

Connecticut Horticultural Society

NEWSLETTER

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October 2020

Daffy About Daffodils

by Jody Morgan – writer and CT Hort member



Daffodils went out of style as desirable denizens of high-class English gardens in the early 1800s. The time-honored harbingers of spring were considered too prosaic to occupy beds assiduously groomed to display the more fashionable exotics plant hunters were delivering from the ends of the earth. But despite their dismissal from invitation lists to formal garden parties, daffodils continued to flourish, flaunting their flowers as they flounced through meadows undaunted by the social snub. Embraced by a plethora of colloquial names in the countryside including Daffodowndilly and Daffodily, they enlivened legends long before Linnaeus chose *Narcissus*, one of their mythological monikers, for their botanical designation.

Roman author Pliny the Elder insisted that plants known as *Narcissus* were named for their narcotic properties and not for the legendary youth *Narcissus*, so stupefied by the sight of his own image reflected in a pool that he remained transfixed until sympathetic gods turned him into a flower. Pliny maintained the Greek verb *narkao* (to benumb) was the root of their name. Deer and other undesirable garden visitors definitely shun daffodils somehow knowing all parts are deleterious to their health. In another myth, Hades captures Persephone (daughter of Demeter goddess of agriculture) while she is entranced by the narcissus blossoms she is gathering and drags her into the Underworld. Historians seem to agree that the alluringly scented *Narcissus poeticus*, commonly called the Poet's Daffodil or Pheasant's Eye, is the direct descendent of daffodils featured in ancient Greek literature.

Easily transported bulbs made their way across the Atlantic

to colonial American gardens. Thomas Jefferson's first entry in the garden book, a diary he kept for almost 60 years, begins on March 30, 1766: "Purple hyacinth begins to bloom." The following week he wrote: "Narcissus and Puckoon open." According to the official website of Jefferson's Monticello, our third President's "Calendar of the bloom of flowers in 1782" focuses on bulbs, noting their overlapping and ephemeral sequence of flowering beginning in March and running through May of narcissus, jonquils, hyacinths, anemones, ranunculus and tulips.



Narcissus obvallaris, commonly called The Tenby Daffodil

The exuberant display immortalized by William Wordsworth was first recorded by his sister Dorothy in the journal that frequently inspired her brother's poetry. On April 15, 1802, after walking with William along the shore of Ullswater in the English Lake District, she wrote of the daffodils they spied that "they tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake." Although her brother penned his version of their experience in 1804, he did not publish "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" until 1807. If you want to plant a drift of the daffodils the Wordsworth siblings encountered, purchase *Narcissus obvallaris* (aka *N. psuedonarcissus* ssp. *obvallaris*), commonly called The Tenby Daffodil.

Despite the general dismissal of daffodils as wild things, many British plant breeders remained captivated by the nodding noggins of narcissi. An 1851 edition of *Gardeners Magazine of Botany* featured six daffodil seedlings introduced by Edward Leeds. Although he successfully cultivated a vast variety of

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And the winner of the
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Moving Forward, Looking Ahead

By Cheryl Marino, President

Dear Members-

Looking at the season ahead of us we have many great speakers lined up. The online lectures have been successful as nearly 100 viewers have tuned in. If you are technically challenged, the process to download Zoom is simple, I urge you to reach out to someone who can assist if you need help.

The office in Rocky Hill will be permanently closed on October 31. Barb Skomorowski has found good homes for the books with Bartlett Arboretum, Connecticut College, The CT Botanical Society and Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC). Volunteers Trish Lyons, Barb Skomorowski, Yilin Sun, Cheryl Jourdan, Pat Lavery, Katherine Kosiba, Susan Bement, Nancy Brennick, Rosemarie Tomiso and Alison Green have joined us in pulling and packing books, delivering items to recycle and donate, and sorting thru and preserving historical records. We will be packing the last of the books and moving them to a storage location in the weeks to come, if you would like to volunteer for an afternoon of this masked mission please give the office a call – (860) 529-8713.

The first-ever online auction took place in September. If you didn't see anything that swooned you, check back when we offer more gardening treasures in subsequent auctions. Proceeds from online sales help to fund our college scholarships.

During these times of Covid wariness we as an organization must persist in the workings of the society. I urge those of you with time and talent to consider becoming an integral and contributing part of CT Hort. If you have doubts as to your qualifications for these positions, rest assured that you will have training and help from others.

Positions Open:

- Vice President
- Education Chair
- Raffles
- Treasurer
- Finance Chair

Thank you to our generous business members and supporters!

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Karen Bussolini



Jazzing Up the Garden with Color, Contrast and Movement

*With Karen Bussolini – Author, blogger, photographer,
teacher, garden coach & CT Hort member*

Thursday, October 15, 7 p.m.

Our scheduled speaker, Chris Olsen from Arkansas prefers to present in-person (which is not currently possible), so our fellow Connecticut resident and CT Hort member Karen Bussolini will treat us to a conversation on *Jazzing Up the Garden with Color, Contrast and Movement*. Join in from the comfort and safety of your own home and enjoy Karen livestreamed on your computer, iPad, or phone.

Karen will show you how gifted gardeners across the country put plants together in exciting ways. You'll see how experts use color, texture, form and other elements to harmonize or contrast. Explore building on this basic visual vocabulary to create lively conversations, more complex schemes. Once we dig into plants that move or appear to move you will learn how to get your garden not just talking, but dancing with delight. *Jazzing Up the Garden with Color, Contrast and Movement* teaches simple, intuitive ways for new or experienced gardeners to amp up excitement in their gardens.

Karen Bussolini has been a gardener all her life. She trained as a painter and was an architectural photographer before specializing in garden photography, writing, speaking and eco-friendly garden coaching/design. She is a NOFA (Northeast Organic Farmers Association) Accredited Organic Land Care Professional. Her garden has been featured in many publications, including Anne Raver's feature, "A Hillside of Feisty Beauties" in *The New York Times*.

Visit Karen's website at <https://www.karenbussolini.com/> to sign up for her free email newsletter, *Eco-Friendly News, Views, Clues and How-To's*.

Photo by K. Bussolini



Speaker Feedback

After you attend or view a recorded speaker meeting, please take a moment to tell us what you thought of the presenter. Your candid feedback helps us to arrange for speakers that will hold your interest. Take the five-question survey on our website – cthort.org. Click on the survey icon found on every page then chose the speaker you want to rate. Thank you for your feedback.

News about Recording Speakers for Future Viewing/Review

We've had positive feedback for our past online guests and were able to bring speakers into the homes of many who don't normally attend monthly meetings at the Synagogue. Some of these folks live a distance, or don't drive at night any longer. Online conferencing is a wonderful technology and per your requests, we will continue the live streaming and recording of our meetings even when we return to our in-person monthly meetings.

We are discovering that, if a speaker agrees to be recorded, most are comfortable with limiting the viewing audience to members-only and for only a limited time. So our policy regarding speaker recordings will be:

- Speakers who approve being recorded will be available to members only
- Recordings will be available for viewing/review until the next speaker recording is posted
- Speakers may request a shorter viewing period

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ornamental plants, many grown from seeds received from North America, Leeds is best known today for the 169 varieties of daffodils he produced. Unfortunately, Leeds did not keep adequate records of their parentage. When Peter Barr and his associates acquired Leeds’s inventory of 24,223 bulbs in 1874, they had a difficult time classifying them. Bulbs purchased previously by Barr from the first generation of Backhouse family daffodil devotees came with a similar lack of precise breeding records. Still available on the market, N. W.P. Milner is a creamy white frilled trumpet introduced by William Backhouse in 1869.



N. W.P. Milner

Affectionately nicknamed “The Daffodil King,” Peter Barr was on a mission to find historical varieties. At some point in his career as a nurseryman, begun as an errand boy for a Glasgow purveyor of seeds, Barr discovered John Parkinson’s description of the 94 distinct

daffodil varieties grown in early 17th century English gardens. How many could Barr find? Among those referenced in Parkinson’s *Paradisus*, originally published in 1629, is an exceedingly variable variety now marketed as N. ‘Telamonius Plenus’ and N. ‘Van Sion.’ Parkinson recounts that Vincent Van Sion, a Fleming resident in London, passed along the progenitor, nurtured in his own garden for many years, to both John Parkinson and George Wilmer. Hence, in British catalogues, the selection is still sometimes offered as ‘Wilmer’s Double Daffodil.’

Barr eventually convinced the Royal Horticultural Society to stage a daffodil event. The 1884 conference, proving narcissi compatible with the most cultured horticultural tastes, led to the 1898 foundation of the Daffodil Society. The classification system adopted originally for show purposes derives from descriptions in Barr’s catalogues. Consequently, Divisions of Narcissi are listed in English rather than botanical Latin, beginning with Division 1: Trumpet Daffodils and ending with Division 13: Species and Wild Forms. In 1887, Barr turned the nursery business over to his sons and extended his passion for producing new daffodil varieties to hunting for ancient forms in the wild.

Although the Backhouse fortune was made in finance, the family’s fame continues to involve devotion to daffodils. Robert Ormiston Backhouse, third son of the William Backhouse whose narcissus collection Peter Barr purchased, worked



N. ‘Telamonius Plenus’ / N. ‘Van Sion.’

in the family bank, but also established a commercial bulb business. He and his wife Sarah Elizabeth Dodgson registered many daffodil selections together. Sarah won an RHS award for ‘Moonbeam’ in 1901, the RHS Bronze Medal in 1905 for “A Group of Daffodils” and the Barr Cup in 1916. Following her passing in 1921, Robert registered ‘Mrs. R.O. Backhouse’ in her memory. Possibly the result of 20 years of communal collaboration, this first pink daffodil of any consequence to be released remains available today. Continuing the tradition, Backhouse descendent Caroline Thomson is engaged with her husband Andrew in preserving a heritage collection of Backhouse daffodils at Rossie Arts Garden in Fife.



A relative newcomer to the scene, The American Daffodil Society, incorporated in 1958, has a website (www.daffodilusa.org) filled with excellent current information on the latest introductions as well as heirlooms.

Darling Daffs withstand the test of time:

- **Narcissus poeticus (sometimes listed as *Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus*)**
- **N. W. P. Milner**
- **The Tenby Daffodil (*N. obvallaris*)**
- **N. *Telamonius plenus* (aka Van Sion)**
- **N. Mrs. R. O. Backhouse**



N. ‘Mrs. R. O. Backhouse’



2020 Mehlquist Award Winner Sarah Bailey

by Fairlee Latawic, Awards Committee



In 1987, on its 100th anniversary, the Connecticut Horticultural Society (CT Hort) established the Gustav Mehlquist award to honor our member Dr. Gustav Mehlquist for his extraordinary contribution to horticulture in the State of Connecticut. Dr. Mehlquist, who had been long recognized as one of the leading horticulturists in the United States, was a member of CT Hort, the American Rhododendron Society, the Connecticut Nurseryman's Association and a professor of Plant Science at the University of Connecticut.

Born in Sweden, Dr. Mehlquist, earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut in 1936 and in 1939, earned his doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley. He was also the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship for Biology and Plant Science in 1947 and subsequently studied orchid genetics in England. After many years of outstanding work in plant breeding, specializing in orchids, delphiniums and carnations, Dr. Mehlquist joined the staff at the University of Connecticut in 1952 where he continued his work as a horticultural researcher, plant breeder, hybridizer, educator and writer. While at UConn his interest in rhododendrons led to the development of several vigorous cold-hardy varieties.

Every year CT Hort seeks nominations for this prestigious award named in his honor. This year, it is with great pleasure that the Society has selected Sarah Bailey as the recipient of the Mehlquist Award. Sarah's horticultural career, born of a true love for gardening and the environment, has led her to hone gardening and design skills throughout the gardens of the Farmington Valley and beyond. Many know her as the Hartford County Coordinator for the UConn Cooperative Extension

Master Gardener and she is also the pesticide safety educator at UConn. Sarah is a Certified Advanced Master Gardener and a Connecticut Accredited Nursery Professional. Under her direction, the Master Gardener (MG) Program has provided interns with horticultural training and knowledge that is then shared with the community through volunteer diagnostic and identification services and educational outreach. Over the years, Sarah has educated and inspired hundreds of MGs who in turn have spread out across our state to beautify and inform others. Sarah's reach and impact on Connecticut's gardening community has been significant.



Betty Valentine, Dr. A.L. Mehlquist, and Pierre Bennerup

Sarah's work to transition the MG class to an online platform in 2018 helped bring the Program into the 21st century. This shift makes it easier for students that are still in the workforce to participate, as the in-class commitment was reduced to 4 hours per week. Each day, Sarah leads her team of County Coordinators to provide science-based information to home gardeners. She works tirelessly to meet the challenge of sustaining the MG Program with limited funding

from UConn and federal sources. The program is largely self-sustaining with revenue from MG and Advanced MG classes.

Sarah has been a long-time member of CT HORT who has tirelessly volunteered her service and horticultural expertise for the benefit of the Society, particularly at the Spring and Fall plant auctions. She has also served on the CT HORT board of directors and is a regular contributor to our Newsletter.

Congratulations Sarah Bailey!



Service Award Recipient Heidi Wheeler Isaacson

By Justine Ramsey, Awards Committee



Heidi Wheeler Isaacson joined CT Hort in 2014. Her husband, and past-president Brett Isaacson, was part of the Travel Committee at the time. She was attending every meeting with him, so why not join the fun! Let me be the first to say, we are so glad you did.

Heidi started to volunteer for CT Hort because she knew the organization needed volunteers, and there was always something to do. She started off preparing presentations past-Treasurers Ken Stubenrauch for the monthly meetings. When Ken became President, Heidi stepped up and became the new Treasurer. Heidi has always taken on new tasks that need to get done. In an organization that is run by volunteers, there is always something to do. Being the Treasurer is not an easy task, and Heidi does it without complaints.

While chatting with our 2020 Service Award Winner, I of course had to ask what her favorite plant was! Heidi stated that it was Forget-Me-Knots because they are cheery and so lovely in the garden. I think it is the perfect plant for an unforgettable person!

Thank you Heidi Wheeler Isaacson for selflessly volunteering your time every year for our wonderful organization.

Horticultural Happenings & Announcements

Note: Happenings are listed on a space-available basis. To submit an event, send details to news@cthort.org. Please format the announcement to resemble the entries below. Deadline for November issue is October 15.

Wednesday, Oct. 7, All day - The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group's 2020 Symposium – *Realistic Solutions to Managing Invasive Plants* – will take the form of a full-day webcast, open to all (with recordings of sessions available to registered attendees post-symposium). Sessions include a variety of techniques for management of terrestrial invasives in different situations, aquatic invasives, and native alternatives. CEU's for 11 organizations and Pesticide Recertification Credits are available. Registration \$65 \$25 Students). [Click here for more info.](#)

[American Horticultural Society \(AHS\)](#) and [Wild Ones – Native Plants, Natural Landscapes](#) are co-sponsoring [Webinars for Home Gardeners & Educators](#). Whether you choose to learn how wildlife, people, and plant communities interact; how to share concepts of eco-literacy with your children; or how to collect your own seeds, this live and interactive series will cover an eclectic variety of topics while generally emphasizing the importance of place-based ecological landscapes. Attendees are eligible for an AHS membership discount! One-hour sessions: \$25. 30-minute sessions: FREE! [Click to go to the NDAL \(New Directions in the American Landscape\) website](#) for more info and to register.

ctnofa lists a number of interesting distance learning opportunities on their event calendar. [Click here to review.](#) In addition, the **NOFA Accreditation Course in Organic Land Care** is being offered online this year. It will include the same quality programming as the in-person course, complete with 'online office hours.' Sessions will be held via Zoom again in October-November. Learn more and register at organiclandcare.net.

UConn Home & Garden Education Center (HGEC) www.ladybug.uconn.edu. An invaluable horticultural information resource ready to advise novice and seasoned gardeners. At present, analysis of physical samples has been suspended but digital images can be sent to ladybug@uconn.edu along with description of symptoms or problems, and any other relevant information/questions.

UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources (CAHNR) Blog <https://blog.extension.uconn.edu/vegetable-gardening/>. Here you'll find an abundance of information on current topics from COVID to Vegetable Gardening. Check link regularly as content changes frequently.

Visit cthort.org for the MOST CURRENT listings and links.

CT Hort Travel



Cape Cod Christmas Weekend December 5-6, 2020



Are you looking for a festive December getaway to ring in the holiday season this year? This may be the perfect answer – an overnight trip to beautiful Cape Cod.

DAY 1: Your getaway begins with a stop at **Brown & Hopkins Country Store** in Chepachet, Rhode Island where you can explore two floors of wonderful gifts for yourself, friends, and family. Shopping will work up a hunger so our next stop is Providence for lunch at **Yoleni's**, a Greek market modeled after its flagship store in Athens. Explore an appetizer tasting before enjoying lunch on your own. Then on to Hyannis where we'll settle in to our rooms at the **Cape Codder Resort**. For the holidays, they transform their grounds into an Enchanted Village decorated with lights, topiaries, miniature Christmas trees and Santa's Village.

After a delicious welcome dinner at **Hearth & Kettle Restaurant**, the evening will continue at the **Gardens Aglow** display in the **Heritage Museums and Gardens** in Sandwich. Their festivities include nine miles of holiday lights, marshmallow roasting, merry music, Santa, and model train displays.

DAY 2: Following breakfast our day begins at **Country Gardens** where we will attend a workshop to make your own air plant ornament. There will also be time to do some holiday shopping before we head off to enjoy lunch at the historic **Dan'l Webster Inn**. Lunch will be followed by a cabaret performance featuring Jody Ebling at the Inn. Our final stop takes us to the **Sandwich Glass Museum** for a **Glassblower's Christmas** where local glass artists display their creations on a forest of trees. While at the museum, don't miss the special exhibit – Glass Menagerie A-Z – and be sure to save time to watch a glass blowing demonstration.

Cost: \$419 per person double occupancy | \$489 per person single
Non-members please add \$50

A second departure point has been added for convenience:

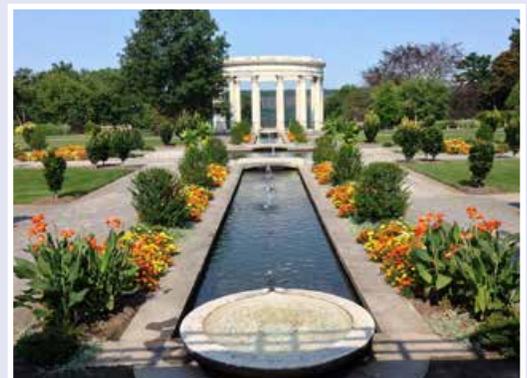
1. Emmanuel Synagogue, West Hartford
2. Buckland Street Commuter Log, Manchester



GARDENS OF SPLENDOR Untermeyer Gardens Conservancy, Yonkers, New York Postponed to Spring 2021

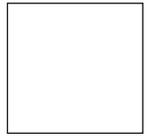
Once called "America's Most Spectacular Garden," Untermeyer Gardens is a 46-acre former estate that is now a public garden. You'll find several gardens on the grounds: a Walled Garden, a grand Vista, a Ruin Garden, the Temple of Love, a Rhododendron Walk and a Rock and Stream Garden. Your day-long adventure includes a docent-led tour of the amazing Untermeyer gardens, sit down lunch at Agostino's in New Rochelle and a stop at Larchmont Nurseries in Westchester.

Cost: \$112 per person
Non-members please add \$6



The Friendship Tours & Ship Shop team is working remotely with temporary office hours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday. With busy phone lines anticipated, the best way to reach them is by email. Staff email addresses are simply the first name of the person with @friendshiptours.net. Or you can email: office@friendshiptours.net.

Regular updates will be posted on the www.FriendshipTours.net website or sent to you via email.
Please check their website regularly.



Dated Material 🌿 *Please Rush*

CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

- Thurs., Oct. 1** – Board of Directors Remote Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Thurs., Oct. 15** – CT Hort ONLINE Program Meeting, 7 p.m., Karen Bussolini, *Jazzing Up the Garden with Color, Contrast and Movement.*
Go to CTHort.org for a link to the meeting.
- Thurs., Oct. 15** – Deadline for Winter (Nov./Dec.) *Newsletter*
- Thurs. to Sun., Oct. 15-18** – Order bulbs in online bulb sale.
- Thurs., Oct. 29** – Pick up bulbs in Rocky Hill or West Hartford.

Printed on recycled paper.



CT Flower & Garden Show takes a ‘GAP’ Year

By Nancy Brennick, Past-President and Flower Show Committee Chairperson

After 40+ years of Connecticut Flower & Garden Shows, the health situation has forced a cancellation of the February 2021 show. This decision was handed down from the Conn. Convention Center and the show’s planner, Kristi Gonsalves, President of North East Expos.

Kristi based her difficult decision on the fact that, “The show utilizes every inch of space in the convention center’s Exhibition Hall as well as several seminar rooms. Employing socially distanced booths, one-way aisles, and limiting the number of people inside at any one time would not only be difficult, but could affect the bottom line of hundreds of quality exhibitors, landscapers and vendors, some of whom travel here from across the country.” Gonsalves continued to explain that, “They count on our show to generate over 40,000 eager attendees so they can display, promote and sell their services and products. For them, substantially reduced foot traffic would be extremely detrimental....”

When we visit a beautiful, joyful show like ours, we sometimes forget it takes months and months of planning and toil to get the live displays, seminar speakers and exhibi-

tors in sync for the four-day event. The good news is we have more time to plan our participation in the 2022 show which is already scheduled for February 24th – 27th, 2022. See you then!

What about those BULBS?!!

Every October we sell bulbs to help offset the expense of the Flower Show display. Though we won’t have a display we still think it important to maintain some semblance of ‘normal’ for our CT Hort gardeners! So, we have planned a way to get you anxious bulb lovers in touch with some bargains, some old loves and some sparks of ‘hope & joy’ in the form of bulbs! This year, bulbs will be for sale in our NEW eBay store starting the night of the speaker meeting through the following Sunday (10/15 thru 10/18). Bulb pickup will take place on Thursday, 10/29 at the parking lots of the Rocky Hill office in the morning and Emanuel Synagogue in the afternoon. *Stay tuned.*

