushing Bride', is a white mophead and is predicted to be even more popular than 'Endless Summer' which outsells nearly all other hydrangeas at a ratio of 10 to 1. Dreaming of a hydrangea that would be more cold tolerant and mildew resistant than 'Endless Summer' with dark green foliage? Then you have been dreaming of 'Blushing Bride' and it will be available on a limited basis beginning in 2006 (see below).

Dr. Dirr then took attendees on a magic carpet ride into the future of hydrangeas. Not ones to rest on their laurels, Dr. Dirr and his research team at the University of Georgia at Athens are continuing to work on creating new *H. macrophyllas* with a focus on developing varieties that display..."superior foliage, compact habit, repeat (remontant) flowering, increased cold hardiness, heat and drought tolerances and double flowers." Can you envision a pink 'Annabelle' with sturdy stems and dark green foliage? Dirr has. They have also made successful crosses between *Dichroa febrifuga* and *H. macrophylla*. Evaluations of these new plants will be made when they flower this year. *Dichroa febrifuga* is a relative to hydrangea which produces pink to blue fruits. The future looks bright and exciting for the world of hydrangeas.

We want to thank Dr. Dirr for the generosity of his time and knowledge. His time in Memphis was brief but he squeezed in a tour of the Dixon Gallery and Garden thanks to Diane Reed and a trip through the Memphis Botanic Gardens thanks to Dr. Stan Myers, Rick Pudwell and Jim Duncan as guides. He made the rounds of all our vendors and their offerings making conversation and his trademark observations. Dr. Dirr took interest in and personal time with each person requesting a book signing. It was a long, long day for Dr. Dirr and many of us, but everyone maintained a high level of good humor and patience. The Mid-South Hydrangea Society thanks you for your volunteerism and attendance.

Linda Orton



### Introducing Endless Summer® Blushing Bride

Look for a new Endless Summer introduction called 'Blushing Bride,' at select independent garden centers beginning this spring. Bred by Dr. Michael Dirr at the University of Georgia in 2001, Dr. Dirr calls this *Hydrangea macrophylla* "my most significant introduction to date." It's a cross between Endless Summer and a lacecap cultivar, 'Veitchii.' It's more cold tolerant and mildew resistant than Endless Summer, but with dark-green foliage and a semi-double, white mophead flower

that ages to soft pink. Add some aluminum sulfate, and the flowers will emerge a robin's egg blue instead. The size and shape of 'Blushing Bride' is similar to the original 'Endless Summer', but it blooms even sooner and reblooms more quickly. If you have a problem locating 'Blushing Bride' this spring, it will be in broad distribution in 2007.

## Recognition of Support for the Dirr Event

I want to recognize all our plant vendors and their door prize donations to our Dirr event. Cricket Hill Farm (Conway, AR), Dabney Nursery, Dan West Garden Centers, Gardens O'Vey (Arlington, TN), Randolph's Greenhouses (Jackson, TN), Stringer's Garden Centers, and Trees by Touliatos all made contributions to our door prize drawings and gave the event a percentage of their sales. Wilkerson Mills Gardens, Palmetto, GA ([www.hydrangea.com](http://www.hydrangea.com)) sent us some hydrangeas for the drawing and enough of their new color catalogs for each attendee. In addition, we received gift certificates and color catalogs from Hydrangeas Plus, Aurora, OR ([www.hydrangeasplus.com](http://www.hydrangeasplus.com)). They are both mail order suppliers with a great selection of hydrangeas. The introducers of Endless Summer, Bailey Nurseries, St. Paul, MN donated a Dirr Hydrangeas for American Gardens book and flyers for everyone highlighting their newest introduction, Blushing Bride. McCorkle Nurseries, Thomson, GA provided us with two "Brides" to auction. Look for Bailey Nurseries and McCorkle grown plants at your local nurseries and box stores. It was a nice perk for our attendees to receive a chance at a free gift and I sincerely appreciate the support and good will that these nurserymen showed to the MSHS. Please reciprocate by visiting these local vendors or their websites.

Linda Orton



## Food Volunteers for the Dirr Event

The Food Committee has received many thank you notes. I would like to share one with you.

*"The volunteers did an incredible job organizing the food for the Dr Michael Dirr event. It was all well presented from beginning to end, kept neat and organized, etc. I heard a number of comments, especially from the visitors that they were particularly impressed with the hospitality shown. Congratulations on a job well done." John Tackett*

I THANK YOU for being a part of the food committee. Feeding 400 people with the miracle of pot luck, was possible due to the giving of your time and wonderful food dishes. If we are called on again, I look forward to working with you... sharing our club members' appreciated talents... with the Mid-South community.

Brad Dantone



## Garden Accessory Shops Sprouting Up!



**BACKYARD**retreats

For those of you that travel by the southwest corner of Poplar and Houston Levee, you may have noticed the opening of a new garden accessory store. Karen Williams has recently opened her shop, Backyard Retreats, in the Galina Centro shopping center and it looks to offer us some nice gardening treats. The day I dropped in they were carrying several different styles of Guy Wolff pots, as seen on Martha Stewart. Give Karen a call at 901-850-7375 for her operating days and hours and then drop in and see her.

### TWIGS AND IVY

Sherry Hawkins returned to Memphis from New York City in late 2005. Since then she, along with the help of her sister, Stacia Weir, have been working non-stop to open to their shop, Twigs and Ivy, located on Sanderlin Drive across the street from the floral shop, The Garden District. They carry a wide range of gardening accessories such as benches, iron tables, trellises, decorative pots, unusual citrus trees and much more. Stop by and you'll find some favorite items for your garden and outdoor needs. Call Sherry at 901-685-3713 for hours of operation.

### Smith & Hawken

Vador Vance has brought small Smith & Hawken boutiques to both Stringer's Garden Center locations, Poplar Pointe and Mid-Town. They are set up to take special orders on large items and have a catalog on hand for you to look through. They currently have a number of different copper items such as watering cans and window boxes along with other featured Smith & Hawken items.

### SUNCity Hydroponics

For those of you who want to start a new type of gardening addiction, check out Sun City Hydroponics located at 2235 Whitten Road, Suite 104. Freeman Peterman is the manager of Sun City Hydroponics. They are the only hydroponics retailer in Memphis and specialize in hydroponic systems and lighting. They offer supplies for starting and advanced hydroponics, pottery and unique gifts, organic supplements, books and more. Go to [www.suncityhydroponics.com](http://www.suncityhydroponics.com) or call them at 901-372-8100 for operating hours. When I stopped by they spent a lot of time answering the many beginner questions I had. Did you know you can grow herbs with hydroponics?

Linda Orton

### Sunny Creek Nursery Debuts Website



Many of you know of Leigh Ballard and her retail and wholesale nursery, Sunny Creek Nursery, located in LaGrange, Tn. She sells an interesting mix of perennials and annuals. Many varieties of which you may read about in gardening magazines but not find at the local box store. The exciting news for us is that Leigh is now offering a website [www.sunnycreeknursery.com](http://www.sunnycreeknursery.com). On it you can review her unique selection of plants and have them delivered to your front door if something strikes your fancy. If you'd rather visit, Leigh is having her open house May 13,

9:00 - 11:00 AM and May 14, 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM.

## Membership Update:

**Welcome to our new Mid-South Hydrangea Society members. We look forward to seeing you in June!**

Adams, Bettie	Edwards, Cathy	Lifer, Gerlene	Shaver, Kathryn
Adams, Buff	Ellis, Judy	Little, Paul	Shopher, Linda
Ainge, Lucy	English-Bolyard, Callie	Lougee, Cindy	Shultz, Barbara
Armstrong, Tommie	Eudaly, Sally	Madlinger, Martine	Skaggs, Dale
Bader, Emily	Farr, Ellen	Majilton, Janet	Smith, Bob
Bailey, Diana	Frost, Ann	Mann, Roma	Sneed, Sarah G.
Bailey, Pat	Fuller, Judy	Mattix, Cecilia	Solomon, Diane
Banks, Susan Walton	Glisson, Darlene	Menzies, Rodgers	Spangler, Cynthia
Carroll, Maxine	Grant, Janet	Nash, Nancy	Stumpenhorst, Marge
Cate, Denisa	Harris, Dianne	Nelson, Linda	Sutherland, Jeanne
Cobb, Lu Lee	Hays, Barbara	O'Connor, Nora	Sweeney-Fisher, Carolyn
Conboy, Ricky	Hill, Brenda	Overstreet, Rhonda	Tackett, John
Coulter, Kathryn	Holliday, Jan	Pardue, Betsy	Taylor, Carra L.
Crass, Cathy	Hopkins, Joan	Pope, Susan	Todd, Nancy
Currie, Gerre	Hughes, Lisa	Pyles, Victoria	Waldon, Ann
Dantone, Brad	Ingram, Julanne	Rice, Elizabeth T.	Watkins, Carol
Davidson, Lee	Johnson, Kathy	Richardson, Margaret	Watson, Joanne
Dawkins, Shirley	Jones, Gwen	Richardson, Sonia	Webb, Judith
Dean, Judy	Judd, Ann	Robilio, Kay	Webb, Mary
DePriest, Brenda	Kelly, Betsy	Rosta, Janet	Wellford, Alex & Karen
Diaz, Beth	Key, Pam	Roster, Ivy	White, Roseanne
Dodd, Sherry	Kiesel, Carolyn	Ruleman, Lois	Wildgen, Mary
Dodds, Joyce	Kolmodin, Deborah	Samada, Hector	Young, Sylvia
Dulin, Turid	Lawrie, Danette	Sams, Carol	Young, Sr., William
Earls, Beverly	Lee, Tom and Lucy	Sanford, Fay	Zaner, J. Ann

## Mophead hydrangea 'Penny Mac' (*Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Penny Mac')

**The plant:** Named for Penny McHenry, founder of the American Hydrangea Society, 'Penny Mac' is a mophead-type hydrangea that re-blooms until frost. Covered with masses of light- to medium-blue balls that measure seven inches across, 'Penny Mac' has a vigorous habit and grows rapidly to five feet tall by equally as broad. The deciduous shrub produces bright blue--and sometimes deep purple--flowers until knocked down by frost. The fall foliage is a mix of purple, burgundy and dark green. Hardy in USDA Zones 5 to 9.

**How to use it:** Plant in masses at the edge of a woodland garden or line a path on both sides of a stroll garden. This is also a good accent plant and fits well in a cottage garden. 'Penny Mac' is a great cut flower, but before you take cuttings, be sure to wait until hydrangea blooms have been on the bush for a while. The season's first flush of brand-new blossoms will not hold up well when cut.

**Cultivation:** An ideal choice for gardeners in colder climates since it sets buds on new wood. Like other hydrangeas, 'Penny Mac' will appreciate well-drained soil, protection from afternoon sun and plenty of good, dark compost. Be sure to apply even moisture to all hydrangeas; they don't tolerate drought. To propagate, simply lower a branch to the ground and secure with a brick. It is advisable to scratch the stem where it makes contact with the soil to encourage faster rooting.



**THE MID-SOUTH HYDRANGEA  
SOCIETY**

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## In Appreciation of Penny McHenry...



The founder of the American Hydrangea Society in Atlanta, Penny McHenry, died of colon cancer on March 2, just short of her 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. She helped focus our attention on the wonderful genus in 1994. I still have the Southern Living article (her home was featured on the cover) from years ago on her home "Hydrangea Heaven" in Atlanta, and I believe it planted the seed in my mind to start a hydrangea society here in Memphis.

Penny had an interesting and challenging life. There is a bittersweet story about the reblooming hydrangea named for her ('Penny Mac'). Many years ago, Penny received a florist hydrangea following the death of her daughter. She planted it in her yard, and the rest is history, and a bit of a miracle. This plant is reportedly the first macrophylla to bloom on both new and old wood. You can see photos of Penny and along with Dr. Michael Dirr at [www.americanhydrangeasociety.org/penny.html](http://www.americanhydrangeasociety.org/penny.html), as he toured her lovely garden.



The Mid-South Hydrangea Society sent a contribution to the Atlanta Botanical Garden in Penny's memory. The ABG will be renaming their hydrangea collection, the "Penny McHenry Memorial Hydrangea Garden". Just Google her name on the internet and you'll find lots of pictures and stories about her. She will be missed.

Linda Lanier