Connecticut Horticultural Society
NEWSLETTER
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Are you ready for the symposium?

Learn more about our speakers before you join us


Rebecca McMackin


Christine Darnell


Jennifer McGuinness

We've planned and planned and it's almost here: the 2026 CT Hort Symposium, "Gardening for ALL Ages." If you're new to CT Hort, this is our biennial event—the first one we've held in person since January 2020—at the Marriott Hartford Cromwell on Oct. 24 from 9am-4pm.

All you need to do is show up and be ready to learn a lot and have some fun. If you haven't registered, do it today and you will save $25 on the price, which is the same price we charged in 2020.

The day will feature presentations by garden experts Rebecca McMackin (keynote), Christine Darnell, and Jennifer McGuinness, followed by "Gardening at Every Age," a panel discussion and Q&A moderated by Jim Sirch. Panelists include gardening experts at various stages of life and career: Karen Bussolini, Nancy DuBrule-Clemente, Dan Furman, Eric Mason, Jennifer McGuinness, and Jillian Shea.

Here, we bring you a little bit about each of our speakers, so you can get to know them before their talks. Enjoy, and we hope to see you on the 24th!

Rebecca McMackin
Adventures in Ecological Horticulture

Gone are the days when a garden could be ornamental alone. We now recognize the impact that our land care practices have on the ecosystems around us and can see the importance of encouraging biodiversity. Thankfully, we do not need to sacrifice beauty when we invite butterflies and songbirds into our gardens.

Rebecca McMackin has cultivated gorgeous landscapes in the toughest environments possible: urban parks, school playgrounds, and the sidewalks of New York City. She will take lessons from her work at Brooklyn Bridge Park, the Brooklyn Museum, and decades of research to share how those of us who are fortunate enough to care for land, can do it beautifully and ecologically.

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Welcome Uli Lorimer to our speaker series!

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Membership Dues:

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

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Leadership Letter

Dear CT Hort Family,

A few weeks ago, a flash of yellow and black stopped me in my tracks: a Giant Swallowtail was gliding through our yard in south-central Connecticut. I hurried to our Hop Tree (Ptelea trifoliata), hoping it might pay a visit—and there it was, laying eggs! Those eggs have since hatched, and the caterpillars are growing bigger every day. I would love to see them establish a population here, so it may be time to plant another hop tree. It is wonderful proof of the old native-gardening adage: "Plant it, and they will come."

Speaking of gardening with natives, you won't want to miss Uli Lorimer, who will be speaking on October 15 with "Digging Deeper into Ecological Horticulture." Uli is director of Horticulture at Garden in the Woods, in Framingham, Massachusetts and a self-described "through and through plant nerd." We'll also have our annual bulb sale that night, courtesy of White Flower Farm – an event that many of us look forward to from one year to the next.

As if that were not enough, just wait until the CT Hort Symposium. We'll have nationally known native plant gurus including Rebecca McMakin, Jennifer McGuinness and designer Christine Darnell speaking at our 2026, in-person, biennial Symposium ,"Gardening Through the Ages" on October 24.

While you're at it, check out our website at cthort.org for info on registering for these exciting programs.

See you soon!
Jim Sirch, President
CT Hort

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Hollister House Garden

NATUREWORKS

White Flower Farm
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Garden Solutions
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Otter Gardens



Uli Lorimer

Digging Deeper Into Ecological Horticulture

with Uli Lorimer

Thursday, October 15 • 7 pm

On Zoom and in person at Congregation Beth Israel, 701 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford
(Members will receive the Zoom link the Sunday before the talk.)

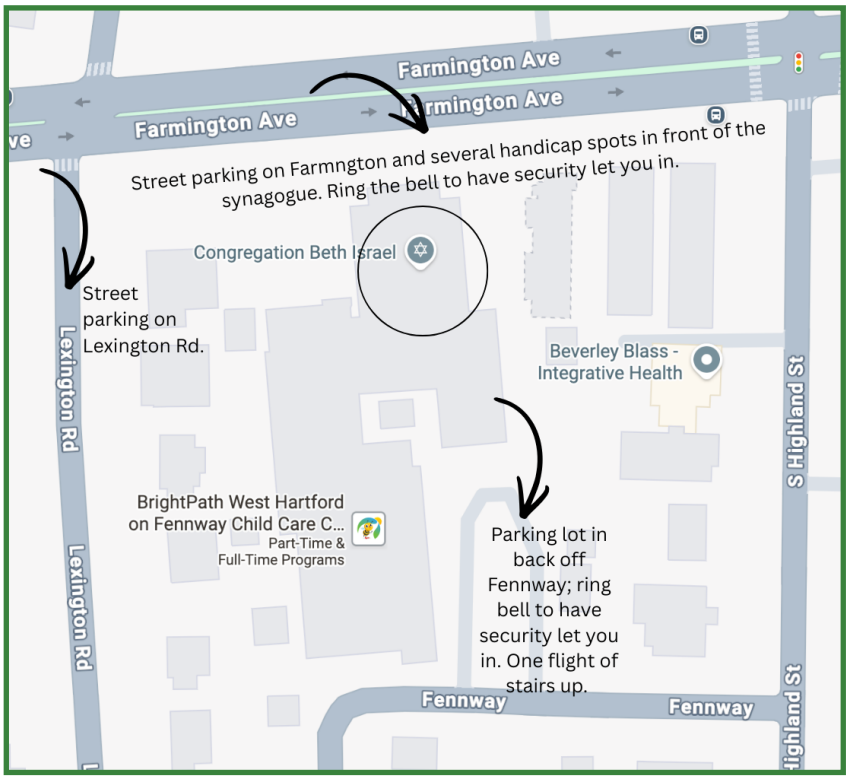
What is Ecological Horticulture? What distinguishes it from mainstream horticulture? Why is genetic diversity important? Ecological Horticulture takes a different approach from traditional gardening by focusing on nature-friendly principles. This talk will dive into key ideas and challenge common gardening practices. For example: Why is genetic diversity essential? Can I use cultivated versions of native plants? How should climate change influence my gardening choices? These questions and more will guide a discussion on creating and caring for gardens in harmony with the environment.

Uli Lorimer serves as the Director of Horticulture for the Native Plant Trust, a leading non-profit dedicated to preserving the native flora of the Northeastern United States. In this role, he oversees the acclaimed Garden in the Woods in Framingham and Nasami Farm in Western Massachusetts, which focuses on native plant propagation and research. Uli's career includes positions at the National Arboretum, Wave Hill, and as the Curator of Native Plants at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. A lifelong enthusiast of plants and biodiversity, Uli continues to study the region's ecosystems, collect seeds from the wild, and introduce new plants to collections.

He is also a prolific author and speaker. His publications include *Tough Natives for Tough Places* and *A Native Plant Reader*. His latest work, *The Northeast Native Plant Primer*, reflects his deep commitment to native plants and their ecological value.

Brought to you through the generosity of the Lois and Herb Isaacson Endowed Lecture fund and the Wild Ones Mountain Laurel Chapter.

Congregation Beth Israel Parking





Bulb Sale is back!

October 15 is also our annual bulb sale! Come a little early (6:30 pm) for next month's talk with Uli Lorimer and enjoy our annual bulb sale! October 15 at Congregation Beth Israel (701 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford).

Every October we sell bulbs to help fund our scholarships, grants, and general programming. So, on October 15, 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.

Connecticut Horticultural Society presents

2026 Symposium

Gardening for ALL Ages

Sat., October 24, 9-4pm
Marriott Hartford Cromwell

4 Sebethe Drive, Cromwell

Featured speakers



CHRISTINE DARNELL

"Approaching the Garden"





JENNIFER MCGUINNESS

"Designing for Birds: Lessons from an Evolving Garden"

Last day at 2020 prices! Register today!!

KEYNOTE SPEAKER REBECCA MCMACKIN

"Adventures in Ecological Horticulture"

Panel Discussion

"Gardening at Every Age" moderated by Jim Sirch

Featuring panelists:

Karen Bussolini
Nancy DuBrule-Clemente
Dan Furman
Eric Mason
Jennifer McGuinness
Jillian Shea



More Information

2020 ticket prices! Your entry fee includes talks, panel, coffee and snack breaks, buffet lunch and parking.

Through October 1: Members $95 • Non-members • $125 • Student $40
From October 2-14: Members $120 • Nonmembers $150 • Students $65
Sorry, no walk-ins • Be sure to visit our vendor tables between talks

REGISTER AT CTHORT.ORG • 860-529-8713

Are you ready for the symposium? from page 1

Christine Darnell
Approaching the Garden

How do we approach designing a garden throughout the phases of our lives?

What should we think about as a new homeowner; when we first set out to make a garden a place of our own and seek to make our house a home.

How do we design as a more experienced gardener, who has learned through observation and missteps, and created a garden with character and depth, but have precious little time to tend it.

And finally, as the gardener who never stops learning, who knows the value of putting their hands in the soil, but stamina is an issue. How do we design our gardens to represent who we are and to still be a place of joy?

Christine Darnell is a garden and planting design specialist. Her firm, Christine Darnell Gardens, offers naturalistic planting design services in the CT area, and specializes in biodiverse landscapes and beautiful sustainable gardens.

She believes that in the face of climate change and ecological crisis, the role of landscape designers is changing from creating beauty in seclusion to that of cultivating gardens that are living systems of care and connection. We are partners in our local ecosystem, and our gardens must be nature-friendly, offering sustenance and habitat. This ideal is reflected in every new space her firm creates.

Christine is the vice-chair of Lyme's Inland Wetlands and Conservation Committee, serves on the Building and Grounds Committee for the Florence Griswold Museum, and teaches landscape design for the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association, training the next generation of gardeners, designers and nursery men and women.

Jennifer McGuinness
Designing for Birds: Lessons from an Evolving Garden

Every garden has a story, and the lessons learned along the way can transform how we think about designing for birds. In this hopeful and practical session, follow the evolution of one garden as it became a haven for birds, and discover what that journey revealed about what birds need to thrive. Learn how organic practices and native plants can meet those needs, and which trees, shrubs, and flowers attract specific species. With inspiring ideas and easy actions drawn from real experience, this session shows how thoughtful, evolving design for birds leads to more balanced, life-filled gardens - and a garden that keeps getting better.

Jen McGuinness is a lifelong gardener and the author of the award-winning "Bird-Friendly Gardening," published by Cool Springs Press. She is also the garden writer and photographer behind Frau Zinnie (FrauZinnie.com), where she shares personal gardening insights, expert interviews, and seasonal inspiration. Based in Connecticut, she champions organic, wildlife-friendly gardening and brings a background in journalism, communications, and visual storytelling to her work.



Panel members for "Gardening at Every Age" include (clockwise, from top left) Karen Bussolini, Nancy DuBrule-Clemente, Dan Furman, Jillian Shea, Eric Mason and Jennifer McGuinness.





Patrick McDuffee drove up from New Jersey and his home at Well-Sweep Farm, with lots of amazing plants and schooled a crowd of more than 45 people on the many scented geraniums and other plants he grows there. Patrick is the third generation tending the land in Warren County.







Yuki Kaneko wowed an audience of more than 125 people in when she kicked off the CT Hort Speaker Series in September. Her talk, "Editing the Garden: Advice from the High Line," was a hit with everyone who came in person and showed up via Zoom.

What's happening in the world of gardening? Find out on ...

Hort Hub

Hort Hub offers a free listing of events throughout CT and the surrounding area related to horticulture and similar topics. Find an event to attend or submit your own event for free to the listings. You don't have to be a member to submit a listing!

Go to CTHort.org to access Hort Hub on the home page.

2026-2027 Scholarship Fund

The 2026-2027 season is upon us, and with it, a goal of $8,000 to provide scholarships to students. We hope you'll consider helping us reach that goal! Go to cthort.org/donate to learn how to give.

Thank you!



Invasive Plant Symposium
October 28, 2026

CT Hort is proud to be a partner of this important event.

The Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group's 2026 symposium

From Awareness to Action - Strengthening Our Response to Invasive Plants

will be in person at UConn Student Union, Storrs, CT, open to all; Wednesday, October 28, 2026. Sessions include a variety of techniques for management of terrestrial and aquatic invasives, as well as restoration with native alternatives. CEU's for organizations and Pesticide Recertification Credits are available.

$90 General Registration (in person attendance). **$80 Recording Only; Student Registration Available.**

More info: cipwg.uconn.edu/2026-symposium

CT HORT TRAVEL



Longwood Gardens Christmas
Dec. 11-13, 2026

Experience the beauty of the holidays in Pennsylvania and more. Over the course of our three days together, we'll travel to Lyndhurst Mansion, the famous Winterthur Museum, and then, to Longwood Gardens, before catching the New York Botanical Garden Holiday Train Show.
Includes two nights at the hotel, two breakfasts and one lunch and one dinner (with $50 in dining dollars), sightseeing and admissions.

Trip cost: $1169 per person double occupancy / $1119 with CT Hort member discount $1359 single person single occupancy / $1309 with CT Hort member discount

Register: www.friendshiptours.net/tours/longwood-gardens-christmas-ct-horticultural-society **or call Barbara at Friendship Tours at 860-243-1630**



Philadelphia Flower Show with New York Botanical Garden Orchid Show & Longwood Gardens Orchid Extravaganza
March 12-14, 2027

Join CT Hort, Friendship Tours, and special guest Nancy DuBrule-Clemente for this incredible annual trip to see the famous Philadelphia Flower and more.

Trip cost: $1045 per person double occupancy / $1219 per person single occupancy (CT Hort members receive a $50 discount)

Register: https://www.friendshiptours.net/tours/philadelphia-flower-show-ct-horticultural-society **or call Barbara at Friendship Tours at 860-243-1630**

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Dated Material *Please Rush*

CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

Tuesday, Oct. 13 – Board of Directors Meeting, 7 pm

Thursday, Oct. 15 – Deadline for the Winter 2026 *Newsletter*

Thursday, Oct. 15 – Speaker presentation: ***Digging Deeper Into Ecological Horticulture*** **with Uri Lorimer** 7 pm, live at Congregation Beth Israel, 701 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford, and on Zoom

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

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Welcome New Members!

Gary Anderson
Monique Anthony
Gayle Anton
MaryJo Archambault
April Barna
Virginia Blair
Megan Blake
Frederick Bland
Holly Bollier
Carmen Jane Booth
Edie Brown
Cheryl Cappiali
Pamela Cartledge
Michelle Colafrancesco
April Cook
Elaine Corey-Zincavage
Alison Cunningham
Jennifer DeChello
Debra DeVries-Dalton
Page Dickey
Diane Dooley
Sherri Sobanski
Enfield Garden Club
Amy Estabrook
Joan Feely
Leslie Fonseca
Anne Gobin
Laura Goldberg
Gail Griffin
Adele Gustafason
Karen Heck
Mary LaKonski
Jim Landry
Jeff Lynch
Matt Marrotte
Cynthia Mas
Sheila Mason
Signian McGeary
James McGrath
Sarah Middeleer
Deirdre Newberry
Kathy Noel-Johnson
Rebecca Noll
Elizabeth Normen
Linda O'Rourke
Christobelle Payne
Wendy Picardo
Susan Pike
Karen Quercia
Deborah Rutter
Amy Schichtel
Eileen Schiess
Prabhjot Singh
Betsy St. John
Betty Standish
Diane Tapp
Jennifer Vargas
Agnes Walsh
Owen Wang
Emma Wasserman
Kathryn Williams
Deborah Wimler
Roxanne Witmer-DeWitt
Wendy Zimbardi