

Connecticut Horticultural Society

NEWSLETTER

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Serving Horticulturists Since 1887

October 2025

Crookneck Squash Pie: A Traditional Thanksgiving New England Treat

By Jody Morgan, writer and CT Hort member

No vegetable dishes are mentioned in primary source accounts of the harvest feast hosted by the Pilgrims in 1621. However, the success of that year's crop of Indian corn is well-documented. Possibly the settlers also received squash seeds to plant from their native neighbors. In any case, squash pie is listed as a traditional Thanksgiving comestible by Laura Russell in her account of her childhood days in Plymouth, Massachusetts in the 1830s. At that time, a day of atonement for the year's transgressions preceded each annual Thanksgiving Day.

In *Laura Russell Remembers*, Russell writes: "We had few holidays. Thanksgiving was the one to which we looked forward with eager anticipation, for there was a family gathering and a lavish supply of good things to eat, both of which we found very delightful. Fast day was by no means so welcome to us, notwithstanding our release from attendance at school. Instead of roast turkey, chickens and ducks with all the accompaniments followed by mince, apple, and squash pies, cranberry tarts, nuts, raisins and fresh fruits, a waiter was brought in with a plate of molasses gingerbread, a pitcher



American Cookery, thought to be the first cookbook published in the United States written by an American, includes a recipe for "A Crookneck or Winter Squash Pudding," which, baked inside a pastry shell, would turn into a squash pie.

of milk and some tumblers." Laura's description of the main ingredient of squash pie, strung up in her mother's kitchen to keep all winter, reads: "Then there were the yellow crook-necked squashes which garnished the walls and hung above the windows suggesting delicious pies which our mother knew how to make."

Intrigued by Russell's account, I sought further information. Released in 1796 in Hartford Connecticut, *American Cookery*, thought to be the first cookbook published in the United States written by an American, includes a recipe for "A Crookneck or Winter Squash Pudding." Amelia Simmons, the author, advises: "Core, boil and

skin a good squash, and bruise it well; take 6 large apples, pared, cored, and stewed tender, mix together; add 6 or 7 spoonsful of dry bread or biscuit, rendered fine as meal, half pint milk or cream, 2 spoons of rose-water, 2 do., (spoonsful) wine, 5 or 6 eggs beaten and strained, nutmeg, salt and sugar to your taste, one spoon flour, beat all smartly together, bake." Baking the pudding in a pastry shell resulted in a pie.

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Time to Rethink Your Garden Ritual for the Winter

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Membership Dues:
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Hello October !

“And the sun took a step back, the leaves lulled themselves to sleep, and autumn was awakened”
~Raquel Franco

Dear CT Hort Family,

The trees are changing color and the fall harvest is here. This is by far my favorite time of the year.
First and foremost, I want to thank those of you who attended our first speaker meeting of the
program season with Peter Del Tredici—what a presentation!

This month we will learn how to put our gardens to bed with our very own Sarah Bailey! As
many of you know our speaker meetings are held in two locations, and this fall we are back at
the Elmwood Community Center. So, please mark your calendars and save that location on
your GPS, so we don't miss you on the 16th!

CT Hort is back in action, and this season is all about bringing fresh ideas to the table,
expanding our reach, and welcoming new members.

As we plan for our upcoming CT Hort Cares grant cycle, we are implementing information
sessions. These info sessions will give past, present and future grantees an opportunity to chat
with the grants committee and learn more about our grantmaking process. Sessions will be
no more than an hour long and conducted via Zoom. During this time, we will review the
application, address FAQ's and give those on the call the space to ask their most pertinent
questions. Dates will be announced, as we get closer to applications opening.

Earlier this summer, students participating in the Adopt-A-Garden program ended the school
year with a bang, and now it is time to jump back into the swing of things. We are seeking new
volunteers to support our efforts at the Montessori Magnet School at Annie Fisher once more.
If interested, please contact me via email at exec@cthort.org.

CT Hort family, I invite you to stay engaged, volunteer with us, and consider contributing to
our ongoing initiatives. Together, we can continue to grow a more connected community.

Thank you for your commitment and enthusiasm. Wishing you a bountiful month!

Warm regards,
Ashley Stewart,
Executive Director

Thank you to our generous business members and supporters!



Colorblends Wholesale Flower Bulbs
Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut
The Garden Barn Nursery
Garden Solutions

Go Organic LLC
Greater Bridgeport Opportunities
Industrialization Center, Inc.
Mountainview Landscaping LLC



Sarah Bailey

Putting Your Garden to Bed— Rethinking the Ritual

with Sarah Bailey

Thursday, October 16 • 7 pm

In person and on Zoom

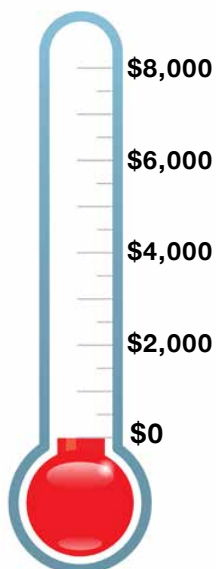
Elmwood Community Center, 1106 New Britain Avenue, West Hartford

(The entrance to Elmwood Community Center is on Burgoyne Street. Type “Burgoyne Street, West Hartford” into your GPS.) *Members will receive the Zoom link the Sunday before the talk*

Traditionally, the Fall garden to-do list included clearing your garden spaces to the soil line, ostensibly to prevent pests and diseases from overwintering. As we learn more about the complex web of the environment we live in, we are discovering that the traditional “putting the garden to bed” practices can leave our gardens less diverse and robust. There are better steps to take to prepare your garden spaces for the winter and the following growing season—both environmentally and aesthetically.

Sarah Bailey is a Connecticut Certified Horticulturalist and a UConn Extension Advanced Master Gardener. A graduate of the University of Vermont and the UMass Green School, she has worked in the horticultural industry for the last

three decades as, variously, a retail nursery manager, a private gardener and garden designer, and a consultant for several landscape firms. She recently retired from both the state coordinator and the Hartford County coordinator positions for the UConn Extension Master Gardener program. She has served on the Board of Directors of the CT Horticultural Society and currently serves on the education committees of both the CT Horticultural Society and the CT Nursery and Landscape Association and is an instructor for the Connecticut Certified Horticulturalist program and the UConn Master Gardener program. Sarah gardens in the northern part of the state under the watchful eye of her current border collie, who digs up mole tunnels for amusement.



2025-2026 Scholarship Fund

The 2025-2026 season has begun and so has our goal to raise \$8,000 to provide scholarships to students. We hope you'll consider helping us reach that goal!

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

Bulb Sale is back!

October 16 is also our annual bulb sale! Come a little early (6:30 pm) for next month's talk with Sarah Bailey and enjoy our annual bulb sale! October 16 at Elmwood Community Center, (1106 New Britain Avenue, West Hartford).

Every October we sell bulbs to help fund our scholarships, grants, and general programming. So, on October 16, when we meet for our program speaker, we will get you in touch with some bargains, some old loves, and some sparks of 'hope & joy' in the form of bulbs.



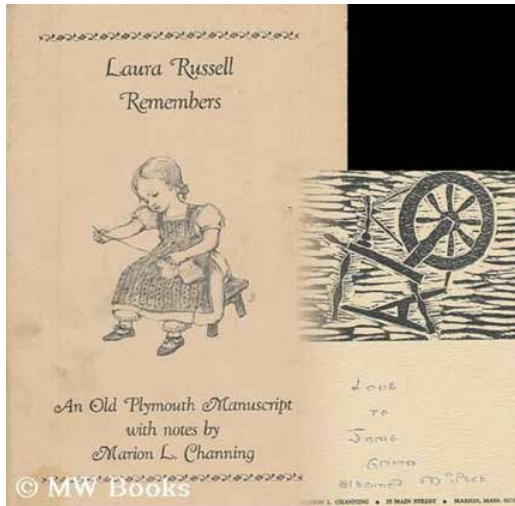
Dreamland Flower Trip

It was a wonderful afternoon for event goers at the Dreamland Flower Farm. More than 25 people were treated to the history of the four-year-old farm, built from scratch, owner Merrie Avallone (pictured) told everyone, as well as a lesson and demonstration of how to care for and plant dahlias. Dahlias, she said, were always the plan for the organic farm in Cromwell, which also includes a waterfall garden and arbor for wedding photography. Merrie also showed everyone how to pull seeds to start their own tubers after taking folks through the fields of beautiful flowers. Merrie estimates she currently has more than 4,500 dahlias growing.



Crookneck Squash Pie

from page 1



Squash pie is listed as a traditional Thanksgiving comestible by Laura Russell in her account of her childhood days in Plymouth, Massachusetts in the 1830s.

In *The Virginia Housewife: Or, Methodical Cook*, first published in 1824, Mary Randolph suggests serving crookneck squash as a vegetable. The entry titled “Winter Squash” instructs: “The crooked neck of this squash is the best part. Cut it in slices an inch thick, take off the rind, and boil them with salt in the water, drain them well before they are dished, and pour butter over – serve them up very hot.”

All the seeds are found in the bulbous section of this squash. Randolph explains: “The large part, containing the seeds, must be sliced and pared – cut it in small pieces, and stew it till soft, with just water enough to cover it, pass it through a sieve and stew it again, adding some butter, pepper, and salt; it must be dry, but not burnt.”

Russell’s family in Plymouth was already harvesting crookneck squash in Plymouth when Boston-based nurseryman Charles Mason Hovey began offering crookneck squash for sale in his seed catalogue in 1834. Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on October 26, 1810, Hovey became well known for his plump, prolific hybrid strawberry and the extensive selection of some 102 varieties of camellias included in his 1852 catalogue.

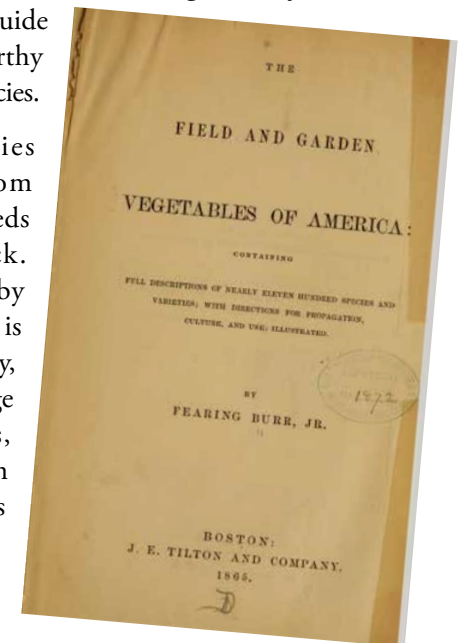
Somehow this variety of *Cucurbita moschata* came to be known colloquially as Canada crookneck squash. Henry David Thoreau relates in his 1850 travelogue, *A Yankee in Canada*: “I have

been told that two townsmen of mine, who were interested in horticulture, traveling once in Canada, and being in Quebec, thought it would be a good opportunity to obtain seeds of the real Canada crook-neck squash. So, they went into a shop where such things were advertised and inquired for the same. The shopkeeper had the very thing they wanted. ‘But are you sure,’ they asked, ‘that these are the genuine Canada crook-neck?’ ‘O yes, gentlemen,’ answered he, ‘they are a lot which I have received directly from Boston.’ I resolved that my Canada crook-neck seeds should be such as had grown in Canada.”

Crookneck squash was still in sufficient favor for Fearing Burr to include it in *The Field and Garden Vegetables of America*. Published in 1865, the guide describes the garden worthy aspects of almost 1100 species.

Several seed companies specializing in heirloom vegetables now offer seeds for Canada Crookneck. The description given by rareseeds.com reads: “This is an old New England variety, preserved at Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts, where our foundation seed came from. It has been reported to originate among the Iroquois Indians.” Weighing 2-4 pounds, crookneck squash takes about 100 days with 6-8 hours of full sun a day, to mature.

Unfortunately, the necks, the tastiest part of this variety, tend to crack in shipping. Hoping to produce a squash that was just as delicious, but easier to store and transport, Stow, Massachusetts farmer Charles Leggett developed a selection of *Cucurbita moschata* during the 1940s known today as Butternut. Leggett brought his new variety to the Waltham



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Crookneck Squash Pie

from page 5

Field Station, where it was tagged Waltham Butternut. The Town of Stow's website still insists it should have been named the Stow Butternut Squash.

No date is given for the Pilgrims' first Thanksgiving celebration. Considering the New England climate of that era, the harvest probably was completed in October. The clearest account of the event comes from a letter written by Edward Winslow dated December 11, 1621. Published in London in 1622 in *Mourt's Relation*, a collection of documents about the settlement of Plymouth, Winslow's report reads. "Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruits of our labors. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company for almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and on the captain and others."

In *Of Plymouth Plantation*, composed of recollections penned several years later, William Bradford writes about the time following the 1621 harvest. "And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides they had about a peck of meal a week to a person, or now, since harvest, Indian corn in that proportion." He also notes: "Some English seed they sowed, as wheat and pease, but it came not to good, either by the badness of the seed or lateness of the season or both, or some other defect."

On October 3, 1789, during his first year in office, George Washington proclaimed the first national observation of Thanksgiving to be held on November 26th of that year.

Only the six New England States continued the tradition of celebrating an annual day of Thanksgiving thereafter. Each state's governor chose the date, which might fall anytime from October through January. In recognition of the Union's decisive victory at Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation of a national celebration of Thanksgiving on October 3, 1863, choosing the same November 26th date selected by our first president.

It's obviously too late this year for me to plant crookneck squash, but I am determined to try growing it to make traditional Thanksgiving pies next year. Wish me luck and you might be invited to sample it! 🍂



**Welcome
New Members!**

Karen Brown & Connie Kintz

Jane Carey

Susan Dowling

Tisha Ferguson

Sally Hambleton

Lori Hummel

Maureen Zavodjancik

Patricia Willens

Carlos Aldave

Julia Carter

Laura Conner

Jessica Tucker

Philip Addario

Danuta & Edward Mullen

Pilar Schmidt

Julie Mcgurk

Nancy Bass

Hayley Blair

Christine Rouleau

Judith Salamacha

Sue Demeo

Denise Risley

Eileen Rausch

Geraldine Mccabe

Mary Altermatt

Deborah Morrissey

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 the November issue is October 15.

Sat., Oct. 4, 10-:30am-noon—Seed Saving/Seed Swap, hosted by West Hartford Garden Club and West Hartford Library, Noah Webster Library, 20 S. Main St., West Hartford. The garden Club's How-To Series begins, run in conjunction with the Seed Library programming,

Sun., Oct. 5, 10am-6pm—Farm & Folk Festival 2025, Hop Culture Farms & Brew Co and Sauls Eclectic Cuisine, 144 Cato Corner Rd, Colchester. Enjoy a full day celebration of family friendly arming, craftsmanship, music and community. There will be artisan vendors, live folk music, food and drink, classes and demonstrations and more. Go to hopculturefarms.com for more information.

Tues., Oct. 7, 7-8pm—Full Moon History Tour, Elizabeth Park, 1561 Asylum Ave., West Hartford. An evening history tour of Elizabeth Park under the Hunter's Moon will be led by David Wilson. It begins at the flagpole outside the Cottage—no registration required. Be sure to bring a flashlight and wear sneakers! Free. Go to <https://elizabethparkct.org>.

Wed., Oct. 8, 5:30-8:30pm—90th Anniversary Celebration of The Rockfall Foundation, Wadsworth Mansion, 421 Wadsworth Street, Middletown. Food, beverages, and live music, along with time to explore table displays from Rockfall's 2025 grant recipients, highlighting their work in environmental education, conservation, and stewardship

throughout the Lower Connecticut River Valley. Network with environmentally minded community members, local leaders, and longtime supporters and enjoy a short program featuring welcome remarks, a keynote address by Christine Palm, and the presentation of this year's Environmental Champion Awards. Tickets are \$75-\$90. Buy tickets at https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/Y1PMbaSbdggbXDzKbeITqQ.

Sat., Oct. 11, 5-9pm—10 Years of Grace Farms Benefit Sunset Dinner, Grace Farms, 365 Lukes Wood Road, New Canaan. Curated by renowned culinary creator Peter Callahan, enjoy a reception and handcrafted cocktails, a sunset dining experience, ad a moonlight toast in the plaza. Tickets start at \$2500. Please reach out to Karen Kariuki, Managing Director, Strategic Initiatives, with any questions at kkariuki@gracefarms.org.

Sat., Oct. 18, 6pm—Hollywood Hill(stead) October Gala at Hill-stead Museum, 35 Mountain Road, Farmington. Celebrating Hill-Stead Museum's 78th birthday. Walk the red carpet, marvel at the view from our Hollywood Hills(tead), brush elbows with glittering guests, and enjoy drinks, dancing and delicious bites. Drinks, dancing and delicious bites. Tickets are \$250 per person. Go to <https://hillstead.ticketing.veevartapp.com/tickets/view/list/2025-gala-parties> or contact Megan Olver at olverm@hillstead.org or 860.677.4787x181.

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

Enjoy the Philadelphia Flower Show along with the New York Botanical Garden Orchid Show & Longwood Gardens Orchid Extravaganza Feb. 28-March 2, 2026

Featuring special guest tour guide Nancy DuBrule-Clemente, Author & Founder of Natureworks Horticultural Services

Highlights include:

- Philadelphia Flower Show Admission
- New York Botanical Gardens Orchid Show
- Longwood Gardens – Longwood Reimagined: A New Garden Experience

Non Member double – \$995 | CT Hort Member double – \$940

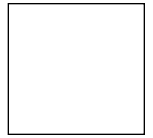
Non Member Single per person – \$1,139 | CT Hort Member Single, per person – \$1,084

Registration and information:

www.friendshiptours.net/tours/philadelphia-flower-show-ct-hort



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P.O. Box 330966
West Hartford, CT 06133-0966



Dated Material 🌿 *Please Rush*

CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

- Tuesday, Oct. 14** – Board of Directors
Remote Meeting, 7 pm
- Wednesday, Oct. 15** – Deadline for the
October *Newsletter*
- Thurs., Oct. 16** – Speaker presentation:
*Putting your Garden
to Bed – Rethinking
the Ritual* with
Sarah Bailey,
7 pm, in person at
Elmwood Community
Center, 1106 New Britain
Avenue, West Hartford,
and on Zoom

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

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*Join us to celebrate the special anniversaries (5-40 years!)
of your fellow CT Hort members. Everyone is welcome!*

Thursday, November 20 at 6:30pm

Elmwood Community Center, 1106 New Britain Ave, West Hartford, CT



Please stay to enjoy the talk

“The Growth of Trees—A Journey Through Time” with Michael Wojtech

Anniversary members will receive invitations in the mail

and can RSVP to 860-529-8713

or office@cthort.org.

