

## Climbing Hydrangea

Years ago, I was vacationing in British Columbia, and took a boat trip to Vancouver Island and Butchart Gardens, a must-see for gardeners. We took a break in a small courtyard surrounded by tall brick walls, completely covered in dark, large leaf foliage, very dense, and accented by numerous saucer-sized explosions of white blooms. Each bloom resembled a burst of fireworks. That was my introduction to the Climbing Hydrangea, anomaly subspecies *petiolaris*. Had to have one, excited to find one, planted one wherever I was living. So, let me share the passion with you.

Native to Asia; Japan, the Koreas, into China. *Petiolaris* is one of many subspecies, and the one typically found in nurseries. Prolific bloomer from spring through summer. Tolerant of most soil types, provided excellent drainage is provided. Full sun is tolerated, but partial shade prevents sunburned foliage. Loves water, but not pooling. Consider gophers when planting.

First of all, this is not a fast grower. Buy one, plant it appropriately, forget about it for a few years, and then you'll begin to take notice. A few more years, and your Hydrangea begins making a statement, growing up a tree trunk, or on a structure, or wall or trellis. Branches attach to surfaces with clumps of little "catch-mes", which may be very difficult to remove. A mature plant may reach heights of fifty to seventy feet, producing many lateral stems for horizontal growth. The laterals add much weight to the vine, so any support provided must be very sturdy. Also true; the climbing Hydrangea may be used as a dense groundcover; an excellent weedblocker.

Typically a very hardy plant, *petiolaris* makes a very satisfying backdrop to a garden, or a signature eye focal point. Enjoy it for many years