

Connecticut Horticultural Society

NEWSLETTER

Volume 68, Number 7

Serving Horticulturists Since 1887

April 2026



Open Garden Days – This year’s Historic Gardens Day is on Sunday, June 28 and is hosted by Connecticut’s Historic Gardens. The 16 members of CHG are open to the public and will have activities throughout the event.

Time-honored blooms

CT’s Historic Gardens offers a way to enjoy history and horticulture

By Tracey Weiss



The original intention in forming CT’s Historic Gardens was to pool marketing resources, but now, so much more has blossomed through the group.

Established in 2008, the non-profit’s goal was to be an online and marketing umbrella for its then nine historic gardens, offering great recognition for them and a forum for the public to access information about some of the state’s most beautiful gardens and distinguished homes.

“It was created as a way to bring people into the gardens and not just the museums,” said CHG President Lynn Mervosh,

It’s also become a way for the group of gardens—now numbering 16—to help and support each other too.

“What we love as a group is how active our (historic) sites are in maintaining integrity in light of the changing climate,” Mervosh said. “We help each other. For instance, we are all struggling with Boxwood blight and we are helping each other. We’re a sounding board.

“Managing 16 gardens and getting together (for meetings) is hard,” she added, which is why CHG is currently not accepting new members into the group. But all the current members meet their required criteria for belonging. Members must be a

non-profit, accept the general public in to see the gardens, be inclusive and post open hours. Most important, they must have a historic property and garden that has original documentation.

Pooling their resources has been successful. “We saw an uptick during Covid and we stayed open,” Mervosh said. Attendance has stayed high since then.

CHG participates in the annual CT Flower and Garden Show held in Hartford each February and hosts the annual Connecticut’s Historic Gardens Day on the fourth Sunday of June.

To promote it, the group established a poster art contest in 2012 to “encourage a connection between the gardens and artists throughout the state.”

The winning artwork is always selected in the fall to promote the event the following year. This year’s winner is Peter Kokoszka of Meriden. His oil painting of the Bellamy-Ferriday House & Garden in Bethlehem captured the spirit and beauty of the house and its garden.

“The Garden of Enlightenment is an 11” x 14” acrylic and oil painting,” Mr. Kokoszka states: “This painting captures the

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website: www.cthort.org

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

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*All announcements, advertising news
and articles for publication should be
sent to: 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 valid ID)	FREE
Horticultural Business Member	\$100 or \$250
Organizations.....	\$80

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Leadership Letter

Dear CT Hort Family,

After a long, snow-covered winter, spring has finally arrived. As I write, crocuses, snowdrops, and hellebores are up and flowering in my yard. The Ozark Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*), with its red, twisty blooms is also in flower. It's time to plan where to smother more grass with wood chips to plant additional Connecticut natives. It's my long-term goal to make my yard more ecologically productive by attracting more native bees and other insects, and in turn more wildlife. I recently enjoyed a webinar by Joey Santore, who makes a powerful (if somewhat potty-mouthed) case for natives over what he sees as boring, tidy gardens full of plants that belong someplace else. We have to remember where the concept of lawns came from—the 17th century estates of the uber-wealthy, says Joey. When I walk into a big box store and see bag upon bag of grub-killer and other poisons and the same old flowering plants, I couldn't agree more.

On another note, it's time to get the peas in the ground at our community garden. Speaking of community projects, be sure to catch Herb Virgo's April talk, "The Past, Present, and Future of the Keney Park Sustainability Project," on April 16 (in person and on Zoom). This innovative project engages the local community in nutrition education, landscaping, forest management, urban agriculture and more. Although it is a hybrid talk, it will be great to see you in person at the CNTR in Middletown.

Both the education and symposium committees under the able leadership of Nancy DuBrule-Clemente, are busy planning some great workshops, field trips, and a top-notch, in-person symposium for you with horticultural leaders in the field. Remember to save the date: Saturday, October 24. We'll be sure to let you know more info as events are finalized.

It's time to start thinking about plants and gardening-related items to donate to our annual plant sale and auction on Friday, May 15. It's always a lively event you don't want to miss, and all proceeds go to scholarships to horticulture students at UConn & NVCC.

Cheers,
Jim Sirch, CT Hort Board President

Thank you to our generous business members and supporters!



Colorblends Wholesale Flower Bulbs

Garden Solutions

Connecticut's Historic Gardens

Go Organic LLC

Elizabeth Park Conservancy

Mountainview Landscaping LLC

The Garden Barn Nursery

Otter Gardens





The Past, Present, And Future of The Keney Park Sustainability Project with Herb Virgo

Thursday, April 16 • 7 pm

Herb Virgo

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

Join Herb Virgo for an inspiring exploration of the Keney Park Sustainability Project (KPSP), a transformative initiative dedicated to preserving and enhancing one of Hartford’s most iconic green spaces. In this talk, Herb will take you on a journey through the history, current efforts, and visionary plans for the future of Keney Park.

KPSP is a holistic initiative that actively engages the community in various areas, including health and nutrition education, landscaping, forest management, waste reduction, building and design, and urban agriculture.

Herb holds a bachelor’s degree in Sociology-Based Human Relations from Connecticut College and has been recognized for his contributions with multiple awards, including the KNOX Green Heroes Award and the Hartford Community Food Security Award. He is a

certified forest practitioner, tree warden, and a member of several environmental councils, including the Connecticut Urban Forest Council. Additionally, he managed a project that expanded Keney Park’s trail system by seven miles, collaborating with local organizations and volunteers to improve public access to green spaces.



COMING UP IN PERSON AND ON ZOOM:



MAY 28 AT 7PM
Designing Meadows and Naturalized Plantings for a Human Landscape with Kathy Connolly

CNTR • 725 Main Street • Middletown



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.

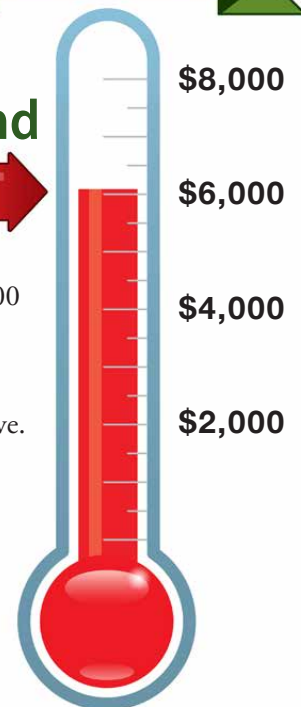
\$8,000

2025-2026 Scholarship Fund

\$6,009

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

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



Save the Date for the CT Hort Symposium

Sat., October 24 • 9:00-4pm Gardening for All Ages

Marriott Hartford Cromwell

Featuring Keynote Speaker
Rebecca McMackin

Many gardeners work hard to maintain clean, tidy environments ... which is the exact opposite of what wildlife wants, says ecological horticulturist Rebecca McMackin. She shows the beauty of letting your garden run wild, surveying the success she's had increasing biodiversity even in the middle of New York City — and offers tips for cultivating a garden that can be home to birds, bees, butterflies and more.

Get inspired! Watch her Ted Talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxgE0q1_m6U



Also featuring:



Jen McGuinness



Christine Darnell

**More details
to follow.**

Email office@cthort.org if you are interested in sponsoring the event.



Hollister House Garden

300 Nettleton Hollow Road, Washington, CT



visit learn enjoy

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

www.hollisterhousegarden.org

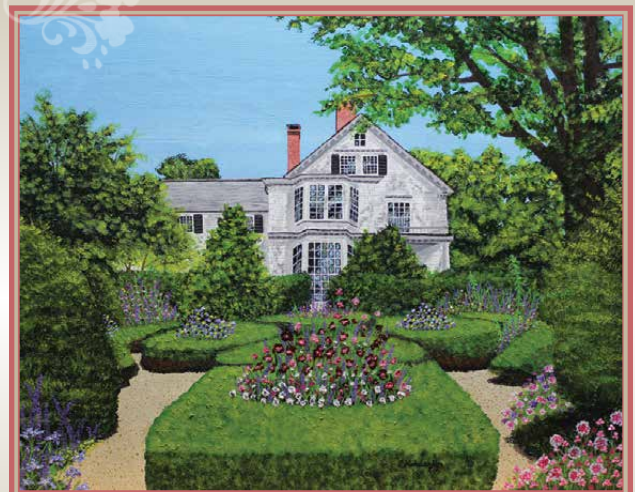
Visiting Hours April 15 - October 10

Wednesdays and Fridays 1-4 • Saturdays 10-4

Admission \$10

(HHG members and children under 12 free)

Connecticut's HISTORIC GARDENS DAY



The Garden of Enlightenment. Acrylic & oil by Peter Kokoszka, winner of the 2026 Historic Gardens Day Poster Art Contest.

SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2026



CTHistoricGardens.org

Facebook.com/CTHistoricGardens

Instagram.com/ConnecticutHistoricGardens

Time-honored Blooms

from page 1



To promote their annual Historic Gardens Day, CHG holds a poster art contest to “encourage a connection between the gardens and artists throughout the state.” This year’s winner is Peter Kokoszka of Meriden. His oil painting of the Bellamy-Ferriday House & Garden in Bethlehem captured the spirit and beauty of the house and its garden.

in the background, one can visit here and forget the worries of the modern day and just relax and get a sense of what life used to be in the 18th century while reflecting on their own beliefs and values.”

Garden Days this year is on June 28, and while all of the gardens are free and open to the public from 9am-1pm, Mervosh suggests checking each of the garden’s own websites for specific times.

“The gardens are all so different,” she said. “The landscapes vary.” All of them are beautiful and have their very own character,

mid-day summer sun glistening overhead as it fills one with the sense of peace and security in the religiously inspired Bellamy-Ferriday Garden. You can see the awesome power of a creator as you reflect on all he has made for us by observing all the things in this heavenly garden! With the peaceful setting of a historic house in

even though “most were created during the revival period—a nod to the 18th century.”

In terms of what’s blooming in each, Mervosh said that they all have different focuses. “Bellamy, for instance, has a focus on lilacs. Most gardens have perennials and are augmented with annuals. Lots of shrubs and trees.”

All will offer different activities, too. “It’s really fun,” she said. Go to <https://www.cthistoricgardens.org> to learn more about Connecticut’s Historic Gardens. 🗺️

The following gardens are members of CHG:

- Bellamy-Ferriday House & Garden, North Bethlehem
- Butler-McCook House & Garden, Hartford
- Florence Griswold Museum, Old Lyme
- Glebe House Museum & The Gertrude Jekyll Garden, Woodbury
- Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford
- Hill-Stead Museum, Farmington
- Mark Twain House & Museum, Hartford
- Osborne Homestead Museum & Kellogg Environmental Center, Derby
- Phelps-Hatheway House & Garden, Suffield
- Promisek at Three Rivers Farm, Bridgewater
- Roseland Cottage, Woodstock
- Stanley-Whitman House, Farmington
- Stowe Center for Literary Activism
- Thankful Arnold House Museum, Haddam
- Webb Deane Stevens Museum, Wethersfield
- Weir Farm National Historical Park, Wilton

Thankful Arnold House Museum in Haddam



Promisek at Three Rivers Farm Bridgewater



Bellamy-Ferriday House & Garden in Bethlehem



Nominate someone you know

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

The 2026 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 with the subject line Mehlquist nomination describing the background and qualifications of your nominee to Mary Anna Martell 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, 2026.

The 2026 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 2026 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 (with subject line Service Award) to: Mary Anna Martell, CT Hort Office P.O. Box 330966, West Hartford, CT 06133-0966 or email: office@cthort.org.

Nominations must be received by June 15, 2026.

earth day
at grace farms

Sat. April 25, 2026
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new canaan, ct | gracefarms.org



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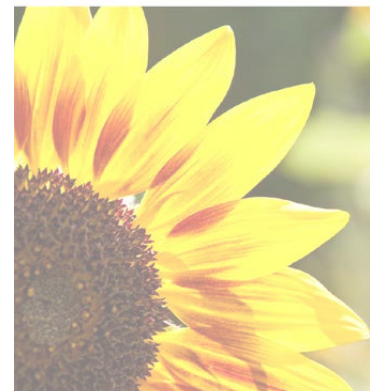
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Spring Plant Sale & Auction

Connecticut Horticultural Society's popular annual event!

Friday, May 15 from 6:30-9pm

Doors open to the public at 6:00 pm, \$5 Admission

Bethany Covenant Church, Berlin

With growing season fast approaching, the sale and 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.

Horticulturist Nancy DuBrule-Clemente will once again curate the night's auction offerings.

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.

Dear Members,

Our annual Auction is approaching on **May 15th**, and we are excited to invite you to contribute unique items to make this year's event a success. For the past several years, the auction committee has discouraged garden donations due to concerns over **invasive jumping worms**. However, in response to high member interest, we are opening up several ways for you to donate while keeping our gardens safe.

Garden & Plant Donations

We can now accept plants from your personal garden, provided they meet the following safety and quality criteria:

- **Safety First:** All garden plants **must be root-washed** and repotted in fresh, sterile potting soil to prevent the spread of jumping worms.
- **Selection:** We are looking for **unique and uncommon plants** that will excite bidders.
- **Identification:** Please ensure every plant is clearly **tagged with its identification**.

Creating Collections

The committee is looking for specific "vessels" to help us bundle items into attractive collections. If you have any of the following, please consider donating them:

- **Large baskets**
- **Interesting or decorative containers**
- **Wooden crates**

Silent Auction Highlights

The Silent Auction is the perfect place for high-quality garden-related items. We are currently seeking:

- **Garden tools** in excellent condition (items you no longer use but are still top-quality).
- **Garden ornaments** and decor.
- **Unusual house plants**

Your contributions help support our mission and make our auction a highlight of the year. If you have something of interest please reach out to a committee member or auction@cthort.org.

Sarah Bailey • Robin Dressler • Cheryl Marino

Thank you for your continued support and generosity!

CT Hort Cares Grant



Supporting community efforts to educate state residents on the importance of plants and the environment. The grants, totaling \$5,000, will be awarded twice in 2026. The maximum amount available per grant is \$500 and anyone who wishes to apply can do so. There are no restrictions on who can apply, but the grant must be used on a project taking place in the State of Connecticut.



First round applications will be accepted from February 15 – April 15. Grants awarded on May 1.



Go to CTHort.org/other-ways-to-give



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ottergardensct@gmail.com



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dcgardensolutions@outlook.com

2025-26 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 on 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 on plant material
only, moscarillos.com

NATUREWORKS, 518 Forest Road,

Northford 06472, (203) 484-2748,
discount only applies to in stock retail plant
material, natureworksgardencenter.com

NE SEED, 10% CT Hort members: Mail
order 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 on plant material only,
riversidenursery-ct.com

SCOTT'S ORCHARD & NURSERY

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

STONE POST GARDENS (*seasonal*)

1185 Randolph Road, Middletown 06457,
(860) 343-0360, stonepostgardens.com

THE GARDEN BARN NURSERY

228 West Street, Vernon 06066
(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

168 Woodland St., Manchester 06040,
(860) 643-8474, woodlandgardens-ct.com

2025-26 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, mention Promo Code PCONN26.



NEW MEMBERS ALSO RECEIVE:

\$10 in Auction Bucks, redeemable at our Plant Sales & Auctions



Adopt-a-Garden Program

We invite passionate individuals to join us at Annie Fisher Montessori Magnet School or Capital Preparatory Magnet School in Hartford through the Adopt-a-Garden program!

Gardeners of all levels wanted! By volunteering, you'll have the opportunity to connect with students and help them understand where their food comes from, enjoy the outdoors, and contribute to sustainable practices that benefit everyone.

The school gardens are used by the elementary age students, grades 1-3 at Annie Fisher and grades 2-5 at Capital Preparatory.

Volunteer times to work with the students and teachers will be during school hours and requires less than an hour a week.

You will start by working with an existing garden volunteer at each school. Weekend help (no students will be there) is also needed for weeding and watering. Capital Preparatory has a summer term in July and August during which there would be opportunities to work with students and/or garden maintenance as well.

Interested individuals can contact Val Bryan (vjbryan@att.net) for Annie Fisher Montessori School or Alice Gold (alicergold@gmail.com) for Capital Prep School.



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 May issue is April 15.

Sat., April 4, 11, 18 & 25, 9am-1pm—The 2nd Company Governor’s Horse Guard’s Garden Compost Drive, Old Farm Rd., Newtown. Bring your own containers and bags to take your compost home. Horse manure compost improves the nutrient content of soil, its structure and its ability to retain moisture. Suggested Donations \$10-\$50 per visit (depending on the number of buckets/bags) \$100 per visit for small truck loads. Help Support the Second Company Governor’s Horse Guard, its horses, and its mission. Questions? 2GHGevents@gmail.com.

Sat., April 11, 8:30-11:30am— ‘Wicked Good Violets’ – Windsor African Violet Society, Grace Episcopal Church, 311 Broad Street, Windsor. The Windsor African Violet Society presents its annual judged show and sale. Show plants, including specimens, standards, trailers, miniatures, semi-miniatures, and other gesneriads are on display, as well as designs including African violets. Commercially grown plants from Lyndon Lyon Greenhouse are available for purchase. Members plants, leaves, and rooted leaves are also for sale. Admission is free and open to the public. Event information: 860-922-5039 or joycedickey@yahoo.com.

Wed., April 15, 9am— 97th Annual Meeting of the Federated Garden Clubs of CT, Inc., featuring Ace Berry of Ace in Full Bloom, The Aqua Turf Club - 556 Mulberry St. Plantsville. International award-winning florist Ace Berry of Ace In Full Bloom is featured at this year’s event for an inspiring and entertaining program, which will include the live creation of 7 to 10 stunning floral designs. Proving that flowers can change a life – from a Texas oil field to the world stage, Ace shares his journey, creative secrets, and the belief that anyone with passion, curiosity, and a love for flowers can learn the art of floristry. Ace has generously agreed to donate his magnificent, completed designs to be included in the raffle. Cost: \$49 per person. <https://ctgardenclubs.org/meeting-and-luncheon-registration/>.

Tues., April 28, 11am-noon—Daytime Gardeners of North Haven presents Paula Wolf “Get the Buzz about Bees,” North Haven Recreation Center, Linsley Street 7, North Haven. Paula Wolf, CT State Apiary Inspector from CAES (Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station). Learn how bees are coping with our environment and how to help protect them. The program is open to the public. Admission is \$5. Call 203-239-1557 to register.

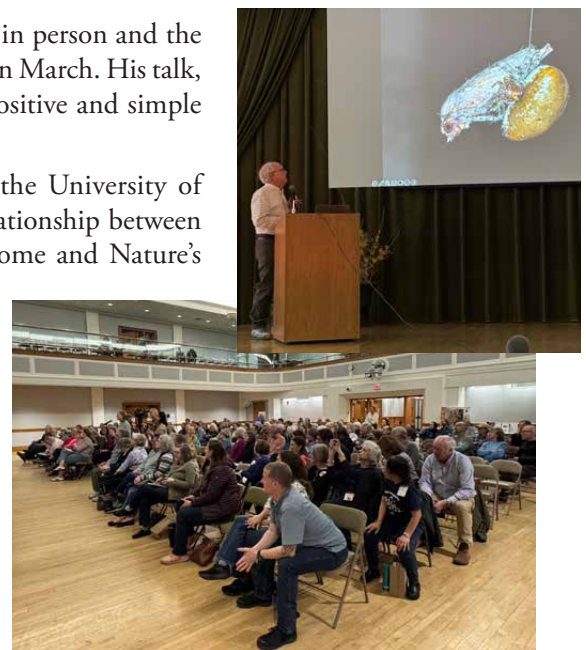
Visit cthort.org for the MOST CURRENT listings and links.

Doug Tallamy, live!

Doug Tallamy spoke to an audience of more than 500 people—300 in person and the rest broadcast via WHCI—at the West Hartford’s Conference Center in March. His talk, “Homegrown National Park”, delivers a dire warning with a clear, positive and simple solution: we all must start creating biodiversity in our own backyards.

Dr. Tallamy is an entomologist, conservationist, and professor at the University of Delaware, whose work has transformed our understanding of the relationship between native plants and wildlife. His books including *Bringing Nature Home* and *Nature’s Best Hope*.

The event was co-hosted by West Hartford Public Library, West Hartford Leisure Services, and West Hartford Garden Club, with support from Canton Land Conservation Trust, Cherry Brook Garden Club, Connecticut Horticultural Society, Hartford Audubon Society, Sierra Club of Hartford, Simsbury Garden Club, Simsbury Land Trust, Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy, and The Wild Ones Mountain Laurel Chapter. This event is generously supported by the Thomas F. Kilfoil Memorial Bequest, West Hartford Library Foundation.





Dated Material 🌿 *Please Rush*

CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

- Tuesday, April 14** – Board of Directors Remote Meeting, 7 pm
- Wed., April 15** – Deadline for the May 2026 *Newsletter*
- Thurs., April 16** – Speaker presentation: *The Past, Present, And Future of The Keney Park Sustainability Project* with Herb Virgo, 7 pm, live at CNTR, 725 Main Street, Middletown, and on Zoom

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

Printed on recycled paper.



HORT HUB is HERE!

- Hort Hub, on CTHort.org, lists all the horticultural happenings in the state and beyond.
- Hort Hub is open to all organizations, clubs, and businesses to post their happenings. It is completely free.
- Listing an event is easy and open to anyone with information to share and takes a few minutes.
- Listings will include, but not be limited to, horticultural societies, garden clubs, land trusts, pollinator pathways, environmental organizations, and other groups interested in promoting horticultural happenings.

Can you help us to spread the word?

We're looking for Hort Hub Ambassadors to help us spread the word: we want everyone in the state to enjoy and use this incredible resource.

We currently have someone talking to folks in Hartford and Litchfield County. If you have even an hour or two a week to spare, we would love your help to spread the word in the following counties:

Fairfield County	Middlesex County
New Haven County	New London County
Tolland County	Windham County

