

# Connecticut Horticultural Society

# NEWSLETTER

Volume 68, Number 5

Serving Horticulturists Since 1887

February 2026



## Trees Bearing Witness

By Jody Morgan, CT Hort Member and contributing writer

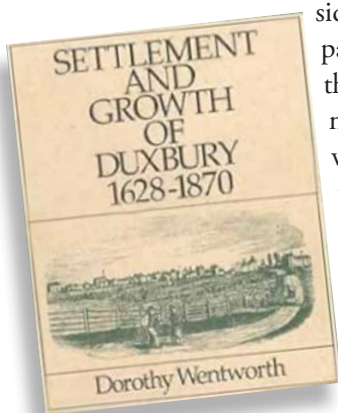
Connecticut's Charter Oak provided an accessible hollow when need arose in 1687 to hide the favorable charter given the colony by King Charles II.

Some trees lucky enough to avoid interaction with people have survived within our forests since pre-colonial times. Their relatives positioned in the path of human progress inevitably have had their lives cut short. Asked to attest to boundary lines during colonial days, many trees are documented as witnesses despite the short-termed nature of their service. Nevertheless, a few trees, rooted in the right place to witness significant historical events, still stand.

In *Settlement and Growth of Duxbury*, the second Massachusetts town established by the Pilgrims, Dorothy Wentworth illustrates the use of trees to define land grants with a typical deed signed October 18, 1712. “We began at a maple tree marked on four

sides, standing on the West side of the path near the brook, and run from thence, North sixty rods, to a bunch of maples marked, and from said maples, we run East Eighty rods to a red oak tree marked on four sides, and from said red oak we run Sixty rods to a great spruce tree marked on four

In *Settlement and Growth of Duxbury*, the second Massachusetts town established by the Pilgrims, Dorothy Wentworth illustrates the use of trees to define land grants with a typical deed signed October 18, 1712.



sides standing by the brook where it parts, and from thence it is bounded by said brook on the Southerly side, till it comes to the maple tree first mentioned.” Although gashes used to mark the trees tended to hasten their demise, their testimony survives in town records.

Referring to this abundant source of information on the species of trees called to witness colonial property deeds, Edward K. Faison asserts: “Although largely ignored or unknown to foresters, ecologists, and conservationists, most Connecticut towns possess a colonial-era forest inventory in their town archives.” In his Summer 2014 article for *Connecticut Woodlands* titled “Witness Trees. Fossil Pollen, And Other Insights,” Faison posits that such data provides the best record of the relative abundance of tree species in the forests traversed by Reverend Thomas Hooker and his intrepid followers in 1636 that resulted in the settlement of Hartford. His research indicates that Connecticut’s state tree, the white oak, occupied as much as 40% of the forests. Fossil pollen extracted from layers of silt in ponds confirms that Connecticut was primarily forest rather than open meadow when the first Europeans arrived. Indigenous people used controlled burns to clear understory plants, leaving the canopy layer of old-growth trees in place.

Connecticut’s Charter Oak provided an accessible hollow when

continued on page 5

**Tovah Martin is now  
our February speaker!**

**Page 3**

### IN THIS ISSUE:

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Leadership Letter | 2 |
| Hort Hub is Here! | 4 |
| New Members       | 7 |



Connecticut Horticultural Society  
P.O. Box 330966  
West Hartford, CT 06133-0966  
(860) 529-8713

email: [office@cthort.org](mailto:office@cthort.org)  
website: [www.cthort.org](http://www.cthort.org)

Phone Hours  
Tuesday & Thursday  
11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Ashley Stewart  
Executive Director  
[exec@cthort.org](mailto:exec@cthort.org)

Tracey Weiss  
CT Hort Director of Communications  
[news@cthort.org](mailto:news@cthort.org)

*All announcements, advertising news  
and articles for publication should be  
sent to: [news@cthort.org](mailto:news@cthort.org).*

Send Membership Information  
& Direct General Questions To:  
Mary Anna Martell  
Office Administrator  
P.O. Box 330966  
West Hartford, CT 06133-0966

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

Contributions are tax-exempt to the extent permitted under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Service Code. Reproduction of the CTHort Newsletter in whole or part without prior permission is prohibited.

© Copyright 2026



Hello and Happy February!

It's hard to believe it's February already, but we're actually kind of excited, because we'll be participating in the Flower Show again. It's been a few years since our last appearance. While we've been judging exhibitors for years to select the Best of Show, various circumstances, including Covid, made it challenging to set up a booth. However, we're excited to be back and look forward to seeing you there. Stop by and say hello! (See page 6 for details about the show.)

Another change this month is our speaker. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Heather Dionne, our featured speaker, had to withdraw. We're delighted that the incomparable Tovah Martin has graciously agreed to join us instead. Read about her latest talk—a brand new one—on page 3. Please note that it's a Zoom-only event.

We're also thrilled to share that we have a date and theme for our Symposium this year! "Gardening At Any Age" will take place in person again on Saturday, October 24 at the Courtyard by Marriott Hartford Cromwell. Our committee is diligently working to organize everything. We'll have more updates soon.

We hope you'll join us for one or all of these wonderful events.

Cheers  
Jim



Thank you to our generous business members and supporters!



**Colorblends Wholesale Flower Bulbs**

**The Garden Barn Nursery**

**Connecticut's Historic Gardens**

**Garden Solutions**

**Elizabeth Park Conservancy**

**Go Organic LLC**

**Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut**

**Mountainview Landscaping LLC**



Due to unexpected circumstances, our scheduled speaker for February, Heather Dionne, had to cancel her appearance. Fortunately, we are lucky enough to have the wonderful Tovah Martin taking her place.



Tovah Martin

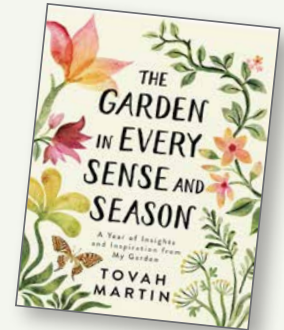
# Issues & Answers: Harnessing Plants to Solve Problems

with *Tovah Martin*

Thursday, February 19 • 7 pm

On Zoom Only

(Members will receive the Zoom link the Sunday before the talk.)



This lecture suggests solutions for a wheelbarrow load of problems from dry shade to gravelly hellstrips plus perennials that can live in peace and harmony with a black walnut. When your property is a symphony of issues, this lecture has answers. Accomplishing remedies harmoniously and creatively, this lecture explores plants that save the planet while also coming to our rescue.

An avid (verging on obsessed) gardener indoors and outside, Tovah Martin is the author of many gardening books. Most recently, she served as a lead writer in the international team that created Phaidon's new landmark compendium, *The Contemporary Garden* (2025). Another recent title, *The Garden in Every Sense and Season*, received GardenComm's Gold Medal Media Award in 2019. That

book follows several titles on houseplants including *The Indestructible Houseplant*, *The Unexpected Houseplant*, and *The New Terrarium*. Notable among her earliest books was the classic *Tasha Tudor's Garden*.

A freelance writer, her articles have appeared in publications throughout the country and the world including *Gardens Illustrated* in Britain and the Korean Airlines inflight magazine. She is an accredited Organic Land Care Professional through NOFA and an honorary member of the Garden Club of America. She speaks throughout the country and has lectured aboard the QE2. With lifelong indoor gardening experience, she also serves as a houseplant coach, helping clients make their homes greener places.

## CT Hort is back at the CT Flower & Garden Show!

We're going to have a table at the Flower Show for the first time in several years.

We need your help in manning the table. If you have a few hours and want to help us by sharing information about CT Hort, we welcome you and a friend to share a shift!

The Flower Show is February 19-22 at the Connecticut Convention Center. We have shifts of 2, 3 and 3.5 hours.

Email [office@cthort.org](mailto:office@cthort.org) if you are interested helping out.



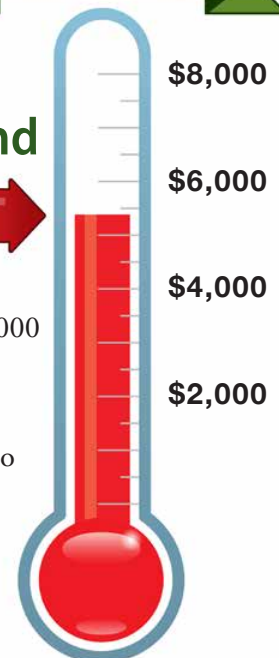
**\$8,000**

### 2025-2026 Scholarship Fund

**\$5,459** →

Won't you help us with our annual goal to raise \$8,000 to provide scholarships and grants?

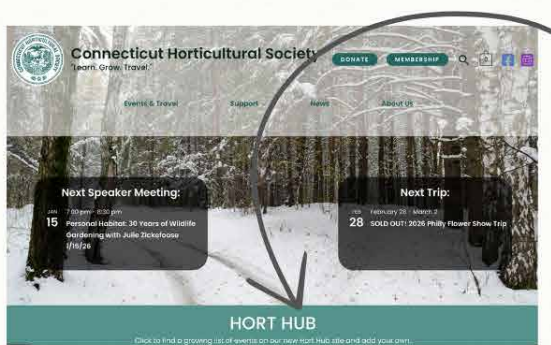
Go to [cthort.org/donate](http://cthort.org/donate) to give. Thank you!





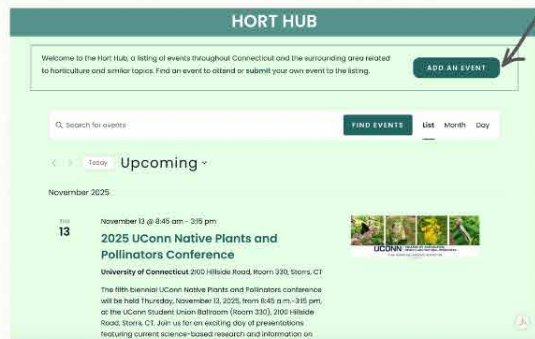
# Introducing Hort Hub!

We're thrilled to announce the launch of Hort Hub—a new online home for all things horticulture in CT and beyond! Discover upcoming presentations, workshops, garden tours, and more.

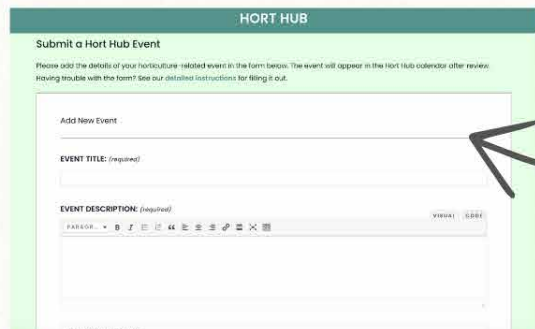


You'll easily find Hort Hub on our homepage.

Organizations, clubs, and businesses—share your events for FREE and reach a wider audience!



Listing is quick and easy. Go to CTHort.org and you will see the link to the page to peruse other happenings and then enter your own submission.



CTHort.org

## Trees Bearing Witness

from page 1

need arose in 1687 to hide the favorable charter given the colony by King Charles II. The legendary white oak succumbed to a lightning storm on August 21, 1856. Primary source documentation of the tree's service is lacking, but the tree's status as a symbol of freedom and Yankee ingenuity is secure.

The Liberty Tree, an elm planted on the Boston Common in 1646, lives on in the hearts of those valuing the freedoms secured for us by the Sons of Liberty who met under its limbs. They began meeting beside the elm in 1765 to oppose the Stamp Act and continued to gather there in subsequent years to protest British abuses. During the siege of Boston in 1775, British Loyalists felled the tree and burned the remains. When Patriots regained control of Boston, they erected a Liberty Pole in the tree's place.

Planted a decade before the Liberty Tree, the Endicott Pear survives in Danvers, Massachusetts as a witness to the determination and resilience of New England's original English colonists. Planted about the time John Endicott, first Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, received a grant of 300 acres in 1632, the pear tree named for him has rejuvenated itself several times in the aftermath of numerous storms and a wanton act of vandalism in 1964. The sugar pear's fruit was so admired by our second President John Adams, that scions suitable for propagation were conveyed to him in 1810 by Reverend William Bentley of Salem. None of the original trunk remains yet sprouts emerging from the rootstock continue to produce delicious pears. Now resident on a property owned by Massachusetts General Brigham Healthcare Center, the tree, enclosed by a wrought iron fence, is carefully maintained.

Many sycamores survive as Revolutionary War and Civil War era Witness Trees. Possibly Connecticut's Champion Sycamore, the Pinchot Sycamore in Simsbury, should be counted among them. The tree's age is estimated to be 200-300 or even more years. Assuming it is more than 250 years old, it would have witnessed significant events at nearby Pettibone's Tavern (now known as Abigail's Grille). Information supplied by the restaurant relates: "The Pettibone Tavern was a meeting place to exchange news of the war, and Captain Phelps of Simsbury used the tavern as a rendezvous with Etan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys to engineer the bloodless capture of Fort Ticonderoga in the nearby New York Colony. It is highly likely that both of our



Many sycamores survive as Revolutionary War and Civil War era Witness Trees. Possibly Connecticut's Champion Sycamore, the Pinchot Sycamore in Simsbury, should be counted among them.

first two presidents stayed at the Pettibone Tavern during their travels between Boston, New York and Philadelphia."

Within Brandywine Battlefield State Park in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania stands an ancient sycamore that witnessed the events of September 11, 1777. Rooted beside the Gideon Gilpin House used as a staging point for the battle the tree is said to have sheltered the Marquis de Lafayette as his leg wound was dressed. At 111' it stands slightly taller than the Pinchot Sycamore, but its circumference of 18'2" is outdone by our Connecticut Champion's girth of over 28' last measured in 2016.

The battlefield in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania holds numerous stumps marked by monuments as well as surviving witness trees. Even more remarkable to me is a sycamore photographed at the site of the parade route along which Abraham Lincoln rode to deliver his Gettysburg Address. A 2024 photograph of the same tree shows how close it resides to power lines. Judicious pruning by caring arborists has kept this tree in place since an unknown photographer captured its image on November 19, 1863. In addition to witnessing Lincoln's arrival in Gettysburg, this sycamore bears testimony to the potential for other healthy street trees to be saved from wanton felling just because cutting them down is cheaper than maintaining them. 🌳



## Horticultural Happenings & Announcements

Note: Happenings are listed on a space-available basis. To submit an event, send details to [news@cthorth.org](mailto:news@cthorth.org). Please format the announcement to resemble the entries below. Deadline for the March issue is February 16.

Fri., Feb. 6-8, 9am-4pm—Natureworks' Seedy Celebration Days, 518 Forest Road, Northford. They have 1000s of vegetable, flower and herb seeds from the best seed companies including Seed Savers Exchange, Renee's Garden, High Mowing, Botanical Interests, Hudson Valley, NE Seed, Livingston and Flowering Lawn will fill the shop. Go to <https://natureworksgardencenter.com> for more information.

Sat., Feb. 7, 11am-12:30pm—Hill-Stead Museum presents The World of Seeds and Winter Sow with Mini Greenhouses, 35 Mountain Road, Farmington. Get a head start on Spring by joining us for a seed planting talk and winter sow workshop presented by Pat Sabosik. Pat will discuss the different types annual, perennial and vegetable seeds and how a plant grows from these tiny bundles. Bring a clean gallon jug and perennial seeds if you have them. Pat will supply the seed starting soil and duct tape for your greenhouse as well as a small selection of perennial seeds. Members \$20/\$25 Non-Members. Register at <https://hillstead.org>.

Tues., Feb. 10, noon-2pm—Leete's Island Garden club presents pruning Woody Plants in the Landscape, Nathanael Greene Community Center, 32 Church Street, Guilford. The club hosts Club hosts Felicia Millett, licensed arborist and CAES Plant Diagnostician, who will present objectives that should be considered before pruning, and the proper techniques, tools and timing to achieve these goals. Guests are welcome. Call 203-453-0780 to register for this free event.

Thurs., Feb. 26, 10am-noon—The Flowered Press hosts a Pressed Botanical Art Workshop, Waveny Park 681 South Avenue, New Canaan. Discover the art of pressing flowers and transforming them into beautiful, one-of-a-kind works of art. In this special two-part workshop led by artist Marguerite Alpert, participants will learn both traditional and contemporary techniques for preserving botanicals and using them creatively. The cost is \$195 members/\$205 non-members. <https://carriagebarn.org>.

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

### CONNECTICUT *Flower & Garden Show*

CT CONVENTION CENTER  
February 19-22, 2026

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

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



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



**Spectacularly Floral Artistic Gardens**

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



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

**Show Theme: The Storybook Garden**

**CTFlowerShow.com**



# Welcome New Members!

Rebecca Nisley  
 Kaitlin Quartuccio-Gade  
 James Randall  
 Denise Trammel  
 Jean Madden-Hennessey  
 Ann Sagalyn  
 Mark Gutzmer,  
 Elizabeth Park Conservancy\*  
 Barbara Eno Karp  
 Kelly McGovern

Felise Cressman  
 Kenneth Everding  
 Deborah & Jeffery Fiducia  
 Isabelle O'Hara  
 Valerie Koch  
 Tovah Martin  
 Laura Victoria Barrera  
 Scott Childs  
 Holly Hambleton  
 Dennis Spencer

Lynn Mervosh,  
 CT Historic Gardens\*  
 Dawn Garcia  
 Julie Prescott  
 Lauren Handler  
 Randy Thomas  
 Judith Clark  
 Jeanne Leblanc  
 Kate Pierro  
 \*New business member

## CT HORT TRAVEL



### Gardens of the Brandywine Valley

**May 4-8, 2026**

Enjoy a spectacular trip through the gardens of the Brandywine Valley from May 4-8, 2026. Stops during the trip include the Mansion at Andalusia, Winterthur, Mt. Cuba Center, Jenkins Arboretum, Chanticleer, Valley Flowers, Tyler Arboretum, Longwood Gardens, Greenwood Gardens and more! You'll be staying at the Mendenhall Inn.

The cost of the trip:

\$1,749 per person double occupancy

\$2,079 per person single occupancy

CT Hort Members will receive a \$50 per person discount.

Pricing is based on a 30-passenger minimum

**FOR RESERVATIONS:** [www.friendshiptours.net](http://www.friendshiptours.net) or call Barbara at Friendship Tours at 860-243-1630. [Click here for the brochure.](#)



### Andalusia, Spain

**May 8-19, 2026**

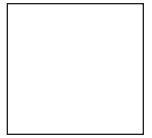
The tour includes transfers to and from Seville/Malaga airports for arrival and departure, transportation to all destinations, eleven nights lodging in Four Star Hotels, breakfast daily, 10 group lunches, six group dinners, host throughout tour—Cole Burrell, a local guide throughout the tour, admissions to all parks and gardens, guided tours and excursions, hotel taxes and service charges, gratuities for your tour host, gratuities to your local driver and guides.

The tour is limited to 24 passengers:

\$5,495.00 Land Price — Double Occupancy \$1,400.00 Single Supplement  
 PRICING FOR 15-19 TRAVELERS

\$5,895.00 Land Price — Double Occupancy \$1,400.00 Single Supplement  
 Fewer than 15 travelers may result in a small surcharge. Don't purchase air flight until you have been advised that the minimum registration has been reached.

**FOR RESERVATIONS:** [www.friendshiptours.net](http://www.friendshiptours.net) or call Barbara at Friendship Tours at 860-243-1630. [Click here for the brochure.](#)



*Dated Material* 🌿 *Please Rush*

**CT Hort Calendar at a Glance**

- Tuesday, Feb. 10** – Board of Directors  
Remote Meeting, 7 pm
- Monday, Feb. 16** – Deadline for the  
March 2026 *Newsletter*
- Thurs., Feb. 19** – Speaker presentation:  
*Issues & Answers:  
Harnessing Plants to  
Solve Problems*  
with Tovah Martin,  
7 pm, on Zoom only

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

Printed on recycled paper.



# 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>

