

Connecticut Horticultural Society

NEWSLETTER

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Serving Horticulturists Since 1887

April 2025



Sowing Seeds in the Spring and Summer

by Nancy DuBrule-Clemente, Natureworks founder, horticulturist and CT Hort Education Committee Chairperson

Nancy will present “Oh! What I didn’t plant!” on April 24. See page 3 for details.

When we think about sowing seeds, what often comes to mind is sowing seeds indoors, under lights. I do a bit of that in my house, but I am very limited by space. Oh, what I wouldn’t give for a greenhouse! It is certainly one of my top bucket list items. Until then, I have figured out a way to grow many of my favorite plants from seed *outdoors*.

STARTING SEEDS OUTDOORS IN FLATS

In my courtyard, I have set up a potting table. It is metal, very sturdy, and has a big umbrella over the top. Starting in mid-May, I begin sowing seeds of warm season annual flowers and veggies in flats. I not only clean and reuse the plastic seed starting packs that I buy (filled with plants, of course) from Natureworks, I also have invested in some really sturdy, rectangular, wooden seed sowing flats. On my work table I have a potting caddy, a bucket with labels and a waterproof pen, and stacks of clean 3” and 4” pots. I also have a pint jar of pre-mixed Stress-X, a seaweed powder that I use to soak my seedlings when I transplant them. A covered galvanized barrel with seed starting soil and another filled with container soil sit below.



Cactus Zinnia

The first thing I start is zinnias. I *love* zinnias and cannot garden without them. But the selections of zinnias available in the marketplace is usually limited to a few varieties. I like cactus flowering forms, certain single colors in great quantity (orange and purple and deep coral in particular) and I adore the wonderfully patterned “Zowie,” “Jazzy,” and “Whirlygig” varieties. I sow rows horizontally across a rectangular wooden seed tray, one or two per variety, and label them with my waterproof marker. I water them gently and put them on the stone courtyard to germinate. If the weather is still a bit cool, I place the trays in my cold frame, which also sits in the courtyard, and close the cover if needed. But the stones absorb the sun’s warmth and the seeds usually germinate very quickly.

I repeat this process with another flat a week or two later. By then, it is late May or early June and the weather has really warmed up. The seeds practically leap out of the soil! My second sowing includes Tithonia (Mexican sunflowers), Cosmos “Rubenza,” more zinnias, and any other fun annuals that I

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Spring Plant Sale & Auction is coming up.
More details Page 10

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Membership Dues:	
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Organizations	\$80

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Leadership Letter

Dear CT Hort Family,

Happy Earth Month everyone! Spring has sprung and it's oh so exciting!

I am filled with joy for what this season holds for each of you. The longer days and warmer weather remind me of the resilience of nature.

The CT Hort committees have been busy at work planning an incredible season of workshops, speaker meetings, local events, and even tree planting! Meanwhile the Board is exploring evaluative thinking as a tool for organizational growth. I am honored to lead such an engaged and dedicated team.

Our very own CT Hort Cares grant is accepting applications for just two more weeks. Please help us in spreading the word about this awesome opportunity to help fund community projects. CT Hort Cares is a personal favorite because it exemplifies how small contributions can lead to impactful change (see page 4 for just how much). I am looking forward to another round of awesome awardees.

Additionally, we are thrilled to be enmeshed in the planning of CT Hort's Biennial Symposium in 2026. We are looking forward to doubling our attendees, and hosting the first in-person symposium since 2020!

I encourage each of you to get involved, whether it's volunteering your time, participating in events, or reaching out to fellow members to share your experiences. Let's come together to share knowledge, exchange ideas, and cultivate our passion for the green world around us this Earth Month.

As always, thank you for your unwavering support.

Warm regards,
Ashley Stewart
Executive Director

Thank you to our generous business members and supporters!



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Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut

**Greater Bridgeport Opportunities
Industrialization Center, Inc.**

The Garden Barn Nursery

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Nancy DuBrule-Clemente

Oh! What I didn't plant!

with Nancy DuBrule-Clemente

Thursday, April 24 • 7 pm

In person and on Zoom. CNTR, 725 Main Street, Middletown
(Members will receive the Zoom link the Sunday before the talk)

Nancy's garden is filled with so many annuals, perennials, biennials, shrubs, and herbs that she didn't plant. They may be considered "free gifts" or they may be considered "plants gone rogue"! Dive into how to recognize, manage, move around, edit, and generally care for a generous garden that offers so much to its gardener.

Nancy DuBrule-Clemente is the founder of Natureworks Horticultural Services, an organic garden center, landscape design, consultation, installation and maintenance service in Northford, CT that she started in 1983. She is also the author of Succession of Bloom in the Perennial Garden: A Manual for Garden Designers, Including Shrubs and Vines Often Found in Perennial Gardens and A Country Garden for Your Backyard: Projects, Plans & Plantings for a Country Look



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. Click on the survey icon found on any page then chose the speaker you want to rate. Thank you for your feedback.

COMING UP

Our speakers will be on Zoom and in person at the CNTR, 725 Main Street, Middletown, CT

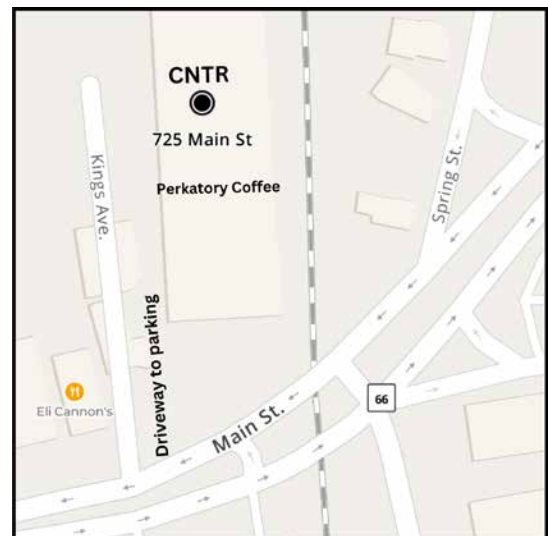


Thursday, May 15 at 7pm
Crevice Gardening: Even more than it's cracked up to be
with Panayoti Kelaidis



Thursday, June 26 at 7pm
Designing for Habitat: From Back Yards to Byways
with C. Colston Burrell

Speakers in person at the CNTR, 725 Main Street, Middletown, CT



Two more weeks to apply for a CT Hort Cares Grant

Applications for the CT Cares grant program are being accepted through April 15. Go to <https://forms.gle/qwFNmrfhLYnqY1FH9> to apply.

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.

If you would like to support our efforts with a monetary donation, please visit <https://cthort.org/support/other-ways-to-give/> to donate. You will be able to choose 'Scholarship Fund' or 'Community Grants' as the destination for your donation. Thank you for your support.



A grant program update

There's nothing more rewarding than hearing how our grants can make a difference. We recently heard from the folks at KNOX, and to say we're delighted is an understatement:

"Thanks to a generous \$300 CT Hort Cares grant from Connecticut Horticultural Society awarded on May 7, 2024, more Hartford residents are growing fresh food for their families in KNOX community gardens!

Connecticut Horticultural Society is helping Hartford families grow their own food locally. KNOX's 21 community gardens are located across ten low-to-moderate income Hartford neighborhoods. The high-quality foods from these gardens are a much-needed source of nutrition for the people of Hartford. Thanks to the CT Hort Cares grant, 217 families grew food in the community gardens in 2024, including 157 families who returned to their plots from the previous year! In addition to providing fresh food for their families, many gardeners donated their produce to local food banks to reach those who needed it most. Thank you, Connecticut Horticultural Society, for supporting community gardens at a time when people need them most."

Watch your email in June for your chance to vote on the amendment to the bylaws.

Bylaws Amendment for the New Executive Director Position

Last June, the membership of CT Hort approved amendments to the Society's Constitution and Bylaws, reflecting the organization's adaptation to the evolving landscape of the horticultural world. One such change was the approval of electronic voting for future amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws.

This June, you will have the opportunity to vote on one additional update to the Bylaws: the creation of the new position of Executive Director.

Below is the bylaw that will be amended. **The underlined passage highlights the specific change.**

Bylaws:

Article III - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

3.1 Administration of Affairs of the Society.

Administration of Affairs of the Society. The administration and management of the affairs and properties of the Society, except as hereinafter provided, shall be vested in a Board of Directors.

The purpose of these bylaws is to outline the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Director (ED) of the Connecticut Horticultural Society (CT Hort), ensuring the effective management and operation of the organization.

The Society may hire an Executive Director, who will be a non-voting member of the Board of Directors. The ED will be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Society and will work closely with the Office Administrator, the Director of Communications, and the elected Board of Directors.

If a President is in office, the ED will collaborate with the President to ensure the effective execution of the President's duties. In the absence of a President, the ED will assume the President's responsibilities (see Summary of Duties).

The ED will lead strategic planning efforts, collaborate with the Board of Directors, and promote the Society to key business partners. They will also seek funding through grants and fundraising initiatives to help the organization meet its financial goals. Operating within the approved budget, the ED will oversee financial reporting and audits. In addition, the ED will guide the organization's operations and assist the Board in fulfilling its governance responsibilities.

The ED will provide regular updates to the Board regarding organizational performance and activities. The ED will also undergo an annual performance evaluation, conducted by the Board of Directors or jointly with the ED.

The ED may be appointed or removed by a majority vote of the Board of Directors and shall be directly accountable to the Board for their performance.



Hollister House Garden

300 Nettleton Hollow Road, Washington, CT



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learn
enjoy

For a calendar of lectures, workshops and special events, please visit:

www.hollisterhousegarden.org

April 19 - October 12

Visiting Hours:
 Wednesdays 1-4 • Fridays 1-4 • Saturdays 10-4
 Admission \$10 (under 12 free)



Jazzy Zinnia

want to try. Favorites include love-lies-bleeding (*Amaranthus caudatus* “Coral Fountain”), Joseph’s Coat Amaranth, Cardinal Climber vine (I soak these, Morning Glories, and Moonflowers for 24 hours first), Emilia Javonica (Tassel flower), and Mina Lobata (Spanish flag vine).

By early June, I am keeping an eye on the first seedling flat. As soon as the plants grow a set or two of true leaves, I separate them and either pot them on or plant them directly in the garden. I take a shallow basin and fill it with liquid seaweed water. I lift a small clump of seedlings, set them in the water, and gently tease them apart. This requires patience and courage!



Annual Bachelors Buttons

lettuce or spinach grew), it shoots up quickly, eventually reaching 6 feet or more in fall. The dramatic plumes of orange flowers are the ideal eye-catching plant for September and October.

Late June and July brings me to the next phase of outdoor seed starting. Last year I had great success pre-starting escarole and “Ezrilla” lettuce in flats and transplanting them directly into the garden in early August. Again, I shaded them with a roof of floating row cover as they settled in, removing it when the weather finally cooled down in early September. Escarole is one of the easiest greens to grow. It is not bothered by insects and takes a wide range of temperatures. I harvested my escarole

.....
“One of my favorite flowers to plant in mid-June for fall color is *Amaranthus* “Hot Biscuits.” When transplanted into the garden in early July (usually in a spot where an early spring crop such as lettuce or spinach grew), it shoots up quickly, eventually reaching 6 feet or more in fall. The dramatic plumes of orange flowers are the ideal eye-catching plant for September and October.”

But it is also a wondrous experience to realize just how many baby plants you can get from a single packet of seeds. If I do this on an overcast day, or even if it is sprinkling, I often just plant my baby seedlings directly into a prepared bed. I then set up stakes and cover the patch with floating row cover fabric as a roof to keep them protected for a few days until they settle in.

If I am really busy and haven’t had time to prepare the planting beds, I often just move them up to a 3” or 4” pot for a week or two. In that case I use container planting mix, not seed starting soil, as it a bit heavier. I also feed the plants with a dilute solution of liquid organic fertilizer such as Sustane Flourish or fish emulsion.

One of my favorite flowers to plant in mid-June for fall color is *Amaranthus* “Hot Biscuits.” When transplanted into the garden in early July (usually in a spot where an early spring crop such as

right up until the hard frost in mid-November. “Ezrilla” lettuce is a fairly new variety that I really like because after you harvest the first head of leafy, succulent lettuce, it regrows new smaller heads and side shoots. Again, I was eating this lettuce until very late fall.

You may ask, “Why sow in flats when you can sow in the ground?” I do so because it gives me a lot more control and a lot more plants! By soaking and separating seedlings, you can use practically every single one that you grow. This means you have plenty for yourself and plenty to give away as gifts or trade with friends! Also, I can time my plantings directly into the garden beds to happen as earlier, cool season plants are finished. I always add lots and lots of annuals to my raised beds where I grow my vegetables. This helps not only with pollination, but it also attracts beneficial insects which help control the bad bugs.

Sowing Seeds

from page 6



Rubenza Cosmos



Tithonia is attractive to butterflies



Zowie Zinnia Seedlings

DIRECT SOWING SEEDS INTO THE GARDEN

I do **direct sow**, some cool season, annual flowers right into the garden in mid-March. I have had excellent luck with annual bachelor's buttons, calendula, and larkspur as they can take to cool soil at that time of year. I also *direct sow* vegetables such as escarole, lettuce, kale, and peas (which I soak first for 24 hours) in April as soon as the soil can be worked.

In late spring and summer, I direct seed sow vegetables as well. Beans are a special case. I sow "Emirite Filet" French haricot vert pole bean seeds in late May. I have found that if I keep picking and feeding this superior variety of pole beans, they will keep producing until the fall. In mid-July, I sow Bush beans as they do not take as long to produce a crop before the first fall hard killing frost. Winter squashes are direct sown in late May, early June at the latest as they need a long season to mature. I sow cucumbers and summer squashes every two weeks from late May until mid-July. Carrots and beets are direct sown into fabric Smart Pots both in spring and in late summer for a fall crop. I use Smart Pots for these root crops as my soil is very rocky and it is heavy clay. Even with years of adding compost and other organic soil amendments, I find the root crops do a lot better in Smart Pots.

In July, I also do another sort of seed sowing: **biennials**. For the past few years, I have been starting sweet Williams and foxgloves in flats in July, potting them on in early August, and planting them directly in the garden in late fall. I find this so much more efficient than simply sprinkling seeds and hoping for the best, especially because my gardens are packed solid in July and seedlings don't have a chance!

I was inspired to write this article on growing plants from seed by a conversation I had in the winter with a Natureworks customer at our annual Seedy Celebration weekend in early February. She told me that she asked her garden club "How many of you grow plants from seed?" and she was shocked by how few hands were raised. I was shocked too. Growing plants from seed is one of the oldest traditions known to gardeners. It saves you money, offers you the opportunity to grow varieties you may never find in the garden center, and invites you to *slow down*. The older I get, the more I enjoy growing plants from seed. Perhaps in my younger years, so chaotic and filled with work, I didn't have the time or the patience to focus on seeds that much. But now, I am thrilled to have discovered the joy of seed sowing and want to teach everyone how to join me in this fun and rewarding practice. 🌱



Zowie Zinnia patch



Zowies and butterflies

2024-25 CONNECTICUT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY MEMBER DISCOUNTS

The following nurseries offer CT Hort members a 10% discount. Please present your membership card before your purchase. Discount normally applies to non-sale items.

AL'S LANDSCAPING & NURSERY

204 Kelsey St., Newington 06111,
(860)-667-1822, alslandscaping.com

BETTER STONES, 200 Tolland St,
East Hartford 06108, (860) 289-1414,
betterstones.com

BIDWELL'S YARD, GARDEN AND

PET, 133 Hopmeadow St., (Rte. 10),
Weatogue 06089, (860) 651-8555,
simsburygarden.com

BOSCO'S GARDEN CENTER &

LANDSCAPING, 1376 Hopmeadow St.,
Simsbury 06070, (860) 658-2428,
boscosgardencenter.com

BOTTICELLO FARMS

209 Hillstown Road, Manchester 06040
(860) 649-2462, botticellofarms.net

BROKEN ARROW NURSERY,

13 Broken Arrow Road, Hamden 06518,
(203) 288-1026, brokenarrownursery.com

BUTLER'S FLORIST & GARDEN

CENTER, 416 Park Road, West Hartford
06110, (860) 561-2148,
butlerflorestandgarden.com

CRICKET HILL GARDEN

670 Walnut Hill Road, Thomaston 06787,
(860) 283-1042, treepeony.com

CROPLEY'S GARDEN CENTER &

LANDSCAPING, 1262 Boston Tpk.,
Bolton 06043, (860) 649-6364,
cropleysgardencenter.com

EDMONDSON'S FARM GIFT SHOP

& FLORIST, Route 44, Coventry 06238,
(860) 742-6124, edmundsonsfarm.com

GO ORGANIC LLC

1244 Thompson Road, Thompson 06277,
(860) 935-5235, <http://goorganicllc.com/>

GOTTA'S FARM, 661 Glastonbury Tpk.,

Portland 06480, (860) 342-1844,
gottasfarm.com

HARKEN'S GARDEN CENTER

287 Route 5, East Windsor 06088,
(860) 528-6806, discount applies to
plant material only,
harkenslandscapesupply.com

LARSON'S GARDEN CENTER

26 Covey Road, Burlington 06013,
(860) 404-5747, larsonsgardencenter.com

MOSCARILLO'S, 2600 Albany Ave.,

West Hartford 06117, (860) 236-5487,
discount applies to plant material only,
moscarillos.com

NATUREWORKS, 518 Forest Road,

Northford 06472, (203) 484-2748,
discount applies to plant material only,
naturework.com

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neseed.com

O'BRIEN NURSERY, 40 Wells Road,

Granby 06035, (860) 653-0163,
obrienhosta.com

RIVERSIDE NURSERY & GARDEN

CENTER, 56 River Road (Rte. 179),
Collinsville 06022, (860) 693-2285,
discount applies to plant material only,
riversidenursery-ct.com

SCOTT'S ORCHARD & NURSERY

1838 New London Tpk., Glastonbury
06033, (860) 633-8681,
scottsorcharandnursery.com

STONE POST GARDENS (seasonal)

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(860) 343-0360, stonepostgardens.com

THE GARDEN BARN NURSERY

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(860) 872-7291, www.gardenbarn.com

TORRISON STONE & GARDEN

422 Main Street, Durham 06422,
(860) 349-0119, www.torrisonstone.com

WARNER NURSERY & GARDEN

CENTER, 76 Riverside Road, Simsbury
06070, (860) 651-0204,
warnernursery.com

WOODLAND GARDENS

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(860) 643-8474, woodlandgardens-ct.com



Connecticut Horticultural Society

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2024-25 CONNECTICUT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY MEMBER DISCOUNTS

JUST \$12 for a year of 'Horticulture' magazine

That's **67% off** the cover price. *Horticulture* is dedicated to **celebrating the passion of avid gardeners**, who take delight not just in gardens but in garden-making. The engaging writing and brilliant photography help gardeners to **create beautiful and useful spaces**.



Place your order by calling 1-877-860-9146 or by mail to Horticulture Magazine, P.O. Box 37308, Boone, IA 50037.

To get the discount, be sure to mention Promo Code PCONN25.



\$10 DISCOUNT on a NEW or GIFT MEMBERSHIP to *American Horticultural Society*

CT Hort has arranged a **discount on membership** with the American Horticultural Society (AHS). **A new or gift 'single membership' costs only \$25** for a year, rather than the regular rate of \$35.

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CT Hort Plant Sale & Auction Friday, May 16, 2025

Bethany Covenant Church, 785 Mill Street (Rt. 372), Berlin, CT
Doors open to the public at 6:00 pm, \$5 Admission

Mark your calendar to attend this lively, fun-filled, and educational event on Friday, May 16. With growing season fast-approaching, the Auction is a great spot to find just the right plant or gift. The evening begins with a plant sale, while bids are accepted for unusual silent auction items and refreshments are served.

Then it's on to the LIVE auction! Horticulturist Nancy DuBrule-Clemente will once again curate the night's offerings. Plant donations from private gardens will no longer be accepted due to the spread of Asian jumping worms. If you have a specimen that may be of interest, please email the Auction Committee to discuss.

Proceeds from the evening provide scholarships to Plant Science students at the University of Connecticut (since 1959), and Naugatuck Valley Community College (since 2011). In addition, funds in excess of our scholarship commitments will spill over to CT Hort Cares, our civic grants program.

Please come join us! For additional information or questions email auction@cthort.org



New trip!

Coastal Cape Ann Gardens July 13-15, 2025

Enjoy a getaway to Cape Ann, the beautiful Massachusetts destination known as "the other Cape."

Includes::

- deCordova Sculpture Park • Sunset Estuary Cruise
- Long Hill Estate • Hammond Castle • Dinner Cruise
- Castle Hill at the Crane Estate • Beauport Sleeper-McCann House
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- Friendship Tours Escort

\$1,654pp double / \$2,054pp single
(CT Hort members receive a \$55 discount)

Go to www.friendshiptours.net or call 860-243-1630
for more information.

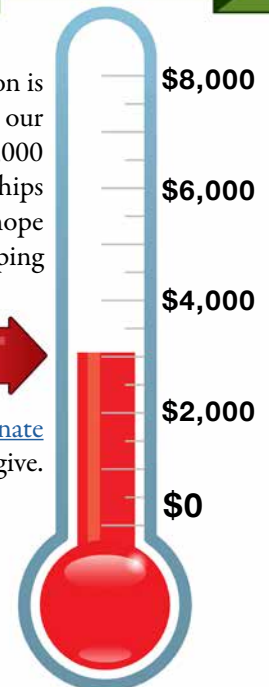
2024-2025 Scholarship Fund



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

\$3,013

Go to cthort.org/donate to learn how to give. Thank you!



Nominate someone you know

It's time to recognize someone you know who goes above and beyond

The 2025 Mehlquist Award

In 1987, on its 100th anniversary, the Connecticut Horticultural Society (CT Hort) established the Gustav Mehlquist award to honor the late Dr. Gustav Mehlquist for his extraordinary contribution to horticulture.

Every year CT Hort seeks nominations for this prestigious award named in honor of Dr. Gustav Mehlquist.

If you know a Connecticut resident who deserves to be honored and recognized for their significant and extraordinary contributions in horticulture or the art of gardening, please submit a nomination letter describing the background and qualifications of your nominee to Mary Anna Martell or via email office@cthort.org. Or, mail the office: CT Hort Office, P.O. Box 330966, West Hartford, CT 06133-0966

Nominations must be received by June 15, 2025.

The 2025 CT Hort Service Award

The Connecticut Horticultural Society (CT Hort) exists largely due to the help of many volunteers. If you've attended lectures, bought a cool plant at the auction, traveled to amazing gardens, participated in workshops, or benefited from any of the offerings CT Hort provides, it was possible because of our amazing volunteers.

Please take a moment to recognize an individual who has enhanced your experience with CT Hort by nominating them as the 2025 Service Award recipient. Nominations should include a brief explanation of why you feel they should be considered and as much background about them as you can. Send nominations to: Mary Anna Martell, CT Hort Office P.O. Box 330966, West Hartford, CT 06133-0966 or email: office@cthort.org Subject line: Service Award 2024 Service Award.

Nominations must be received by June 15, 2025.



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Dated Material  *Please Rush*

CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

- Tuesday, April 8** – Board of Directors Remote Meeting, 7 pm
- Tuesday, April 15** – Deadline for the *May Newsletter*
- Thursday, April 24** – Speaker presentation: *Oh! What I didn't plant!* with Nancy DuBrule-Clemente, in person at CNTR, 725 Main St. Middletown, and on Zoom

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

Printed on recycled paper.



Help us celebrate Earth Month!

Earth Month is celebrated in April, with Earth Day on April 22nd, and it's a time to raise awareness about environmental issues and encourage action to protect our planet.

This month, we'll be holding a tree planting and we'll also be participating in New Britain's Honey Fest on April 26 from 11am-3pm. Hosted by the New Britain Downtown District, Honey Fest NB celebrates New Britain as the "Bee Hive" by encompassing many family-friendly components relating to honey and the important role that pollinators play in our ecosystem. Event highlights include honey tastings, honey-infused product vendors, observation hives, a critter show, a recycling magic show and a honey harvesting demonstration.



Honey Fest NB

HONEY FOR SALE

HONEY-INFUSED PRODUCTS

HONEY TASTINGS

APRIL 26, 2025
11AM - 3PM

PRODUCE

CENTRAL PARK,
DOWNTOWN
NEW BRITAIN

BEES FOR SALE

FLOWERS + PLANTS

RECYCLING MAGIC SHOW

HONEY HARVESTING DEMO

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