

# Connecticut Horticultural Society

# NEWSLETTER

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Serving Horticulturists Since 1887

February 2025



## Seeing the trees for the forest

Bill Gleason's contributions to  
West Hartford's arboreta are extraordinary

by Tracey Weiss

Bill Gleason's work with West Hartford's trees has been a "godsend," according to people such as Doug Jackson, Westmoor Park's naturalist. "He has so much expertise and he is an excellent photographer," Jackson said. "He dedicated himself to coming to the park to photograph the trees, and really spearheaded our efforts to finalize an arboretum officially."

*Tree man.* That's what the bumper sticker on the back of Bill Gleason's car says.

Also true: his contribution to the West Hartford's tree population, both literally and figuratively, is already leaving a legacy that will carry on forever. It's no wonder that he won the 2024 Arborist Citation Award from the Connecticut Tree Protective Award. CTPA is an educational association dedicated to advancing the care of Connecticut's trees.

Gleason was nominated by Ted Goerner. Goerner and his wife, Carolyn, founded the West Hartford Tree Project, now in its fourth year of planting at least 1,000 trees each year in the town and more.

"Bill has been an invaluable addition in many ways," Goerner said in his nomination letter. "He has assisted with our informational slideshows on our Facebook Page, he has been present on the last two distribution days giving first hand advice to people as they pick up trees, he has been at the last two planting days and a planting day at Sedgwick Middle School,

and last year he gave fantastic expert advice on which native species to procure."

If that isn't enough, Gleason cataloged the trees in Westmoor Park in 2021. As a result, the designation of Westmoor Park's arboretum by ArbNet, which "facilitates the sharing of knowledge, experience, and resources to help arboreta meet their institutional goals," and is considered the industry standard for arboreta.

Westmoor is now an accredited Level II Arboretum.

"It took a while to photograph and catalog the trees, and then to go through the arboretum process—that was a challenge," Gleason said.

It meant taking pictures of 66 trees (so far) six times a year and writing copy to document each season of change, the leaves, buds, and more. And now, the website, <https://4seasontrees.com/westmoor> features a self-guided tour of all of that work, with maps, lists and of course, lots of photographs.

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**CT Hort Cares grant program:  
Application period opens Feb. 15!**

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Membership Dues:	
Individual.....	\$60
Family .....	\$80
Senior Individual (65+).....	\$55
Senior Family (65+).....	\$75
Student (full time with valid ID).....	FREE
Horticultural Business Member.....	\$100 or \$250
Organizations .....	\$80

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## New growth, new plans for 2025

Dear CT Hort Family,

Together, we have cultivated not only plants but also relationships, knowledge, and a deep appreciation for the beauty of nature.

Through our horticultural programs we are empowering individuals of all ages to connect with the earth. From hands-on workshops to educational outreach in local schools, your support has made a profound difference. We've seen an increase in membership, highlighting a growing interest in sustainability and a desire to learn more about the world of horticulture.

February can be seen as the time in a garden when the first signs of life begin to awaken from their winter slumber. Just as gardeners prepare their soil, ensuring it's rich and ready for planting, this month serves as a moment for reflection and planning.

It's a period of pruning and clearing away from the previous year, making space for new blooms and fresh ideas to emerge. This is exactly what we are doing at CT Hort!

We have exciting plans for 2025. We will be expanding volunteer efforts, implementing our Adopt-a-Garden pilot program, enhancing our educational workshops, and exploring new partnerships to further our mission. I encourage you to stay connected with us through our upcoming events and to share your thoughts on how we can continue to grow together.

Thank you for your unwavering support, passion, and dedication to the work we do.

Warm regards,

Ashley

Thank you to our generous business members and supporters!



Hollister House Garden



B. Yaeger LLC

Go Organic LLC

Colorblends Wholesale Flower Bulbs

Grace Farms

Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut

Greater Bridgeport Opportunities  
Industrialization Center, Inc.

The Garden Barn Nursery

Mountainview Landscaping LLC

Garden Solutions





Jim Sirch

# Gardening for the Frogs

with *Jim Sirch*

Thursday, February 20 • 7 pm

**Zoom only.** Members will receive the link to the program via email the Sunday before.

Learn about the natural history of Connecticut's 11 species of frogs and toads and how to attract them and a host of other wildlife to your yard through bubblers, small ponds, and other water features.

Jim Sirch has been giving lectures on pollinator gardening and propagating native plants from seed for over 20 years. He is on the board of the Connecticut Horticultural Society and founded the Beardsley-Maritime Chapter of FrogWatch, a national citizen science program. A CT Master Gardener, Jim co-founded the Hamden Public Library's Pollinator Seed Library. He recently retired working as Education Coordinator at the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History.

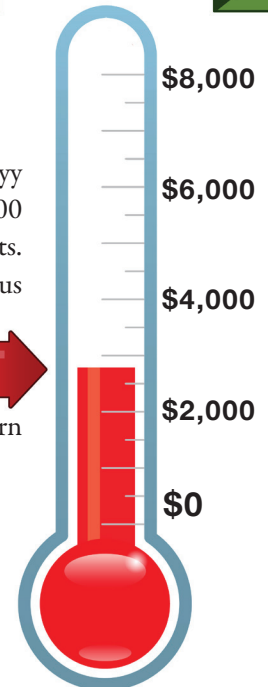


## COMING UP

**Gardening in Overtime:  
Getting the Most Out Of  
Your Late Season Display  
with Dan Benarcik**

**Thurs., March 20 at 7pm  
Zoom only**

## 2024-2025 Scholarship Fund



The 2024-2025 season is underway and so has our goal to raise \$8,000 to provide scholarships to students. We hope you'll consider helping us reach that goal!

**\$2,838**

Go to [cthort.org/donate](http://cthort.org/donate) to learn how to give. Thank you!

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**CT Hort Plant Sale  
& Auction**

**Friday, May 16 • 6:30pm**

Bethany Covenant Church, Berlin, CT



## 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 the March issue is February 14.

**Thurs., Feb. 6, 1pm**—“Garden Jeopardy” with the Goshen Garden Club, Camp Cochepiannee, 291 Beach Street, Goshen. Renee Marsh will lead the game at the club’s first meeting of the season. She is an Advanced Master Gardener, Garden Designer, Horticulturist and Flower Farmer. Free for members; drop-in fee is \$10. Go to [goshengardenclub.org](http://goshengardenclub.org).

**Tues., Feb. 11, noon**—Leete’s Island Garden Club hosts “Monarch Migration,” Nathanael Green Community Center, 32 Church Street, Guilford. Dr. Kelsey Fisher, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station scientist, will present the latest information on Monarch Butterfly migration and habitat condition. Kelsey is considered one of the experts in this field. Call Event information: 203-453-0780. Please register at [kayclairborn@comcast.net](mailto:kayclairborn@comcast.net) and meet in the Faulkner Room of the Community Center. The event is free.

**Thurs., Feb. 13, 7pm**—The North Haven Garden Club presents “Honeybees,” North Haven Congregational Church, 28 Church St., North Haven. Ray Sola will discuss why bees are critically important for the pollination of our crops and native plants. He will focus on the diversity of bees and their life cycles, and how we can create a habitat for them to survive and thrive. Ray is the owner of Ray’s Raw Honey. There is a \$5 drop-in fee. Call 203-269-2653.

**Thurs., Feb 20-Sun., Feb. 23, various hours**—43rd Connecticut Flower and Garden Show, CT Convention Center, 100 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford. “Signs of Spring” is the theme of this annual popular show that features expansive live gardens, a nonstop schedule of seminars and demonstrations, the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut’s annual Standard Flower Show, and hundreds of vendors displaying and selling all types of items. Go to [ctflowershow.com](http://ctflowershow.com) for more information.

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

### CONNECTICUT Flower & Garden Show

CT CONVENTION CENTER  
FEB 20-23, 2025



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

### Spectacularly Floral Artistic Gardens



**Floral Design & Horticulture Competition**  
Federated Garden Clubs of CT

**Hundreds of flower & garden exhibitors!** Including artists, crafters, tools, decor, outdoor living experts, indoor & outdoor plants, seeds, bulbs, water features & more!

### 2025 Show Theme - Signs of Spring



**20+ horticulturalists, landscapers & experts**  
offering 80+ hours of educational seminars & demos!

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

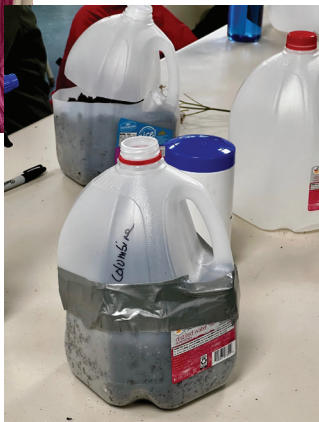






## Another great workshop!

Milk jugs, native plant seeds and some soil. That's all it took for a group of more than 30 participants to get their gardens ready for the spring. Jim Sirch, CT Hort Board Vice President and Master Gardener, led the group through the germination process.



## Welcome New Members

Merrie Avallone

Lauren Curran

Ethel Davis

Stephanie Day

Veronica Deere

Meghan Edwards

Maura Esposito

Ann Freeman

David Grande

Beth Grant

Carmen Holzman

Heather Kiesling

Eva Konopka

Regina Landesberg

Tracy Lawlor

Jayne Lawson

J. Danusia Lokii

Paul Margiott

Andrea O'Boyle

Tracy Payne

Eileen Roark

Ellen Scott

Linda Sheridan

Judy Spindel-Brown

Martha Staniford

Eleanor Stargardter

Michael Sturtevant

Robert Taylor

Lisa Terlecky

Eliot Wadsworth

Lisa Zurles

Deborah Caviness  
Greater Bridgeport OIC, Inc.

Seeing the Trees for the Forest from page 1

Gleason was also nominated for the award by Liz Pang, a volunteer for the Tree Project and the owner of Luna Tree Care, located in West Hartford. "The fact that he turned Westmoor Park into an arboretum was very impressive," Pang said. "His virtual tour of the arboretum, I believe, is an amazing feat of love for not only trees, but for our town. It will be used a resource for many generations to come."

Doug Jackson agrees. Jackson is Westmoor Park's naturalist. "Bill's been a godsend," he said. "It's me and the staff tending to the park and adding trees and other interest. We do as much as we can. But there's always been a void in what we do for adults."

Jackson was introduced to Gleason three years ago through Goerner and the West Hartford Tree Project.

"We were talking about creating a database of the trees here," Jackson said, "and Bill said, 'I can do that. I love trees.' He has so much expertise and he is an excellent photographer. He dedicated himself to coming to the park to photograph the trees, and really spearheaded our efforts to finalize an arboretum officially. I really appreciate his friendship. It's a real asset to what we do here. I'm hoping it will grow people's interest and appreciation for the world around us."

There's more to do at Westmoor, according to Gleason. "Westmoor has 60 tree species without even going into the deep forest. Some are 150 years old." He plans on continuing his work there to make Westmoor a Level 2 Arboretum with ArbNet, which means the documentation of a minimum of 100-130 tree species.

Gleason's work with West Hartford's trees extends beyond the arboretum at Westmoor Park and the West Hartford Tree Project. Over the years, he has created Tree Trails at most of the West Hartford Parks, in coordination with the Leisure Services Department. He has identified all of the mature trees on the Sedgwick Middle School campus, laying the groundwork for a potential future arboretum there.

He has collaborated with Marty Aligata of the Notable Trees Project, an organization that collects and distributes information



Bill Gleason's work with West Hartford's trees has been a "godsend," according to people such as Doug Jackson, Westmoor Park's naturalist.

about Connecticut's largest and most historic trees, both native and introduced. He attends invasive plant cutting parties and other events and workshops hosted by the West Hartford Garden Club. He also conducts tours of the trees at the parks.

All of these accomplishments started after he retired in 2020. "I thought, 'what is the next phase?'" Gleason joked. "I am not a golfer but I'm good at rainforests and deserts. I'm weak on Northeast trees. A couple years before Covid, I turned my attention to trees."

"I became an ambassador at Elizabeth Park," he said, which led to his joining so many of the tree-related groups in town. He can also usually be found leading a tree tour in one of the many parks in town.

"On top of all his other achievements he is a really nice guy who is willing to share his wealth of knowledge with anyone willing to learn," Pang said.

A native of Hartford in a family of five, Gleason's family moved to West Hartford when he was 16.

"I was a diver as a teenager," he said. "I was fluent in coral reefs, rainforests, oceanic currents." Over the years, he estimates that he made more than 10,000 dives.



Interested in a tree tour?

Bill Gleason is scheduling a number of tours—probably about a dozen, he said—this year that will be promoted through West Hartford Leisure Services. You must go to the town's portal <https://westhartford.recdesk.com/Community/Home> to register to receive information about the tours. Register as soon as you can; the tours fill up quickly.



Seeing the Trees for the Forest from page 6

Bill Gleason (left) won the 2024 Arborist Citation Award from the Connecticut Tree Protective Association, which he was given on January 18. The association is an educational non-profit dedicated to advancing the care of Connecticut's trees.



He graduated from Northwest Catholic High School in town. He received his BS from Fordham University in the Bronx, where he focused on marketing, management and journalism.

His love of diving and his background led to a position in 1978 as a freelancer and advertising sales representative for *Skin Diver* Magazine. He quickly moved up the ladder there, becoming the editor/publisher of the Petersen Publishing Company (publisher

of *Skin Diver*) for almost two decades, and living in Manhattan and then later, in Los Angeles.

In 1997, he moved back to West Hartford to create his own consulting business, and started his own company, Digital Wordsmith, which offered copywriting, SEO copywriting, website development and content, and more.

Gleason plans on continuing his volunteer work in town, and is scheduling a number of tours through the town's Leisure Services Department this year. "I really feel this is something I can touch and share with people," he said.

"The story of trees is intertwined with the story of civilization," Gleason added. "The role they play in our environment and contribution they make to our world is so important. The health of the climate and the health of trees are related. If you can't increase your appreciation of trees, at least plant some." 🌳

Go to <https://4seasontrees.com/westmoor> for the self-guided tour of Westmoor Park's Arboretum.



# We need you!

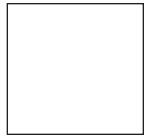


Volunteers are the heart and soul of the Connecticut Horticultural Society. With only three part-time employees, we rely heavily on the hands of dozens of helping volunteers to be able to offer a season of professional speakers, educational workshops, Spring Plant Sale & Auction, trips, biennial Symposium, and more.

We also have openings on our leadership team for the next term, including President, Board Members, Membership Committee Chair, and on the Finance Committee.

**Please consider adding your talents and time to the mix, whether on a one-time or ongoing basis. If leadership isn't your thing, we can always use help in so many other ways.**

Your board of directors and fellow CT Hort members welcome your efforts and thank you in advance. Please contact Office Administrator Mary Anna Martell at 860-529-8713 or [office@cthort.org](mailto:office@cthort.org).



*Dated Material* 🦋 *Please Rush*

### CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

**Tuesday, Feb. 4** – Board of Directors  
Remote Meeting, 7 pm

**Friday, Feb. 14** – Deadline for our  
March *Newsletter*

**Thursday, Feb. 20** – Speaker presentation:  
*Gardening for the Frogs*  
with Jim Sirch,  
7 pm (Zoom only)

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

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## GRANTS PROGRAM

CT Hort Cares grant applications will be accepted starting Feb. 15

The program expands the Society's efforts to educate our great state on the importance of plants and our precious environment. When reviewing applications, the committee gives priority to projects that support the educational mission of our organization, and the project must take place in Connecticut.

Two rounds of grants are awarded for a total of \$5,000 each year; the maximum amount per grant is \$500.

Applications will be accepted from Feb. 15 - April 15, with grants awarded on May 1.

To see a sample version, go to:

<https://cthort.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/May2025-Cares-Grant-App-SAMPLE.pdf>

