

# Connecticut Horticultural Society

# NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2021

## Homegrown Dyestuffs for Our Nation's First Flags

By Jody Morgan—writer and CT Hort member

Although tales concerning the creation of our nation's first flags may be partially or wholly the stuff of legends, the dyes that colored the earliest extant examples have been well documented. Plants utilized to produce the reds and blues of Revolutionary War era banners grew in colonial gardens. Often pieced together from whatever textiles were at hand, the flags displayed the ingenuity and independent spirit of the crafters.

The Flag Resolution passed by the Marine Committee of the Second Continental Congress on June 14, 1777 read: "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation." Neither the arrangement nor the shape of the stars was specified.

According to family legend shared a century later by her grandson, Betsy Ross designed the original "Stars and Stripes" the previous summer. As the tale goes, she suggested the five-pointed star because it was easy to cut and placed the stars in a circle on the blue union. Records confirm she was commissioned to make flags for the Pennsylvania fleet at least a month before the Flag Resolution passed.

Unfurled in the face of besieging British forces at Fort Schuyler (previously Fort Stanwix) in Rome, New York on August 3, 1777, a hastily improvised banner may have been the first example of the stars and stripes flown in battle. The previous evening, Lieutenant Mellon arrived with 200 men of the

Ninth Massachusetts Regiment, much needed supplies, and a newspaper reporting the Flag Resolution. W. Pierpont White, President of the Mohawk Valley Historic Association relates: "Fort Schuyler was without a flag. Sunday, the 3rd became memorable by the patriotic supplying of this want. From a soldier's white shirt, a woman's red petticoat and blue cloth of Captain Abraham Swartwout's camlet cloak, our emblem of red, white and blue was pieced together by the women of the fort." Colonel Marinus Willet wrote about the event 25 years after the battle. Whatever details may have been embellished in the retelling, Swartwout's submission of a bill of eight shillings to replace his cloak used "for the colors" is documented. After a 21-day siege, the British retreated to Canada.

Barbara Gatewood, Professor Emeritus of Textile Science at Kansas State University, described the materials and dyestuffs used in early American flags in an interview released by K-State News on July 1, 2013. "Undyed and sometimes bleached fabrics were used for the white portions of the flag," she said. "The red dye was usually obtained from the root of the madder plant, which, ironically, was also used to produce the British Army's famous red coats, or from the female cochineal, a tiny insect that lives on specific cactus. The primary

continued on page 4



*Betsy Ross designed the original "Stars and Stripes" flag, and the dyes for the original "Stars and Stripes" came from the leaves and roots of plants. The leaves of Woad, above right, and Inigo were used to produce blue dye.*



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**"We can't move forward  
without your help!"**  
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## President's Letter

### New roles filled and to fill

Dear Members

I had the pleasure of hosting a pot luck dinner for our CT Hort BOD and Committee heads during our last lecture of the season with Christine Froehlich. We watched the presentation from a TV set up on my patio, it was a lovely evening spent with outstanding people.

The Board has worked hard to serve the organization during the Covid era, and we have learned the value of technology and are striving to find more ways to utilize it. This is why I'm thrilled to let you know that our new Communications Director will be working closely with David McCarthy, who will be working as Director of Marketing and Community Relations. This is a new position, which will be focusing on our social media exposure.

I look forward to this next season and the opportunities we will have to see familiar faces and new ones!

We are still without a Vice President who will fill my shoes. As my second year begins we will be seeking a candidate who will work alongside me and prepare for becoming President.

We have been operating without a Treasurer—a key position to keep our finances in order and oversee our investments. Heidi and Brett Isaacson have been a huge help filling in and attending to items needing attention to this point, and their assistance has been much appreciated. Going forward, we need a willing candidate to fill this much-valued role, rather than continue to ask too much of our past-president and our former treasurer. Will you step up and help us in this position?

Warmly,  
Cheryl Marino

Thank you to our generous business members and contributors!

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Bill Noble

# Spirit of Place

*The Making of a New England Garden with Bill Noble*

Thursday, September 23, 2021 –  
7 p.m.

How does an individual garden relate to the larger landscape? How does it connect to the natural and cultural environment? Does it evoke a sense of place? Bill Noble—a lifelong gardener, and the former director of preservation for the Garden Conservancy—helps us answer these questions by sharing how they influenced the creation of his garden in Vermont.

For 30 years Bill Noble has worked as a garden designer and professional in garden preservation. As Director of Preservation for the Garden Conservancy, he was instrumental in the preservation and restoration of dozens of gardens throughout the United States.

In his newly released book, *Spirit of Place: The Making of a New England Garden*, he describes the pleasures and

challenges—both aesthetic and practical—of creating a garden that feels deeply rooted to its place. His garden is included in the Smithsonian Institution's *Archive of American Gardens* and has been featured in *Martha Stewart Living*, *House & Garden*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and the Garden Conservancy's *Outstanding American Gardens*.



## Speaker Feedback

After you attend a 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 six-question survey on our website – [cthort.org](http://cthort.org). Click on the survey icon found on any page then chose the speaker you want to rate. Thank you for your feedback.



**We look forward to seeing you IN PERSON at  
the Emanuel Synagogue Auditorium in September for the start  
of the 2021-22 Season!!**

## Have a Garden Room? *Send us a photo!*

### **A request from Gordon Hayward for his October talk on GARDEN ROOMS**

Gordon Hayward, writer, designer, and lecturer, is asking members of CT Hort to e-mail him a single picture of a garden room they have created. Between now and late September, Gordon will gather these images and include a dozen or so in his October lecture. Gordon's presentation will also include garden rooms that he and his wife have on their property as well as others he has designed across the country. With this real-life cross-section of photos, Gordon will explore the principles behind the garden room in a way that will encourage listeners to create their own rooms.

**Send your best photo (only one per person) to [Office@CTHort.org](mailto:Office@CTHort.org).  
Subject line: GARDEN ROOM**



Photo from [www.haywardgardens.com](http://www.haywardgardens.com)



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 "Homegrown Dyestuffs" from page 1
 

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sources for blue dye were woad and indigo, two plants that contain blue dye in their leaves."

The first synthetic dye, Perkin's mauve, she notes, was not developed until 1856. Commercial processing of madder, woad and indigo took days of patience, hard labor, and tolerance for long hours spent working in extremely unpleasant circumstances.

Having woad and madder mattered enough to the Puritans to be included in a 1629 notation cited by the Herb Society UK. "Articles to be sent to New England by the Massachusetts Bay Company: vines, cereals, fruit seeds, woad seed, saffron heads, liquorice seed, madder roots, hop-roots."

Madder and woad also appear in the list compiled by Roger Tabor of herbs taken to New England by early settlers. Tabor designed the Herb Society's National Herb Garden at Sulgrave Manor, the ancestral home of George Washington's family. The garden features herbs taken to North America by colonists and herbs brought to Europe from North America.

Puritans weren't dying their garments scarlet and blue. Elaine Dow, a member of the New England Chapter of the Herb Society of America, writes in "A Short History of Dye Plants": "Woad black, obtained from the addition of madder, produced a black superior to all other blacks and one used until well into the 1800s." Both woad and madder can generate a range of colors depending on other ingredients used. Dow explains, "Madder (*Rubia tinctoria*) is probably the single most important natural dye herb. It was used by the ancient Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans. Henry II of England chose red as the color for the livery of his servants, which was to be 'dyed red with madder,' which in turn led to the color of the coats of the British Army."

Rita Buchanan offers both history and practical knowledge of growing and processing dye plants in *A Weaver's Garden*. Madder roots are dug in their third year to be processed for dying cloth.

The plants are floppy and tend to sprawl along the ground. Rita advises that "usually about eight ounces of fresh or dried madder root will dye a pound of fibers." A chemical called a mordant is necessary to bite into fibers to make them receptive to taking dye. The choice of mordant is determined by the fiber being dyed and the color desired.



*Eliza Pinckney made horticultural history by experimenting until she could successfully grow Indigo in South Carolina. Her work made fortunes for her neighbors. George Washington served as one of her pallbearers when she died.  
Photo source: National Park Service*

Buchanan writes: "Woad (*Isatis tinctoria*) may have been the first plant cultivated for its pigment." She adds; "Woad was by far the most widely used dyestuff in Europe for centuries, prior to the introduction of indigo from India in the 1600s." In England in the mid-1580s woad was six times as profitable a crop as grain. Faced with a food shortage, Parliament limited the amount of land that could be devoted to growing woad. Elizabeth I repealed the restrictions in 1601, but found the odor of fermenting woad so offensive she forbade sowing of woad plants within

five miles of her residences.

Woad is a biennial in the mustard family. Leaves can be harvested several times between June and October with a single plant yielding as much as half a pound of leaves a season. Two pounds of leaves dye four ounces of fiber. Currently listed as a noxious weed in 11 western states, woad now generates the kinds of blues associated with misery. It outcompetes native grasses and agricultural crops. The tap root may exceed five feet in length! Madder has gone out of fashion.

Indigo doesn't grow in New England, but became readily available in the colonies when Eliza Pinckney succeeded in raising a sufficiently successful crop in 1744 on her family's South Carolina plantation to distribute seeds to neighbors. In 1775, exports from the southern colonies totaled 1,122,200 pounds. By the close of the American Revolution, England had established cheaper sources of indigo in India, so Eliza's son Charles, a signer of the Constitution from South Carolina, put the land to use growing a different cash crop: cotton.

Cochineal, the fourth dyestuff mentioned by Gatewood, comes from a South American insect that feeds on opuntia cactus as far north as the American Southwest. During the American Revolution, Spain still controlled cochineal production. By the time the red English wool bunting used in the flag flown over Fort McHenry on September 14, 1814 was loomed, cochineal was being processed by other European countries. The flag inspiring Francis Scott Key to pen the "Star Spangled Banner" was made by Mary Pickersgill, daughter of Revolutionary War flag maker Rebecca Young. 🗡️





# We need YOU to REVIEW!

We're thinking ahead to winter...but only because we are looking for volunteers to read and review gardening books for our winter edition of the newsletter. We're looking for 300-400 words on your opinion of the book. If you are interested, please call Tracey at 860-796-0185 or send her an email at [news@cthort.org](mailto:news@cthort.org) and we will assign you something interesting!



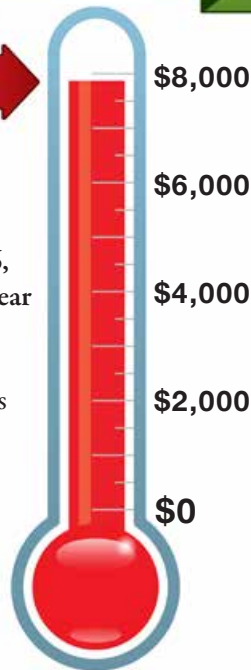
## Scholarship Fund Status

**GOAL \$8,000**

**\$7,976 Raised** →

Thank you to Nancy DuBrule Clemente and the "Weed Wars" workshop she presented in June. We made a whopping \$2,640! With the proceeds from the workshop we are at \$7,976, just \$24 shy of our \$8,000 goal for the fiscal year ending 8-31-2021.

Since 1959, CT Hort has awarded scholarships to horticulture students at UConn. In 2010, scholarships for plant science students at Naugatuck Valley Community College were added. To help grow the Scholarship Fund, go to [CTHort.org](http://CTHort.org) and donate or mail a check to Connecticut Horticultural Society, PO Box 330966, West Hartford, CT 06133.



## Membership dues will stay the same as last year!

With the cost of everything increasing because of the effects of Covid, we want one thing in your life to stay the same! At their last meeting, the board of directors decided to keep the cost of membership the same as last year.

You can go online to renew your membership or if you're a lifelong member of CT Hort and you want to make a donation, that's easy to do online as well!

And don't forget: a membership for a friend or family member makes a great gift!





## Horticultural Happenings & Announcements

*Note: Happenings are listed on a space-available basis. To submit an event, send details to [news@cthort.org](mailto:news@cthort.org). Please format the announcement to resemble the entries below. Deadline for September issue is August 15.*



*Photo by Karolina Grabowska from Pexels.*

**Sat., July 3 and Sat., July 24 from 2-3 pm — The Peach Bros. on Tour at The Garden Barn, Vernon.** The Peach Brothers return this year with the freshest peaches from around the country! The Peach Brothers are pre-order only this year, although they will be sure to bring extra boxes to each stop to allow walk-up customers the chance to purchase. Please click on the link below for more information about The Peach Brothers and don't forget to check out their awesome recipes for Peach Cobbler and Peach Margaritas! <https://www.thepeachbrothers.com/> The Garden Barn is at 228 West Street, Vernon.

**Thurs. & Friday, July 9 & 10, 5 pm – Hill-Stead Museum presents Come Fly Away with Us!** This event is inspired by Theodate Pope Riddle's extensive travels and collection of souvenir postcards. The evening will feature a Spanish-inspired multi-course dinner and wine pairings by Chef Tyler Anderson of Millwright's, as well as top-notch musical talent, and live and silent auctions. Taking place outdoors on Hill-Stead's West Lawn, it will be al fresco dining at its finest—and guests will be safely socially distanced at tables spaced at least 6 feet apart and may indicate their seating preferences on their ticket order: table of 2, 4, 6, or 8 guests. Tickets can be purchased at <https://www.hillstead.org/benefit-dinner/>.

**Wed., July 21, 6:30 pm West Hartford Noah Webster Library presents Container Gardening.** From raised beds to pots and everything in between, learn the ins and outs of growing vegetables and fruits successfully in small spaces and unconventional containers. This session covers everything you need to know about setting up for success, including location, design, light, and containers. Learn how to choose your edible plants, planting methods, seasons, crop mapping, seeds and

starts, where to get your plants, soil mix, and define your goals for the season. This is a virtual program. Register at <https://westhartford.librarymarket.com/events>

**Fri., August 6, 1-4 pm - Hollister House presents the workshop Flower Arranging from the Garden.** This workshop will explore the joys of creating a seasonal floral design foraged from one's own garden, the fields and woods. Horticulturalist and landscape designer Deborah Munson will begin by introducing you to her work and reviewing the tools of the trade. She will follow it with a walk through the Hollister House Garden discussing floral design, structure and color and a return to the barn to create a design on your own. Please bring your own glass or ceramic container. All floral material will be provided. The cost is \$85 for HHG members \$85 (includes \$50 materials fee) and \$95 for non-members \$95 (includes \$50 materials fee). Go to <https://hollisterhousegarden.org> to register.

**Weds. August 18, 3:00pm - The Avon Free Public Library** will present Backyard Composting. Don't let those vegetable peels, egg shells, coffee grounds and tea leaves go to waste! Learn how to easily turn household scraps into compost (aka "Black Gold") that your backyard garden will love! Presented by Dr. Yonghao Li from The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. The program is for adults and children entering 6th grade or older. It will be presented online through Zoom. Closed-captioning available. Register at [www.avonctlibrary.info](http://www.avonctlibrary.info) and a Zoom link will be sent to you before the program. For more information, please call the library at 860.673.9712 or visit [www.avonctlibrary.info](http://www.avonctlibrary.info).

**UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources (CAHNR) Blog** is pleased to announce that following a national search, Sydney Everhart, Ph.D. will serve as the next head of the Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture (PSLA). She replaces Richard McAvoy, Ph.D., who is retiring after serving in the role for 10 years.

Ms. Everhart comes to UConn from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln where she is an associate professor and graduate chair in the Department of Plant Pathology. Her recent research projects are focused on the application of molecular tools for elucidating the biology, epidemiology, and origins of fungal plant pathogens causing disease within cultivated crops. She received her M.S. degree in biology from the University of Central Missouri and a Ph.D. in plant pathology from the University of Georgia.

Visit [cthort.org](http://cthort.org) for the MOST CURRENT listings and links.

# CT Hort Travel

## 2021 Christmas in Cape Cod

**Saturday-Sunday,  
December 4-5, 2021**



While on your summer vacation, you might kick around a few ideas on what to do for the holidays. Consider spending a weekend in Cape Cod. Although unable to make this overnight in 2020 due to travel restrictions in place at the time, this trip was so well received that we have brought it back in 2021. The weekend will be escorted by Brett Isaacson and includes:

### DAY 1:

- A stop in **Brown & Hoskins Country Store**—one of America's oldest country stores and it will be dressed for the season.
- Enjoy an appetizer tasting at **Yoleni's Greek Market** in Providence—modeled after its flagship store in Athen's—followed by lunch on your own.
- Arrive at the **Cape Codder Resort** in Hyannis in the afternoon with time to enjoy their incredible grounds, decorated as an enchanted village.
- Freshen up for dinner at the **Hearth & Kettle Restaurant**, known for its commitment to 'fresh, wholesome food, thoughtfully prepared.'
- After dinner the day is concluded with a visit to **Gardens Aglow** at the **Heritage Museums and Gardens** in Sandwich to delight in a 9-mile wonderland trail of lights, marshmallow roasting, music, and model trains.

### DAY 2:

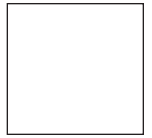
- Following breakfast, a local garden shop—**Country Gardens**—will host a workshop to make an air plant ornament. There will be time to shop as well.
- The historic **Dan'l Webster Inn** will be our spot for lunch before enjoying a live holiday cabaret performance by Jody Ebling.
- Before leaving the Cape for home, the final stop will be to the **Sandwich Glass Museum** to experience a **Glassblower's Christmas**. The museum will feature glass blowing demonstrations along with the creations of local Cape Cod glass artists.



A deposit of \$75 per person will hold your spot with final payment due October 1, 2021.

Cost: \$439 per person, double occupancy | \$519 per person single | **Non-members must add \$50**

**To reserve your spot or for more information, please call  
Friendship Tours at (860) 243-1630 / toll-free (800) 243-1630  
or visit [www.friendshiptours.net](http://www.friendshiptours.net).**



*Dated Material* 🌿 *Please Rush*

**CT Hort Calendar at a Glance**

- Thurs., Aug. 15** – Deadline for September *Newsletter*
- Thurs, Sept. 23** – CT Hort IN-PERSON Program Meeting, Emanuel Synagogue Auditorium, West Hartford 7:00 p.m., **Bill Noble** presents *Spirit of Place: The Making of a New England Garden*
- Sat., Sept. 25** – Kaminski's Garden Tour 9 a.m.–noon

Printed on recycled paper.



## Kaminski's Garden Tour

A private garden located at 4 Davis Road, Oxford  
**Saturday, September 25, 9 am–noon**

Once you visit Sue and Dick Kaminski's garden, you'll see that it is so much more than just a garden. There are features to delight all—topiaries, perennial gardens, bonsai, espaliered apple trees, gazebo, a pond complete with frogs, a completely landscaped miniature train town and more! Visit and relax in this playful, uplifting outdoor space.

The garden will be open on Saturday morning, September 25 with a rain date of the next day. Sue and Dick have asked that guest fees collected will be donated to The Scholarship Fund. Cost: Member-\$15, Non-member-\$20, student-\$5.

**Please note:** The property is built on levels and as such may be a challenge for some to manage. There are no restroom facilities available so please plan accordingly (there is a Dunkin Donuts nearby).

To register, visit [www.cthort.org](http://www.cthort.org). You can choose to pay online OR to pay at the door. Please register online even if paying at the door so that we have an accurate count for refreshments. Thank you.

Register for the tour at <https://tinyurl.com/3racv8tn>.

