

Welcome to the new, electronic Leaflet!



There's a great deal going on at MassHort these days and a lot of information to impart to our members and friends. In previous years, we've circulated the Leaflet as a printed newsletter with an admittedly erratic schedule. Going forward, you can expect to see us, at minimum, six times a year.

Instead of printing, we're going to an email edition. And, in going electronic, we're choosing to offer you the opportunity to scan the opening paragraphs of articles, with hyperlinks to the full text of those articles, which can be found on MassHort's website.

We are keenly interested in your feedback on this issue and welcome all of your comments and suggestions.

Michael Opton
Editor

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BLOOMS! to Feature Five Great Lectures



How do you plan to spend this Saturday? Taking in the sights and scents of BLOOMS!, of course, but why not enrich the experience with a little education on the side?

On Saturday, MassHort will offer an all-day lecture series at the InterContinental Boston, featuring five talks on diverse subjects from some of the best speakers in the business. The lectures are free to MassHort members. If you'd care to bring a non-member guest, the charge is \$5 per talk or \$15 for the full series.

The series gets underway at **10 a.m. with Barbara Melera** talking about the story of America's great seedhouses. They're among the country's oldest businesses (Ms. Melera's Landreth Seed Co. dates to 1784 and is the fourth oldest corporation in America). Ms. Melera will take you on a journey that traces the development of such innovations as the seed catalog and how seedhouses spurred agricultural innovation.

At 11:30, landscape designer Nan Sinton will give a talk entitled, 'Smaller Gardens: Tailoring Bid Ideas to Limited Space'. The title is a fair description of the subject matter: discovering the potential of the smaller garden. She'll offer fresh ideas and practical tips on how to make every inch of a garden enjoyable. Ms. Sinton is president of Sinton & Michener Associates.

At 1 p.m., Toby Wolf of the Halvorson Design Partnership will take the stage to talk about the interrelationship between public spaces and private gardens. Halvorson has created some of Boston's most attractive public spaces, including Post Office Square and MassHort's Gardens on the Greenway. Mr. Wolf will talk about how big gestures and little touches can come together to make a distinctive place. He'll then translate that appreciation into ways a homeowner can create gardens on an intimate scale that are truly distinctive.

At 2:30, Paul Miskovsky, president of Miskovsky Associates, the South Shore and Cape Cod landscape firm, will share his experiences at last year's Chelsea Flower Show. Those who have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Miskovsky at the podium will know that, while the main subject will be addressed, so will many other topics, all of them engaging. He is a speaker not to be missed.

And **at 4 p.m., R. Wayne Mezitt**, president of Weston Nurseries, will talk on 'Early Color in Your Garden'. New Englanders know that the first seasonal splashes of color in the garden are the ones that are appreciated most. Mr. Mezitt will discuss dozens of plants to inspire and add interest to the early spring garden. Each of his examples are guaranteed to be colorful, easy to grow, and readily available at garden centers.

Each talk leaves ample time for questions. All talks will be held on the second floor of the InterContinental Boston.

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Meet Holly Perry - MHS Trustee



Take a Tour of Elm Bank
with Trustee Holly Perry

Holly Perry says she has always been a gardener. She remembers weeding in her grandparents' garden (she hated it) at a tender age. When she became a teacher, gardening became her relief valve. "I remember getting up at three in the morning and grading papers so that I could work in the garden with a clear conscience," she says. Perry says if she didn't get in enough gardening time, she was 'a basket case.'

Perry taught Spanish in the Westwood public schools, retiring in 2001. High on her list of things to do was to become a Master Gardener.

"I had learned about the Master Gardener Training class while volunteering at the New England Flower Show," she says.

"Unfortunately, because the class was offered during the day, I needed to wait until I retired to take the courses."

Perry became a Master Gardener with the winter class of 2002. And that, in turn, led to a new career revolving around MassHort.

"Master Gardeners were offered the opportunity to monitor lectures and symposia in return for doing things like taking tickets and setting up chairs," she recalls. "I also wanted to re-hear the material I had taken as part of the Master Gardener course and so I volunteered to help out with the classes."

The next thing Perry knew, she was creating questions for and grading the weekly, take-home tests that are part of Master Gardener course work. And then she was running the course.

"I just fell into it," she says with a shrug.

Eighteen months ago, Perry was invited to become a MassHort trustee. "As it was explained to me, I was to fill the 'Master Gardener' chair and represent the needs of that group to MassHort," she says. "I thought I'd have a year or two to get my feet wet."

Perry had been a trustee just a few months when MassHort imploded.

"I wasn't equipped to understand the finances or fund raising issues," she says, "but I came with a very good knowledge of the educational mission of the organization, and that's what I focused on."

In the words of the people around her, Perry was one of the people who 'stepped up in a crisis'.

"I have the time. I have the energy. Someone has to open the mail," she says.

But opening the mail (and, yes, she does that) is just part of Perry's current role at MassHort.

"I'm also thinking of the long-term educational mission for the society," she says. "And I think about how the Greenway Gardens fit into the mission."

In early February, Perry attended a talk by Lynden Miller, a New-York-based public garden designer and director of the Conservatory Garden in New York's Central Park.

"Miller talked about the role of the urban garden," Perry says. "While her best-known projects are at high-visibility places like Bryant Park and the New York Botanical Garden, the focus of her talk was on the small gardens in poorer areas of New York."

"People need green space; they relate to plants and shrubs. Miller fills her gardens with four seasons of interest and places to explore," Perry says.

"Miller's gardens are easy to get into and easy to interact with. Best of all, they're wildly successful. They're respected by the people who use them and they bring vitality to the communities in which they're located."

As Perry listened to Miller's talk, she realized that Miller was describing the relevancy of the Greenway Gardens.

"It was a revelation," Perry says. "So much of the rest of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway is grass and concrete. It's open space, but there's little or nothing with which to interact. By contrast, every time I visit MassHort's Greenway Gardens, I sense their vitality. I see the looks on the faces of the people who use these parcels, and I know we're on the right track. It took a garden expert from another city to validate that Mass Hort is doing the right thing in Boston."

Perry is now starting to think about how MassHort preserves its success on its three Greenway parcels.

"MassHort, Elm Bank and the Greenway Garden should be the focal points for the 'green' industry in New England," she says. "We should be the stating point for anyone looking for design excellence. When someone wants to show a customer, a town or a civic group how it's done right, they should start with MassHort's gardens in Wellesley and Boston."

Perry also feels strongly that MassHort needs to get back to its educational roots. "The Society was founded by a group of individuals with a strong scientific bent," she says. "MassHort gave the great minds of the day an audience of interested listeners. As we reorganize the Society, that educational mandate should again become paramount."

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Children's Activities Set for BLOOMS!



BLOOMS! isn't just for adults. In fact, the biggest 'bloom' around will be reserved for children and their parents.

At BLOOMS!, the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association will be setting up an area for kids age 3-12 to explore the world of sunflowers. Fifteen Master Gardeners, under the leadership of Kathi Gariepy, will offer an opportunity for children to learn about plants in general, and about sunflowers in particular.

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"We want to combine a fun and an educational experience," Ms. Gariepy says. "The Master Gardeners who have volunteered for the show are all current or retired teachers with long experience working with children as well as being extremely knowledgeable about plants."

Younger children will have the opportunity to plant a Russian Mammoth sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) seed in an Earth-friendly peat pot, which they may take home to watch sprout and transplant into the family garden when warmer weather arrives. Parents may want to note that the Russian Mammoth bears that name for a reason: the cultivar grows to a height of twelve feet.



"We're also going to be focusing on one of the fascinating traits of sunflowers," Ms. Gariepy says. "More visibly than any other flower, the sunflower head follows the sun over the course of the day. The phenomenon, called 'phototropism' is one that kids of any age find fascinating. By the time a child leaves BLOOMS!, they, and their parents, will know all about it."

The BLOOMS! volunteers will also offer crafts projects built around sunflowers, including making sunflower pinwheels to take home..

All children's activities will be held in the lobby of 125 High Street. Programs will be available all days and hours during which BLOOMS! is open to the public.

[See times and locations...](#)

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March Horticultural Hints



by Betty Sanders
Principal Master Gardener

If March means the snow has melted and the sun is out, everyone wants to get started in the garden. But stay off your lawns and flower beds, and out of the vegetable garden, until the soil passes the "ball" test. What's the ball test? Take some soil in your hand and squeeze it into a ball. If it falls apart when poked, it's ready to be worked. If it doesn't, it's still too wet and any work in the garden will compact the soil and make your life much harder as the season goes on.

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Start the month indoors, repotting any house plants that have outgrown their container or have been in the same container for several years. Removing soil which is full of salts from tap water and fertilizers will give your plants a real pick-me-up as they go into the spring growing season.

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As soon as spring bulbs appear, sprinkle a small amount of granular fertilizer around (not on) the new greens. This will wash into the soil with spring rains and help the bulb get ready for next's year's flowers.

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Start peppers and eggplants indoors

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If the garden soil has dried out enough to pass the ball test, you can start planting cool season vegetables such as onions, lettuce, spinach, broccoli and cabbage. They can take cold nights and provide you with an early garden harvest.

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Plant dormant (bare root) roses now and you will have blooms this year.

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The best time to move trees and shrubs is when they are dormant—before they begin the process of putting out leaves.

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Wednesday Evenings at Elm Bank



Back to the Garden!

From late April through the end of June, MassHort offers a series of Wednesday evening programs that will help you brush up your gardening skills and learn new ones. Except as noted, all programs begin at 6 p.m. and include both a presentation by an expert in the field and ample time for questions and answers. Light refreshments will be provided.

We also invite you to come early and explore Elm Bank's gardens as they evolve from late spring into their summer richness.

The cost for each individual program is noted in the description. Registration for these seminars is required. You may register by phone (617-933-4995), [online](#), or by sending your course selections and payment to MassHort, 900 Washington St., Wellesley, MA 02482.

April 22, 2009

6-8 pm at Elm Bank

How to Shop a Nursery: A Professional's Tips on Selecting the Best

with Tom Ward, experienced plantsman and nurseryman

Course highlights: Where do I find what I want to grow? How do I know which plant to buy? Putting in healthy plants is one of the keys to successful gardening and Tom Ward will share his many decades of experience in choosing the right plant. He'll talk about how to evaluate nursery stock when presented with dozens of seemingly identical plants, and how to put in that plant once it's purchased.

Cost. \$10 non-member; \$5 MHS Member. ([register online](#))

April 29, 2009

6-8 pm at Elm Bank

Growing and Using Herbs

with Joe Kunkel, experienced herb gardener

Your herb garden can be as simple as some pots on the deck or entail cultivating several hundred square feet. Either way, there are a set of basics that every herb gardener needs to know. Joe Kunkel, who had spent much of his life in the nursery business, will take you through the 'what', 'how' and 'when' of herb gardening, including preserving those herbs for winter use.

Cost: \$10 non-member; \$5 MassHort Member. ([register online](#))

May 6, 2009

7-9 pm at Elm Bank (note later starting time for this session)

Three Seasons of Color in the Garden

with Kery Ann Mendez, garden designer

Perennials aren't just for summer. With the right selection of plants and an intelligent design, they can be the color foundation of a garden from early spring through late autumn. Moreover, they can be among the easiest of plants to maintain. Kerry Mendez will share her tricks of the trade for putting a 'wow' factor into your home garden month after month. She'll discuss smart plant selection, design tips and surefire maintenance shortcuts.

Cost: \$15 non-member; \$10 MassHort Member. ([register online](#))

May 13, 2009

6-8 pm at Elm Bank

Vegetable Gardening Refresher

with Betty Sanders, Principal Master Gardener

Course highlights: Save money, eat fresh, and know just how your food is grown this summer. With proper planning, even a small garden space can yield hundreds of dollars of vegetables for your family. Betty Sanders will

discuss the pro's and con's of raised beds, no-till gardens, plant sets versus seeds, and protecting your garden against unwanted visitors. The first half of her talk will be indoors; the second half will be in MassHort's new Vegetable Trial Garden. Gardeners at every experience level will find benefit in her talk.

Cost: \$10 non-member; \$5 MassHort Member ([register online](#))

June 24, 2009

6-8 pm at Elm Bank

Build a Backyard Butterfly Haven

with Suzanne Mahler, Landscape designer

Course highlights: By adding a progression and variety of easy-to-grow, nectar-rich flowers to your home garden, you can ensure a season-long treat in the form of visiting butterflies. Suzanne Mahler is an expert in the subject and she'll show you how mass plantings of colorful flowers, particularly those tinted pink and lavender, are irresistible to butterflies passing overhead. Butterflies are fragile creatures, and Suzanne will talk about how to ensure your garden is a haven for them.

Cost: \$10 non-member; \$5 MassHort Member ([register online](#))

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