Hort Report September 2017

The first Caryopteris I ever saw was the cultivar ‘Longwood Blue’, which ran in rows on both sides of the allee between the topiary garden and the main fountain gardens at Longwood Gardens. It was a beautiful sight when in full bloom; sadly, it was removed for the fountain renovation, and not re-planted. I was able to purchase one at a local nursery many years ago, and it lasted a long time before it weakened and died.

Not being able to find a replacement ‘Longwood Blue’, I purchased a Caryopteris x clandonensis ‘First Choice’, a hybrid developed in Clandon, England. The common name is Bluebeard, as it’s covered in tiny blue blossoms.

This deciduous shrub is small, only reaching two to three feet high and wide. Due to the weird weather this spring, it bloomed in the spring, and again at its usual time in late summer. This plant does best in full sun, and is very attractive to butterflies, bees, and other beneficial insects. The soft, grey-green foliage is aromatic. It would not look out of place in an herb garden.

Caryopteris is intolerant of heavy wet soil. It can be pruned back heavily in early spring, much like a Buddleia, as it blooms on new growth.