

# Connecticut Horticultural Society NEWSLETTER

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Photo by Olaf Nyman

## George Washington's Vision for Mount Vernon: Landscaping with Native Trees

By Jody Morgan, writer and CT Hort member



During the summer of 1776, George Washington took time out from assessing the strength of British forces amassing against American troops encamped on Manhattan Island to write to Lund Washington, his cousin and estate manager. His deep appreciation for the value of trees and shrubs indigenous to his homeland is evident in his correspondence. Envisioning the landscaping that would greet him when he returned to Mount Vernon may have provided the essential antidote to stress that kept Washington's spirits up throughout the arduous years of the American Revolutionary War.

On August 19, 1776, while expecting an attack on the City of New York at any moment, George asked Lund to gather seeds from Honey Locust trees for a thickly planted hedge. His detailed instructions including precisely where to place additional primarily native acquisitions continue: " — these Trees to be Planted without any order or regularity (but pretty thick, as they can at any time be thin'd) and that to consist at the North end, of locusts, altogether, & that at the South, of all the clever kind of Trees (especially flowering ones) that can be got, such as Crab apple, Poplar, Dogwood, Sassafras, Lawrel, Willow (especially yellow & Weeping Willow, twigs of which can be got from Philadelphia) and many others which I do not recollect at present — these to be interspersed here and there with ever greens such as Holly, Pine, and Cedar, also Ivy — to these may

be added the Wild flowering Shrubs of the larger kind, such as the fringe Tree & several other kinds that might be mentioned." ([founders.archives.gov](https://founders.archives.gov/)).

A few days before his famous clandestine nighttime crossing of the frigid Delaware River, George Washington wrote to Lund in a letter dated December 10-17th, 1776. Despite acknowledging that "I wish to Heaven it was in my power to give you a more favourable Acct of our situation," the general found time to advise Lund on horticultural matters. "If you can get some Holly Trees to plant upon the Circular Banks in the manner, or rather thicker than I did a year or two ago I should be glad of it — or if good & well set Holly can not be had then young & strait bodied Pines will do." ([founders.archives.gov](https://founders.archives.gov/))

As a self-taught landscape designer, Washington translated concepts he studied from popular British resources into plantings appropriate to his personal vision for Mount Vernon. Realizing that, notwithstanding his victories as an officer in the colonial militia during the French and Indian War, the British were not going to offer him a commission, Washington resigned from his military post at the end of 1758. He married Martha Dandridge Custis in January 1759 and ordered Batty Langley's *New Principles of Gardening* in a letter to London on May 1st, 1759.

continued on page 4

**This Issue:**  
**Grafting Workshop**  
**with Kevin Wilcox!**  
**page 8**

### IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Letter	2
Horticultural Happenings	6
CT Hort Travel	7



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#### Membership Dues:

Individual.....	\$60
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Horticultural Business Member.....	\$100 or \$250
Organizations.....	\$80

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## President's Letter

### Growing new events

Dear Fellow Gardeners,

Though this might seem to be a quiet time for our organization, we are in the midst of planning many things! Our education committee is working on a grafting workshop with Kevin Wilcox, a tour of O'Brien's Nursery, an event at Andrew Pighills' home, and this fall, Jim Sirch will teach us about sowing seeds in the winter.

Our Symposium committee is looking for volunteers to help plan next year's event. The speaker plans for next season are underway, with various lecturers of diverse expertise being contacted. The Auction committee has secured the date and venue for our Spring Auction. As always, your help will be needed: contacting your "go-to" nursery for donations, set up, tear down, food donations and more. Please connect with Mary Anna at the CT Hort office to get hooked up with the Symposium and Auction committees. Get involved!

Also remember - from now through March we will be **virtual only** with our lectures. I hope you were able to tune in to see James Dillon's fabulous presentation, either live over Zoom, or by watching the recording we send to all members during the following week.

Until Deborah Chud's presentation on February 16, I wish you well!

Gratefully,  
Cheryl Marino

Thank you to our generous business members and supporters!

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Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens  
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The Garden Barn Nursery  
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Deborah Chud

# New Perennials: A Love Story

with Deborah Chud

Thursday, February 16, 2023 • 7:00 pm

Live via Zoom (you'll be sent the link on the Sunday before the talk).



"New Perennials: A Love Story" is a personal introduction to the design principles of the New Perennialists, who gave rise to the hottest gardening trend in the world today—naturalistic landscaping. In the US, their influence can be seen in New York's High Line, Chicago's Lurie Garden, the Oudolf Meadow at Delaware Botanic Gardens, and Oudolf Garden Detroit. Deborah Chud's six years of research on these gardens led to her own highly unusual New Perennial garden and the only known database of New Perennial plant combinations. Her talk is part memoir, part history, and part design theory—with some practical "dos and don'ts" for gardeners at every level.

Deborah Chud is a retired Massachusetts physician turned garden maker, consultant and educator. In the fall of 2020, she presented her work as part of "Piet Oudolf: How Does He Do It?"—an international event organized by Piet Oudolf's co-author, Noel Kingsbury, under

the aegis of [gardenmasterclass.org](https://gardenmasterclass.org). She has also presented to members of the following institutions and organizations: Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, the United States Botanical Garden in Washington, D.C., the Ecological Landscape Alliance, the Northwest Perennial Alliance, Toronto Botanical Garden, and Delaware Botanic 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](https://cthort.org). Click on the survey icon found on any page then chose the speaker you want to rate. Thank you for your feedback.

Coming up next month  
(via Zoom ONLY):

**March 16, 2023:**

**Poppies, Peacocks and Parterres—  
Gardens of Scotland**

*Nancy Stevens, gardener and author*

Rounding  
out our  
season of  
speakers:

**April 20, 2023: Nibbling on Natives in Your Back Yard and Beyond**  
(Zoom and in person)

*Russ Cohen, naturalist and wild foods enthusiast*

**May 18, 2023: Healthy Plants, Indoor and Out**  
(Zoom and in person)

*Nick Goltz, director of UConn's Plant Diagnostic Laboratory*

**June 15, 2023: The Eye of the Beholder: Is It Messy, or an Acquired Taste?**  
(Zoom and in person)

*Edwina Von Gal, landscape designer*



## Vision for Mount Vernon from page 1

**Honey Locust tree from 1931**

A photograph of a Honey Locust tree taken on the grounds of the Washington's Mount Vernon estate.

**Honey locust tree**

On August 19, 1776, while expecting an attack on the City of New York at any moment, George asked Lund to gather seeds from Honey Locust trees for a thickly planted hedge.

Many articles posted on Mount Vernon's website ([mountvernon.org](http://mountvernon.org)) describe Washington's keen interest in every aspect of gardening. One titled "Batty Langley," notes: "The book remained in Washington's library throughout his years of great renown, all the way until his eventual retirement from public life. Appraisers of Washington's estate noted 'Langley on Gardening' in the study upon the first President's death." Washington followed Langley's advice on freeing the landscape outside the confines of his walled fruit and vegetable gardens from stiff regularity. He bordered his lawn with gracefully curving paths leading into planned wildernesses of native trees.

An article titled "Developing Mount Vernon's Landscape" ([mountvernon.org](http://mountvernon.org)) explains: "Along the serpentine paths, Washington planted forest trees, which framed the views while offering welcome shade. ... Walking west from the Mansion along these paths, Washington's guests first encountered two 'shrubberies,' dotted with bursts of color created by flowering shrubs." During his brief respite from public service after resigning his commission as Commander-in-Chief at the close of the Revolutionary War in 1783 until he was summoned into the political arena first presiding over the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and subsequently serving as the first President of the United States of America, Washington installed the major elements of his landscape plan.

Washington wrote to friends and family members to gather species native to their locations. From New York Governor George Clinton he received black gum and American Linden.

In a letter to his nephew George Augustine Washington dated January 6, 1785, the recently retired general wrote: "If it is not too late in the Season to obtain them, I wish you would procure for me in So. Carolina a few of the acorns of live Oak — and Seeds of the Ever-green Magnolia — this latter is called in Millers Gardeners dictionary greater Magnolia — it rises according to his Acct to the height of Eighty feet or more — flowers early, & is a beautiful tree; there is another Species of the Magnolia of which I wish to get the Seeds -- it is called the Umbrella tree ..." ([founders.archives.gov](http://founders.archives.gov)).

Twin tulip poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) Washington had planted beside the bowling green gates in 1785 still bear witness to his remarkable vision for landscaping with natives at Mount Vernon. On January 12, 1785, he rode across his plantation as documented in his diary "in search of the sort of trees I shall want for my walks, groves & Wildernesses." He may well have marked these "Living Witnesses" for transplantation that day. His diary entry notes: "Within the Meadow fence at the Mill, & within that Inclosure next Isaac's Gates's are some young Crab apple trees and young pine trees in the old field of all sizes. And in the Branch of Hell hole betwn. the Gate & its mouth are a number of very fine young Poplars - Locusts - Sasafras and Dogwood. Some Maple Trees on high ground & 2 or 3 Shrubs (in wet ground) wch. I take to be of the Fringe tree." ([founders.archives.gov](http://founders.archives.gov))

Mount Vernon became a destination for drop-in visitors. Martha repeatedly called on her incomparable ability to provide delicious

last-minute dinners. George entertained guests with walks along peaceful, thoughtfully designed paths.

In *American Gardens in the Eighteenth Century*, Ann Leighton quotes the reaction of one Polish visitor to Mount Vernon in June 1798: "There were many very beautiful trees: the tulip-tree with flowers like tulips, white with an orange touch in the base: magnolias with flowers whose scent is almost as strong as the orange-tree, but not so pleasant; the sweeter scent -- the small violet flowers have the pleasantest smell I have ever noticed, a mixture of strawberries and pineapple; the splendid catalpa is not yet in flower; the New Scotland spruce of beautiful dark green, and many other trees and shrubs, covered with flowers of different hues, planted so as to produce the best of color-effects."

In *Founding Gardeners*, Andrea Wulf asserts: "John Bartram Senior had been the first to bring together trees and shrubs from all thirteen states, but he had done so for commercial reasons in order to supply his British customers and out of scientific curiosity. By contrast, Washington had been the first to unite the trees and shrubs from across the thirteen states as a visual expression of a young nation." 🐾



A holly tree on the property was photographed in 1931. Long before that, Washington wrote to his cousin Lund Washington: "If you can get some Holly Trees to plant upon the Circular Banks in the manner, or rather thicker than I did a year or two ago I should be glad of it — or if good & well set Holly can not be had then young & strait bodied Pin s will do."



A map of the four gardens at Mount Vernon



**We have openings on our leadership team for the next term:**

- Vice President
- Board Member
- Education/Workshops
- Finance Committee

**Interested?** Contact Cheryl Marino at [cheryldmarino@gmail.com](mailto:cheryldmarino@gmail.com)



## 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 March issue is February 15.

Feb. 7, 11:30 am, Garden Club of Hartford presents "Green Infrastructure in Urban and Suburban Environments," Porter Memorial, 75 Main Street, Farmington. The talk features Aaliyah Beckford, Wellesley College Class of 2023. Light refreshments will be served. Free admission but RSVP required: Pat Salner, 860-604-7622 or [yogananapat@gmail.com](mailto:yogananapat@gmail.com).

Thurs. Feb. 9, noon, Hartford Garden Club regular meeting includes Allie Kraushaar, owner of Moss Life in Tariffville on "Moss Life and Terrariums," Saint John's Episcopal Church, 679 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford. Inspired by the resilience of moss, she will share her knowledge of terrarium building and maintenance, along with a step-by-step demonstration. Free for members; guest donation of \$10. Register at [www.WestHartfordGardenClub.org](http://www.WestHartfordGardenClub.org) or call Peg or Cheri 860-521-7684

Wed., Feb 22, 7:30 pm, CT Hardy Plant Society presents Dan Schuknecht: "Fantastic Ferns and How to Grow Them" online only. Free for members; \$10 drop-in fee. Register at <https://fb.me/c/2DkzA96Xj>.

Sat., Feb. 25, 11 am, online only. "Remarkable Natives for Beautiful, Planet-Friendly Gardens" featuring Kerry Ann Mendez, gardener, author, and owner of Perennially Yours. She will discuss unusual perennials and flowering shrubs, striking grasses, award-winning natives, and highly rated mail order sources for native plants. \$13.95 per person. Go to <https://pyours.com/remarkable-natives-webinar/> to register.



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

**CONNECTICUT**  
**Flower & Garden Show**  
**CT CONVENTION CENTER**  
**FEB 23-26, 2023**

Thu 10a - 7p | Fri 10a - 8p  
Sat 10a - 8p | Sun 10a - 5p

\$20 Admission at the Door  
\$17 Advance Tickets Online  
\$5 Children Ages 5-12  
FREE Children Ages 0-4

**Featured Speakers**

  
Charlie Nardozzi

  
Ellen Ogden

  
Lorraine Ballatto

  
Paul Split

  
Diane St. John

  
Nancy Debrule-Clemente

**2023 Theme**  
**Gateway to Spring**

**Spectacular Landscaped Gardens! Design & Horticulture Competition by the Federated Garden Clubs of CT!**

20+ horticulturalists, landscapers & experts!  
Offering 80+ hours of educational seminars & demonstrations! Topics include Seed Starting, Pollinators, Vegetable Gardening, Houseplants, Natives, Trees, Organics and more!

[CTFlowerShow.com](http://CTFlowerShow.com)



# CT Hort Travel

## New Zealand Gardens and National Parks October 15-29

This autumn, join Garden and Nature Tours, Minnesota State Horticultural Society, Friendship Tours and Southern World and traveling guide gurus C. Colston Burrell and Peter Gibbs for an unforgettable journey through the enchanting islands of New Zealand. Down Under it will be spring, and a wealth of magnificent private and public gardens will be draped in their vernal splendor. We will explore enchanted forests, sail in Milford Sound, take in stunning scenery and enjoy delicious cuisine. Our group tour is limited to 22 travelers. This bucket-list trip offers enticing opportunities for exploration, discovery and relaxation.

### PRICING

#### Based on 20-22 Travelers

\$6,525.00 Land Price — Double Occupancy • \$1,275.00 Single Supplement

#### Based on 15-19 Travelers

\$7,425.00 Land Price — Double Occupancy • \$1,275.00 Single Supplement

Fewer than 15 travelers may result in a small surcharge. Itinerary subject to change without notice.

**Call Barbara at Friendship Tours: 860-243-1630**

**or go to [www.friendshiptours.net](http://www.friendshiptours.net)**

## 2022-2023 Scholarship Fund

GOAL  
\$8,000

\$5,053

We hope you'll consider helping us reach that goal! Go to [cthort.org](http://cthort.org) to learn how to give. Thank you!



## SAVE THE DATE



## CT Hort's Annual Plant Sale & Auction is Friday, May 5

Connecticut Horticultural Society's 2023 Plant Sale & Auction is scheduled for Friday, May 5, at Bethany Covenant Church at 785 Mill Street in Berlin, CT.

The sale and auction will include new and rare collections of plants and shrubs.

The evening event kicks off with a plant sale and silent auction of unusual perennials, annuals, vegetables, herbs, shrubs and silent auction treasures from local growers, wholesalers, and businesses, and ends with a live auction of some unusual offerings.

Once again, Nancy DuBrule-Clemente will curate the plant sale and auction, as well as serve as one of the auctioneers.

Proceeds from all sales are deposited into the Society's Scholarship Fund and used to provide scholarships to Plant Science students at the University of Connecticut (since 1959), and Naugatuck Valley Community College (since 2011). Admission is \$5.





*Dated Material* 🌿 *Please Rush*

### CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

**Thurs., Feb. 2** – Board of Directors  
Remote Meeting, 7 pm

**Wed., Feb. 15** – Deadline for March  
*Newsletter*

**Thurs., Feb. 16** – Speaker presentation  
featuring “New Perennials:  
a Love Story” with  
Deborah Chud, 7:00 pm  
(Zoom only)

Go to [CTHort.org](https://CTHort.org) for information on these  
and all other meetings and programs.

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## New Workshop!



### GRAFTING DWARF CONIFERS March 4, 1:30-3:30 pm

Noah Webster House, 227 South Main St. West Hartford  
**\$45 per person (Limit 20)**

Go to [cthort.org](https://cthort.org) to register

Join horticulturist Kevin Wilcox as he teaches you how to successfully graft dwarf conifers. Our program will start with a short slide presentation, followed by participants preparing, cutting and wrapping the grafted conifer. Different conifer cultivars will be provided for people to graft, with selections from Oriental, Serbian, Norway and White spruces. Attendees are welcome to bring selections of their own to try grafting (bring up to two year's growth, not an entire large branch). Please bring a pair of hand pruners.

*At this point, only spruce understock is available, and if others become available, scions for grafting will be provided. Depending on how many people join us, we will graft at least one plant each, with more seedlings for people to take and try at home.*