

Hydrangea anomala ssp. *petiolaris* - Climbing Hydrangea (Hydrangeaceae)

Hydrangea anomala ssp. *petiolaris* is a slow-growing, clinging and twining vine. It has dense, glossy foliage that gives a three-dimensional attribute to walls, columns, or other supportive structures due to its lateral branches that extend horizontally for a few feet beyond the supportive structure. Climbing Hydrangea has creamy-white flat-topped inflorescences in summer are an added bonus.

FEATURES

Form

- primarily a large climbing vine; occasionally found as a slowly spreading groundcover, usually at the base of the existing vine, but sometimes planted specifically as a non-traditional groundcover
- maturing at up to 50' high, but often much shorter either a twining and clinging vine growth habit, or an arching and mounding groundcover
- initially a very slow growth rate, but becoming medium to rapid once established

Culture

- full sun to full shade
- prefers moist, well-drained, rich, acidic soils in partial sun, but is somewhat adaptable to poor soils and neutral to slightly alkaline pH soils
- propagated by seeds, rooted stem cuttings, or transplanting of stems that have self-rooted while lying prostrate on the ground
- Hydrangea Family (some sources list it under *Saxifragaceae*), with few diseases or pests
- commonly available in container form as a young staked vine
- eventually needs some pruning to keep it restricted at its base if it is to be used exclusively as a vine
- if chlorosis of the leaves occurs, a fertilization regimen will likely remedy the plant's nutritional balance, which is probably caused by alkaline soil pH

Foliage

- medium to dark green and glossy on the leaf uppersides
- alternate, broadly ovate, with an acuminate apex and cordate base
- leaf blades are about 3" long, with 2" long petioles
- autumn color is a poor yellowish green in Oct. and Nov.

Flowers

- a white outer ring of showy sterile florets



surrounds the creamy to green-yellow, central, fertile flowers

- flat-topped 5" wide inflorescences flower in June and early July

Fruits

- ornamentally insignificant brown capsules lie in a flat plane within the persistent outer ring of tan sterile floret remnants
- not especially showy, but the entire flat-topped fruiting structure is persistent into the following season

Twigs

- young stout stems are a rich cinnamon color, exfoliating to show a light brown interior and having many aerial root holdfasts, while prominent buds are a shiny russet
- the curving vertical stems are complemented by many horizontally held stout stems, which give a three-dimensional effect to the structure that supports the vine

Trunk

- exfoliating, light brown, and stoutly

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Function

- structural cover, primarily used with wooden posts, large trees, or stone walls
- rarely used as a groundcover

Texture

- bold texture in foliage and when bare
- open density in foliage and when bare

Assets

- gives a three-dimensional effect to walls or posts due to its unique outstretched horizontal stems
- showy creamy-white summer flowers
- lustrous summer foliage
- shade-tolerant clinging and climbing vine

Liabilities

- very slow to establish
- somewhat open and informal as a vine (but if bold three-dimensional depth is desired for a structural support, this is a true asset)

Habitat

- Zones 5 to 8
- Native to Japan and China

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- perennial vines that may serve as a structural cover (*Actinidia*, *Akebia quinata*, *Aristolochia durior*, *Campsis radicans*, *Clematis*, *Hedera helix*, *Wisteria sinensis*, etc.)

Cultivars – Variants – Related species

- the species form is essentially the only type that is commercially available