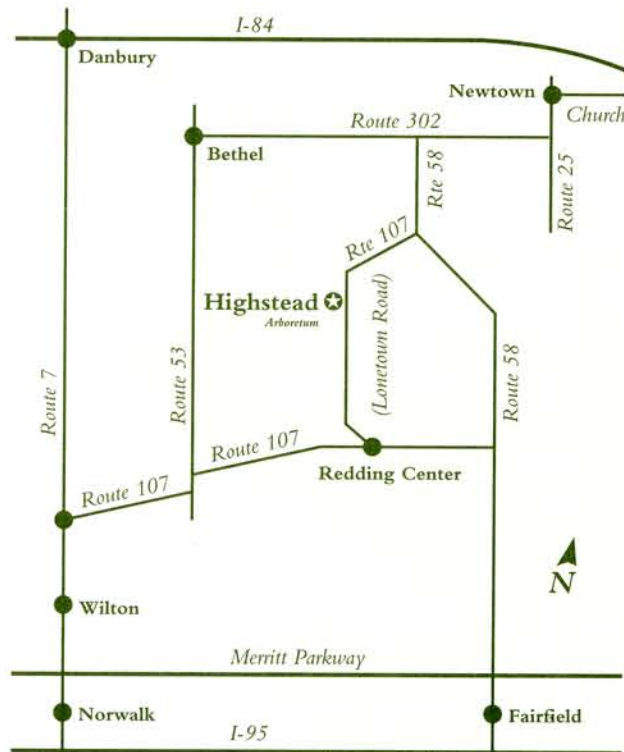


## Facility Notes

For the protection of the fragile plant environment, please note:

- No dogs, bicycles, play equipment, food or beverages
- Stay on the paths and boardwalks
- Please refrain from picking plants and flowers
- No smoking

Peak time for viewing mountain laurel in bloom is usually the second week of June. Bloom time can vary as much as one week either way, depending on weather conditions. Please call ahead to make a reservation, and to check on the timing and condition of the bloom.



Individuals or groups interested in visiting Highstead may make arrangements by writing or calling:

### Highstead Arboretum

P.O. Box 1097  
Redding, Connecticut 06875-1097  
203-938-8809

## Guide to the Laurel Collection

### Mountain Laurel

Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), the State Flower of Connecticut, grows extensively and naturally at Highstead Arboretum. This led to the decision to devote a section of the grounds to a concentrated display of laurel species, forms and cultivars.

The *Kalmia* Collection at Highstead is only a five minute walk from the Barn, but visitors should be prepared to spend at least one hour viewing the Collection and absorbing the beauty of the surrounding woodland.

### Looking at Mountain Laurel

A visit to any collection in full bloom can be overwhelming. Please take the time to study each cultivar closely for leaf shape, stem and bud color, as well as flower color and form. Note

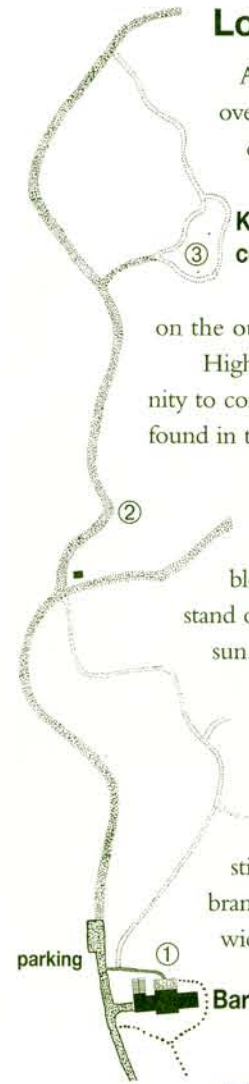
**Kalmia collection** how some flowers are banded with color on the inside, and how this internal banding effects the color

on the outside of the flower as well.

Highstead's *Kalmia* Collection presents the opportunity to compare the characteristics of mountain laurel found in the wild with plants which have been cultivated.

As you start out from the Barn ①, look at the mountain laurel on the slope adjacent to the terrace and see as great a natural variation in bloom color as you will find on the property. This stand of mountain laurel is self-sown and grows in full sun. As you walk toward the *Kalmia* Collection,

make note of the native stands of mountain laurel that are part of the woodland understory ②. Here you will find naturalized mountain laurel flowering less prolifically than the laurel near the Barn, with many stiff, often leggy limbs supporting crooked branches. The Collection itself ③, shows a much wider range of flower color, and a much lower and denser growth habit. These are traits achieved through selection and cultivation.



### The Collection at Highstead

Set on a previously disturbed site, the *Kalmia* Collection at Highstead was begun in 1989. Raised beds were created for optimum drainage, and consist of an organic soil with a pH range of 5 to 5.5. Several inches of mulch have been applied for root protection and moisture conservation. Although normally growing in dappled shade, mountain laurel will do quite well in full sun, as long as the location is not excessively hot.

### Kalmia Species and Their Cultivars

*Kalmia* is part of the Ericaceae (Heath) Family. This family of plants also includes *Rhododendron* (rhododendron and azalea), *Vaccinium* (blueberry), and *Gaultheria* (wintergreen). Three of the seven *Kalmia* species are represented at Highstead; mountain laurel (*K. latifolia*), sheep laurel (*K. angustifolia*), and white wicky (*K. cuneata*). All native to North America, they are most notable for their late spring flowers. The forms and cultivars have been selected to represent as complete a collection of *Kalmia* as possible.

### The Three Kalmia Species at Highstead

#### *K. latifolia*

Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), also known commonly as calico bush and spoonwood, is a broad-leaved (*lati*=broad, *folia*=leaf), evergreen shrub. It rarely exceeds a height of twelve feet. The natural range of this species is along the east coast of the United States, from southern Maine to northwestern Florida, and as far west as Mississippi.

#### *K. angustifolia*

Sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*), has a much narrower leaf than mountain laurel (*angusti*=narrow, *folia*=leaf). It is also shorter, attaining a height of only three to four feet. This plant can be harmful to sheep and other livestock. When eaten in sufficient quantity it can be fatal.

#### *K. cuneata*

White wicky (*Kalmia cuneata*), is the only deciduous member of the *Kalmia* genus. Found growing natively in a narrow band which runs from North Carolina into South Carolina, it is one of the rarest shrubs in North America. The specific epithet *cuneata* is from the Latin meaning "wedge-shaped."

### Cultivars and Forms

In the wild, there is great variation in the color of the bud and flower of mountain laurel. Differences in foliage shape and overall growth habit can be noted as well. Through selection and breeding, these naturally occurring differences have been the source of many beautiful cultivars (over seventy at last count). Much of this work was and continues to be done by Richard A. Jaynes, whose book, "Kalmia, Mountain Laurel and Related Species," is recommended reading for additional information. Several botanical forms (abbreviated f.), such as *apetala* (flowers without petals) and *myrtifolia* (miniature or dwarf growth habit), are also represented in the collection at Highstead Arboretum. The *Kalmia* Collection at Highstead is part of the North American Plant Collection Consortium (NAPCC). This consortium was formed in the early 1990's to ensure the future biodiversity of plants in North America. Highstead's collection is included, due to the depth of natural occurring mountain laurel on the property, and the number of cultivars represented in the planted area.

# The Kalmia Collection

## A Self-guided Tour of Mountain Laurel and Companion Plants



Highstead Arboretum

