

Connecticut Horticultural Society

NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2023

Thomas Jefferson's Garden Legacy

by Jody Morgan, writer and CT Hort member

Fourth of July festivities inevitably recall Thomas Jefferson's role as the principal author of our Declaration of Independence. Jefferson died on July 4, 1826, exactly 50 years after the Second Continental Congress ratified the document. After serving as the third President of the United States from 1801-1809, he retired to his Virginia plantation Monticello finally able to supervise execution of his elaborate landscape designs. Like his contemporaries, he reserved the term "garden" for the plot containing vegetables. That terraced space alone covered almost 2 acres. A football field including the end zones encompasses only 1.32 acres.

Editor Robert C. Baron includes some of Jefferson's letters in *The Garden and Farm Books of Thomas Jefferson*. Undaunted by his daughter Martha's correspondence describing extensive insect damage in the vegetable garden, Jefferson wrote from Philadelphia on July 21, 1793: "We will try this winter to cover our garden with a heavy coat of manure. When earth is rich it bids defiance to droughts, yields in abundance and of the best quality. I suspect the insects which have harassed you have been encouraged by the feebleness of your plants, and that has been produced by the lean state of the soil."

Jefferson penned the first entry in his "Garden Book" on March 30, 1766. On May 28, 1767, he recorded: "strawberries come to table. note this is the first year of their bearing having been planted in the spring of 1766. and on an average, the plants bear 20 strawberries each. 100 fill half a pint." His final entry on September 15, 1824, is a calendar of when each variety was planted and when it came to table. He describes seasons of fickle and unfavorable weather and many failures as well as successes.



Jefferson's perseverance in maintaining a balance between his cultivated garden and the natural world is an inspiration to all gardeners.

Jefferson notes in 1775: "we have had the most favorable winter ever known in the history of man." Then he describes in March: "there came very cold weather & frosts every night for a week, that killed every peach at Monticello."

Baron maintains: "Thomas Jefferson was a master gardener, always trying new varieties and new plants, and intermixing native plants with exotics to add variety. Jefferson's goal was to make Monticello a botanical garden."

Peter J. Hatch, who retired after serving for 35 years as Director of Gardens and Grounds at Monticello, has authored four books and numerous articles on Thomas Jefferson's horticultural legacy. He quotes Jefferson in "Thomas Jefferson and Gardening" (*Encyclopedia Virginia*): " 'I have always thought that if in the experiments to introduce ... new plants, one species in an hundred is found useful & succeeds, the ninety nine found otherwise are more than paid for.' "

continued on page 5

We need YOU to REVIEW!

Be part of our tradition. 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@cthorg.org.



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Membership Dues:

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Senior Family (65+).....	\$75
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Horticultural Business Member.....	\$100 or \$250
Organizations.....	\$80

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Planning Ahead

Dear Members,

What a gorgeous spring we have had. As I write this letter, it is the summer solstice. Loving these hours of light, we try to savor them, appreciating how late we are able to garden. In the fall we yearn for these days with longer light, but nature has its rhythm of shutting down and prepping for winter. As CT Hort preps for the new season, we look forward to meeting at the Elmwood Community Center where we will begin meetings earlier, share food and drink, and perhaps even consider a potluck dinner prior to a meeting! ZOOM will always be an option, but do consider coming, meeting some new friends, and reconnecting with old.

The Board of Directors will be meeting in early September with some new directors. As you know we haven't had a Vice President to come along side of me to transition CT Hort to new Leadership. Although we have a strong Membership base, we as an organization haven't done a good job of succession planning. This year will be pivotal in sorting out what our next steps are. As much as I've enjoyed serving as President, I know that new "blood" is essential for keeping us strong and moving ahead with new initiatives and ideas. Your input and ideas are always encouraged and welcome to the BoD, please email Mary Anna at office@cthort.org with your valued thoughts before the September 7th Board meeting.

Warmly,
Cheryl



Thank you to our generous business members and supporters!



Hollister House Garden

McVane, Bellobuono,
Kuzmak, Wiezalis, and
Bibisi, LLP

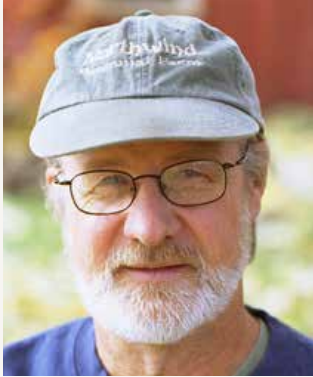


Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens
Colorblends Wholesale Flowerbulbs

The Garden Barn Nursery
Go Organic LLC



Perennial Plant Communities: The Know Maintenance Approach and Coming to Know the Plants



Roy Diblik

with *Roy Diblik*

Thursday, September 21 • 6:15 pm

Elmwood Community Center, 1106 New Britain Ave., West Hartford and via Zoom
(you'll be sent the link on the Sunday before the talk).

Perennial Plant Communities: “The Know Maintenance Approach”

Roy's thoughtful way to design perennial plantings welcomes fresh contemporary styles and plant diversity integrated with responsible stewardship concerns. By using a selection of regionally dependable perennials and native plants, endless nature inspired plant patterns can be created, each relating to time and cost to nurture and care for. He will discuss the developing partnership between the gardener, the plants and nature, always knowing the beauty is in the doing.

Roy is co-owner of Northwind Perennial Farm located in Burlington, Wisconsin. He has been growing traditional and native perennials since 1978. His garden designs emphasize plant relationships to maintenance strategies and costs. Roy's design and planting projects include the Louis Sullivan Arch for the Modern Wing at the Art Institute of Chicago and the lakeside plantings for the Oceanarium at the Shedd Aquarium and recently the perennial plantings for Scott Byron's new garden design for the Chicago History Museum. His book 'The Know Maintenance Perennial Garden' highlights his perennial gardening practice.

SECOND PRESENTATION: Coming to Know the Plants

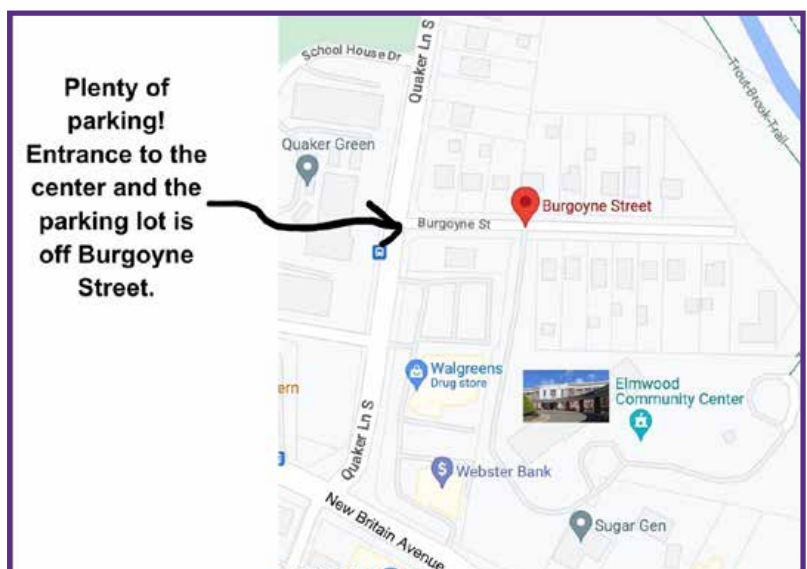
The emphasis will be on the importance of knowing plants and their relationships to each other and the planting site. We will discuss the nature of plants beyond the general awareness of bloom time, flower color, height and soil conditions. Coming to know plants places you closer to their lifestyle needs within community. This thoughtful approach will create a greater interest and deeper enjoyment of landscaping open space, or simply gardening.

**A New Season of Speakers =
A New Space**

WE ARE MOVING!

Programs will be held at
Elmwood Community Center
1106 New Britain Ave., West Hartford
starting September 21, 2023

**ENTRANCE TO THE CENTER
IS OFF BURGOYNE STREET**





Photography Credit: Intrinsic Perennial Gardens

**Perennial of the Year:
Rudbeckia**

“American Gold Rush” Black-eyed Susan

It was chosen by the voting members of the Perennial Plant Association (PPA) out of more than 400 nominated perennials.

According to the PPA, which has been selecting a Perennial of the Year since 1990, “American Gold Rush’ is a stunning focal point in perennial borders and meadows and is brilliant when massed in public or corporate landscapes. Butterflies caper over the blooms and songbirds feast on the plentiful seed long after the flowers have passed—the seedheads provide winter interest too. Garden companions are many, including alliums, asters, sages, and native grasses such as little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*).

The Perennial Plant Association is a trade association composed of growers, retailers, landscape designers and contractors, educators, and others that are professionally involved in the herbaceous perennial industry.



**2022-2023
Scholarship Fund**

\$12,473

Thank you for helping us reach our goal and more!

Go to cthort.org to learn how you can give and support our mission!

Thank you!



Anita Ballek, 93, who died on May 5, will be honored at a celebration of her life on July 3. The public is invited to attend.

**IN MEMORIAM:
Anita Ballek**

It is with profound sadness that we mourn the loss of Anita Marie Gelston Ballek, who passed away May 5 at the age of 93, with her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren at her side.

The founder of Ballek’s Garden Center in East Haddam and longtime member of CT Hort will be missed. She was, as her

family put it, “a smart, strong, and capable woman who loved her work and sharing her wisdom and stories with all. She will live on in all of us and will be greatly missed by many.”



Laurel Hoskins has fond memories of the Balleks from a CT Hort event she coordinated in 2019 at their garden Center. From left, Margaret Hoskins, her daughters Bonnie and Laurel Hoskins, Anita Ballek and her daughter, Nancy Ballek.

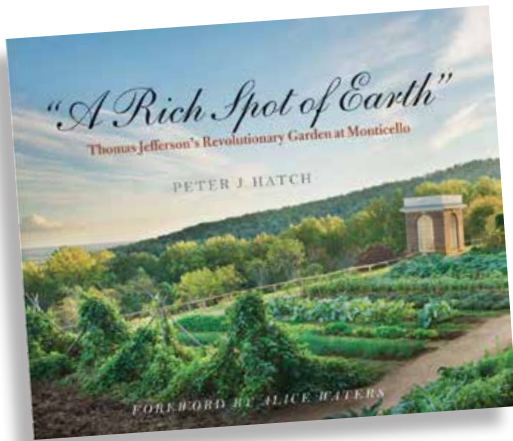
CT Hort member Laurel Hoskins recalls how “...she could hold an audience with her stories of growing up on that land, the geology, history, and rich family life. She was more than willing to have me take pictures of her, never really posing!”

Nancy DuBrule -Clemente always enjoyed seeing her at the Garden Center. “Every time I would visit Ballek’s, she would be there,” she said. “She LOVED her plants and gardens and knew SO MUCH. I did take a workshop from her on English gardens and will never forget what she said: ‘as soon as the king’s horses were out of sight, their manure would be gone as the townspeople scooped it up and heaped it on their delphiniums!’ I will never forget that and now I ALWAYS feed my delphiniums very heavily with composted manure.”

“Anita was always was sitting near the checkout counter at Ballek’s when we went to the store and she loved to talk with the customers,” said Elaine Widmer. “I also remember her in years past being at the CT Flower Show as well, sitting and talking with the attendees. She loved her plants!”

A “Celebration of Life” to honor Anita Ballek is being held at Ballek’s Garden Center, 91 Maple Ave., East Haddam, on July 3 from 2-4pm. Please RSVP to rsvpanitasservice@gmail.com.

Thomas Jefferson's Garden Legacy from page 1



Hatch describes the construction of the two-acre vegetable garden in his book, *A Rich Spot of Earth: Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden at Monticello*: "The Monticello garden is distinctly American in its scale and scope. More than two thousand cubic feet

of Piedmont red clay was moved with a mule and cart by a crew of enslaved men Jefferson hired from a Fredericksburg, Virginia farmer. Over three years they created the garden terrace, which was retained by five thousand tons of rock laid as high as twelve feet and extending the length of the garden. Jefferson's four-hundred-tree orchard, surrounding two vineyards, extended below the wall and vegetable terrace, and the entire complex was enclosed by a ten-foot-high paling fence that ran for more than half a mile."

Jefferson used his enormous garden for extensive experimentation. Sited south-facing to create a micro-climate extending the growing season, Jefferson's vegetable garden supported introductions from warmer climates. He tested seeds collected by Lewis and Clark during the Corps of Discovery Expedition, 1804-1806. He trialed vegetable varieties sent to him from friends in Europe and neighbors in America. While most American gardeners of his day were still growing primarily cold weather crops, Jefferson planted summer vegetables popular today including tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers.

Many of Jefferson's favorite varieties, often named for the friend from whom he received the seed, have been lost. Thanks to heritage seed banks (notably Seed Savers Exchange and National Seed Storage Bank), others like "Tennis-ball lettuce" are once again growing at Monticello.

Concerning the critical importance of maintaining the genetic heritage of historical vegetable varieties, Hatch writes: "A broad spectrum of diverse varieties provides insurance against a virus-induced plague afflicting the high-strung hybrids that dominate world agribusiness. Older varieties are more primitive and, in some ways, more resilient; they are also genetically akin to their wild ancestors, native plants that have persisted without human efforts and have survived centuries of nature's pestilential attacks so successfully. Heirloom vegetables taste better, too." (*A Rich Spot of Earth*).

Seed saving is as important a function of the gardeners managing today's Monticello vegetable plot as it was for its creator. Visitors typically seeing the space on a single day, rarely realize the intensive planning required to generate their glimpse of Jefferson's gardening genius. In 1809, Jefferson's most prolific planting year, 94 different sowings were done. Today as many as 175 sowings are accomplished.



After serving as the third President of the United States from 1801-1809, Jefferson retired to his Virginia plantation Monticello finally able to supervise execution of his elaborate landscape designs.

Hatch explains: "The philosophy of the Monticello vegetable garden restoration is based on the wisdom of Thomas Jefferson. Although we repeatedly invoke his gardening mantra, 'the failure of one thing repaired by the success of another,' modern gardeners also use Jefferson's avowed methods of soil regeneration through the incorporation of composts as a means of enriching the soil and thwarting pestilence. The two-acre garden is covered annually with compost, rotted leaves, or barnyard manure to sustain long-term tilth, basic fertility, and bacterial balance in the soil. Gardeners at Monticello also maintain a high tolerance for superficial pest infestations." (*A Rich Spot of Earth*).

Jefferson's perseverance in maintaining a balance between his cultivated garden and the natural world is an inspiration to all gardeners. In a letter to portrait painter Charles Wilson Peale dated August 20, 1811, Jefferson, then 68 years-old, states: "I am still devoted to the garden. But though an old man, I am but a young gardener."

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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 September issue is August 15.

Tues., July 11, 10:00 am, "Garden Therapy" with Wickham Park's Horticulturist, Susan Albin, 1325 Middle Turnpike W, Manchester. Susan Albin will discuss the benefits of gardening and the therapeutic feeling of nurturing plants and share some insights on how she helps Wickham Park look so amazing! Free. <https://Wickhampark.org>

Thurs., July 20, 4:30-5:30 pm, Westbrook Garden Club presents "Connecticut Gardens-A Book Talk, Westbrook Public Library, 61 Goodspeed Street, Westbrook. Author/Photographer Caryn Davis will speak about and show slides of gardens taken for her newly published book, "Connecticut Gardens: A Celebration of the State's Historic, Public and Private Gardens. Free to the public. Call 860-399-9206

Tues., July 25, 9:45-11:00 am, Orchard Valley Garden Club hosts "Connecticut's Insect Invaders: Who They Are and What You Can Do To Help," American Legion Hall, 64 Main Street, Southington. Dr. Claire Rutledge of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station will provide the latest information on insect pests of concern and what gardeners can do to help monitor and control them in our environment. Free for members; \$5 guest fee. Call 203-232-9274 or go to <https://orchardvalleygardenclub.weebly.com/>

Wed., Aug. 2, 10:00 am – 4 :00 pm, 113th Annual Plant Science Day, presented by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Lockwood Farm, 890 Evergreen Avenue, Hamden. The CAES yearly event includes barn displays, field plots and exhibits, technical demonstrations, plant diagnosis and plant identification, insect identification, activities for kids, Lockwood Farm walking tour, a tour of native woody shrubs and more. Free and open to the public. <https://portal.ct.gov/CAES/Events/Calendar-Events/Events-Page>

Thurs., Aug. 3, 3:00 pm, Zen Gardens, Windsor Public Library & Wilson Branch, 323 Broad St., Windsor. Everyone wishes they had their own personal toolkit to reach into when the world is stressing them out. This program can help make that more of a reality by creating your own take-home Zen garden. Meant as a meditative tool, Zen gardens are a deeply personal experience. In this program, we'll teach you more about the practice, and then give you the tools to create your own Zen garden so that you can help you meditate and wipe away the stresses of the day! Free. Call 860-285-1918.

Sat., Aug. 19, 1:00 pm, FRAMES in FILM: Showing of "The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism" presented by The Kate & Florence Griswold Museum, 300 Main St., Old Saybrook. Following the smash hit, "Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse" comes a new film based on the hugely popular exhibition, "The Artist's Garden: American Impressionism and the Garden Movement" from the Florence Griswold Museum in Connecticut, widely considered a home of American impressionism. American impressionism took its lead from French artists like Renoir and Monet but followed its own path that over a thirty-year period reveals as much about America as a nation as it does about a much-loved artistic movement. The story of American impressionism is closely tied to a love of gardens and a desire to preserve nature in a rapidly urbanizing nation. <https://www.katharinehepburntheater.org/events/the-artists-garden/>

Mon., Aug. 21-29, Trip to Nova Scotia hosted by the Federated Garden Club of Connecticut. Travel to Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. Sample the cuisine and sights of beautiful places the locals call home. Visit top gardens, such as Halifax Public Gardens, Tangled Gardens, Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens, Kingsbrae Gardens, and the famed Vesey's Seeds. Our small group will travel during prime garden season by deluxe motor coach & ferry. Whale watch, lobster boats, wine tasting and more. Cost: \$3710 double, \$4670 single. Call or email Kathy Lindroth at 860.836.3407 or tours@gardenclubs.org.



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



CT Hort is excited to be co-hosting two day-long bus tours this summer with Friendship Tours!



Won't you join us?

Your tour guide for both tours is **Nancy DuBrule-Clemente**, author and founder of Natureworks Horticulture Services.



Gardens of Woodbury Friday, July 21

Bus leaves at 8:30 am from New Britain and 9:00 am from Middletown. Approximate return time is 5-5:30 pm

Your day kicks off with a visit to Earth Tones, a native plant nursery that offers grasses, ferns, perennials, shrubs, and trees that are native to New England. After a tour of the nursery, you'll enjoy a workshop on how to save seeds from native plants and how to sow and grow them.



Then, enjoy lunch at Marketplace Kitchen, in the heart of town, before a trip to the Gardens of Gertrude Jekyll. Ms. Jekyll had a profound influence on modern garden design and is widely considered the greatest gardener of the 20th century, with several hundred gardens designed all over the world.

CT Hort Members: \$150 / General Admission: \$155

Massachusetts—Gardens on the South Coast Thursday, August 17

Bus leaves at 8:30 am from New Britain and 9:00 am from Middletown. Approximate return time is 7-7:30 pm

We'll drive to Avant Gardens in North Dartmouth first, where owner Katherine Tracey will lead a workshop on how to transform your container gardens for late summer and fall. Following the workshop, tour the gardens and greenhouse to enjoy and purchase any of the array of uncommon and rare trees, shrubs, perennials, garden annuals, succulents, and hard-to-find houseplants. A buffet lunch follows.

Then we're on our way to the Allen C. Haskell Public Gardens, a storied former New Bedford nursery and homestead-turned vibrant public park. Mr. Haskell himself curated the six acres of beauty blooming in the heart of the town.



CT Hort Members: \$145 / General Admission: \$150

Quebec's Eastern Townships Garden Tour September 7–11, 2023

The deadline is fast approaching to get on board for this amazing trip!

Join CT Horticultural Society September 7-11 to travel back in time and take in the old-world flavor of Québec's Eastern Townships. In the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, uncover the delights of charming French villages, lush green valleys, enchanted woods, idyllic farmland and Victorian architecture

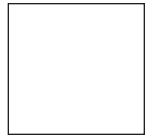
For more information:

<https://cthort.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Quebecs-Eastern-Townships-1.pdf>



Contact Barbara at Friendship Tours

email barbara@friendshiptours.net or call 860-243-1630.



Dated Material 🌿 *Please Rush*

CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

- Tuesday, Aug. 15** – Deadline for our September *Newsletter*
- Thurs., Sept. 7** – Board of Directors Remote Meeting, 7 pm
- Thurs., Sept. 21** – Speaker presentation: *Perennial Plant Communities: The Know Maintenance Approach* and *Coming to Know the Plants*, 6:15 pm (In person and on Zoom)

Go to CTHort.org for information on these and all other meetings and programs.

Printed on recycled paper.



June was a busy month for members, who enjoyed the workshops our Education Committee coordinated.



CT Hort members enjoyed a beautiful afternoon and a light dinner in the gardens of CT Hort President Cheryl Marino with Edwina von Gal before the latter presented her talk, “Eye of the Beholder: Is It Messy or an Acquired Taste?” later that evening. Important takeaways from the event and her talk? Design for ethical aesthetics. “How much less can I do—how can I let nature make the choices?” And, “Get active in supporting legislation in CT that supports nature.”



Nancy DuBrule-Clemente taught 25 members how to pinch perennials in her workshop of the same name in mid-June, in the Natureworks Teaching Tent and Gardens at the nursery. Her advice, which is also something she mentions in the weekly Natureworks newsletter? “Don't forget, you have until the end of the month to get this done. I keep seeing so many asters and other late bloomers that need pinching in my gardens, at Natureworks, and as I drive around. It makes a HUGE difference later. You won't have to stake, you will have a lot more flowers, and you may even double or triple the bloom time. Be brave. Chop chop!”