

# Leaflet

A MASSACHUSETTS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION

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### MassHort Launches Facebook Page

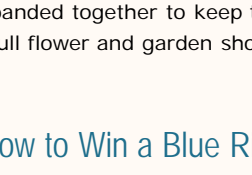
We are pleased to announce the Massachusetts Horticultural Society now has a page on Facebook, the popular social networking site. The page will give us the opportunity to interact with our Facebook fans more frequently. Whether it's a bulletin on our progress with Blooms 2010 at the Boston Flower & Garden Show, sharing our favorite photos of the gardens here at Elm Bank, or providing tips and information on horticulture, MassHort will be getting the word out on Facebook.

Here are some of the people who are currently fans of MassHort. If you want to join them, simply click on the Become a Fan button you see below.

Massachusetts Horticultural Society on Facebook

### Fewer Than 45 Days Left!

By now, everyone knows that MassHort members will be going to the Boston Flower & Garden Show for free. But there's a catch. It's pretty small as catches go, but if you've put off joining or renewing your membership, you have fewer than 45 days to take action.



That's because the cutoff date for free tickets (one for individual members, two for family memberships) is March 17th. You can't join the week of the flower show and expect those tickets. So, why not do it now?

Of course, there are plenty of reasons to join MassHort besides flower show tickets. Topping the list is the knowledge that you're supporting the oldest society of its kind in the country and you're helping to further an educational mission that reaches into schools and communities around Massachusetts.

But the tangible benefits are quite nice, too. You get a \$25 gift certificate to White Flower Farm, one of the premier sources for premium plants in the country. You get complimentary subscriptions to Organic Gardening and Garden Design magazines. There are discounts at nurseries and reciprocal admissions to gardens and arboreta around the country. You'll also receive discounts on activities at Elm Bank, including classes and special events.



So, why wait? Use this link to renew or rejoin.

### About the Preview Party

We've had a number of queries from MassHort members asking if we'll be hosting a preview party for the Boston Flower & Garden Show this year. The short answer is 'no'. The longer answer is that there will be a preview party on Tuesday, March 23, but MassHort elected not to participate when the Paragon Group invited us to host it.

Our reasoning is entirely financial. Preview parties ought to be fund raisers for the organizations involved. As we went through probable expenses for such an event, we could not convince ourselves that such an event would break even, much less turn a profit. And so we passed.

We're delighted that three organizations - Trustees of Reservations, Tower Hill Botanic Garden and the New England Wild Flower Society - have banded together to keep the tradition alive. We're pleased to open all Blooms exhibits for the event, so all attendees will be able to see the full flower and garden show on the eve of its formal opening.

### How to Win a Blue Ribbon at Blooms!

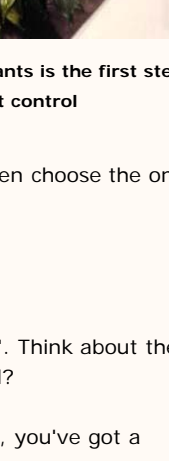
You have this houseplant. It's a really good looking houseplant. And you keep reading about Blooms! and how you can enter that houseplant in March and win a blue ribbon for it.

Right, and you're also going to win Megabucks and buy a Porsche.

But seriously, Megabucks is a real long shot, but that blue ribbon is within your reach.

Here's how you do it.

The first big hurdle is knowing your plant's proper botanical name. In a perfect world, your plant would have come with a tag 'way back when, it would have contained the two names that are assigned to every plant, you would have saved it, and you would confidently say to the entry clerk, "this is Begonia 'Bouton de Rose'" and everything would go like clockwork. The wonderful news is that even though you long since lost that tag and only know that you have a very attractive ruffled begonia, when you get to the World Trade Center, you'll find a room full of very smart people who will take one look at your plant and identify it for you as 'Bouton de Rose'. How can they be sure? Because they've been doing this for many years and they have lots of resources.



The second big hurdle is being on time. Entries are due on Monday, March 22 between noon and 8 p.m. You can walk in if you're taking public transportation, or use the convenient drive-in if you're in a car. If you're driving, there will be someone to take you plant and give you a receipt for it. You can then park and come in to fill out the paperwork. But it doesn't do you any good to show up at 8:10 p.m. even though you get caught in traffic or the 'T' took forever. The entry deadline is the entry deadline.

How can you improve your chance of winning? Groom your plant. Put plainly, grooming is the key to winning.



How do you groom a plant? Put your reading glasses on or get out the magnifying glass, get in some good light, grab the tweezers and carefully go over every inch of the plant.

Clean the pot too. There should not be any dirt or moss on the pot. Some discoloration from fertilizers and salts on clay pots is acceptable, but an encrusted pot is a non-starter. Simple pots, whether plastic or terra cotta, are best. Ornate pots just detract from the plant inside it. Many classes allow you to double-pot - that is, put one pot inside another - with the outer pot being the super-clean one. Never, ever bring a pot with a foil wrapper.

If you don't want to repot your plant you can rub some oil on the outside of the clay pot to even out the discoloration. Make sure you've read the rules in the schedule and have the correct size and type pot for the classes you are entering. Some schedules are very specific about this. It would be a shame not to be able to exhibit a beautiful plant merely because you didn't read the rules carefully.

Remove all damaged or dying leaves. Make sure when removing these leaves or flowers to not leave any part of the stem attached. This is both unsightly and judges notice. Do any major pruning well in advance of the show. Wash leaves in a sink with water and a soft brush, but never use an oil or other substance to make a leaf shine. It isn't allowed in a show.

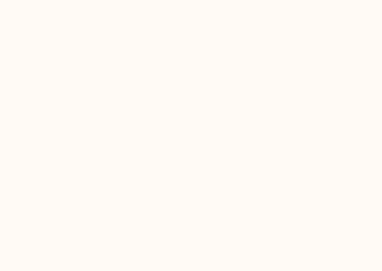
Freshen up the soil or top dress the pot with an appropriate medium such as crushed gravel for succulents or redwood bark for orchids. Whatever you use remember that the top dressing should be unobtrusive and in keeping with the plants growing needs (no sphagnum moss around a cactus for example). Decide where the front of your plant is and mark the back with a chalked "X".

Carefully pack your potted plants for transport to the show. Many a plant has met its demise on the way to a show because it was not carefully stabilized for sudden breaks and turns! This can be avoided altogether by taking the time to carefully secure and pack your plants in boxes or crates before departure. A sturdy box with an "X" cut in the bottom will safely hold several plants.

You can also enter cut specimens. Blooms has categories for both early-spring-blooming cultivars (Witch Hazel, for example) and forced material (apple blossoms, which can be cut in March but which would not normally flower until May).

For early bloomers, identify the plant well in advance but wait to cut it until the day before you bring it in for judging. Look over the whole plant and try to cut the specimen without bug damage and with the freshest flowers. Remember that a day too late (or early) is not going to win a blue.

What about bugs? Never bring a specimen, cut or potted, infested with bugs. It will be turned away. What about signs of former bug damage? Good news - most judges are sensitive to the need to grow organically and not spray toxic chemicals on our plants. Some damage is acceptable but remove any damaged leaves that don't affect the overall look of your exhibit.



Spraying houseplants is the first step to pest control

When you cut your specimen, especially those with long stems devoid of foliage until near the bottom make sure you make the cut well below that foliage so that you can show the foliage and have enough to hold it up. Be aware that there are usually stem length restrictions in the cut specimen classes so choose your specimen wisely. It is better to show some foliage-this helps the judges see the overall vigor and health of the plant. When you place the stem in the bottle take the time to carefully work the wedging material around the stem so that the specimen is standing up nice and tall. When you cut your specimen from the garden, look for a straight stem.

If you're forcing a specimen, think very hard about timing and consider bringing in different specimens a few days apart, then choose the one that's going to look best on the day you submit it for judging.

Overall, what makes a great specimen? One horticultural judge once summed it up perfectly: the exhibit should look "perky". Think about the winners at a dog show. Now look at your exhibit. Is it looking its best? Does it want to win that day? Is it perfectly groomed?

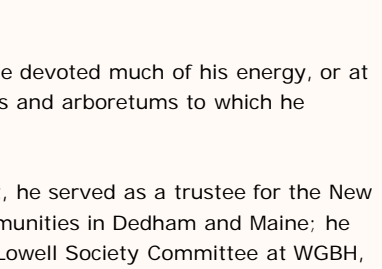
If you can look at your entry with pride and know that it looks its best: if the leaves are bright and the flowers are preening, you've got a winner.

### Floral Designers Get a Feel for Their Space at Blooms!

On a recent Saturday morning, nearly four dozen of the region's top amateur floral designers gathered in the ballroom of the Seaport World Trade Center in Boston. They brought tape measures and paint color fans, notebooks and cameras. They inspected the wallpaper and the carpets and the height and color of moldings. They noted how the light from large picture windows flooded the room.

They were there to get acquainted with the space where, from March 24 to 28, they'll exhibit floral designs that promise to spur the imagination and delight the senses of everyone who attends Blooms! 2010 at the Boston Flower & Garden Show. They were seeing exactly where their designs will be placed and examining the lighting and backgrounds that will enhance them. It's the kind of attention to detail that sets apart the best designers.

Heading the two-hour-long get-acquainted meeting was Maureen Christmas, Chairman of Division I of Blooms! 2010. Back in September, her committee wrote a schedule titled "The Time of Your Life" which listed seven classes developing this theme and dictating the required design type for each class. This morning, with all entry slots long since filled, Maureen was fielding dozens of questions from designers: Could any part of the entry be prepared ahead of time? Was there a height limitation on floor displays? Were entries for the "Victorian Period" arrangements limited to flowers available in Queen Victoria's day?



Maureen Christmas Chairman of Division I

Blooms! may have been two critical in the future at the time of Design Division I's exhibitor's meeting, but sessions like these are critical to the success of a flower show.

"It is important to give the designers as much information as early as possible so they can begin the creative process," Maureen explains. "These are artists and their medium is flowers. Many have ideas of what they will create when they see the schedule. When they see the space their design will be staged in, ideas are adjusted. The pedestal height and color, ceiling height and wall color all play a role in the finished design."

Interestingly, while almost everyone knows everyone else in the room, no one knows with whom they're in competition.

"It isn't that designers aren't interested in their primary competition is really themselves. Can they successfully put their ideas into a great design?" Maureen says. "Who's entering is kept confidential for a number of reasons. You don't want designers to enter a class because of who else is in it. At meetings such as this, some of the judges are also exhibiting on the other entry day. You don't want the judges to know whose design they are judging."

And, when do designers find out who they're up against?

"On entry morning," Maureen smiles. "It's kind of fun to come in at 5:30 am and see who else is in your class. You get a lot of 'Oh no, not you!' and then they get down to business. It's amazing how fast the time (three hours) goes before they need to leave the show area, so the judging can begin."

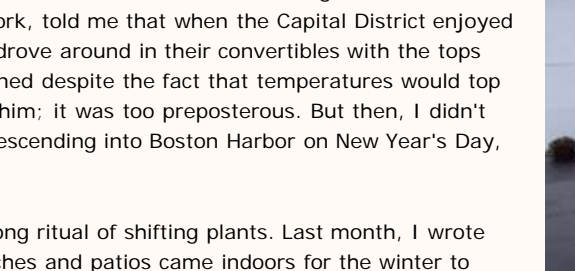
Visitors to the Boston Flower & Garden Show will get their first look at the entries on Wednesday morning at 10 a.m. They'll see who won the blue ribbons and decide for themselves what design element or execution separated first from second place, second from third, and third from honorable mention.

Remarkably, the process repeats itself three days later, with a second group of 28 designers competing in those same seven classes. It's a good reason to go to the flower show twice.

### Local artist supports MassHort through art showing

Local artist Joanne Tarlin will be exhibiting her extraordinary art at the Wellesley Free Library from March 6th through March 30th. She has generously offered to provide an individual membership to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society with the purchase of any of artworks at the show. Below is a press release regarding the exhibit.

Fine Artist Joanne Tarlin Exhibits  
Of a Powerful Nature  
20 dynamic & sensual paintings\*  
At the Wellesley Free Library during the month of March.



**A percentage of all sales will be donated to the Wellesley Free Library and buyers will receive an individual membership to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society.**

**Meet the Artist, Reception  
Saturday, March 6th, 9am-12 noon**

**WHO:** Joanne Tarlin is a graduate of The Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Design, a division of The New School for Social Research. She is a member of the SoWA Artists' Guild in Boston as well as the prestigious 120 year old, National Association of Women Artists.

Prior to painting professionally, Joanne was a successful entrepreneur, graphic designer and then a creative director. In 2004, she began to focus once again on her passion for painting. Joanne now paints full-time at her studio in Boston. Her work is in corporate and private collections.

**WHAT:** Smell the pine, hear the rush of a wave cresting, transcend reality and absorb the female spirit that pervades these contemporary oil paintings. Each one, inspired by nature: glaciers, woodlands, corals reefs and other wonders, is strongly composed and a visual delight of colors, patterns and texture. Additionally, many are commentaries on the state of our environment, such as: Glacier Melting Too Fast and Save the Coral Reefs.

**WHERE:** The Wellesley Free Library, Wakelin Room  
530 Washington Street, Wellesley MA 02482-5989, (781) 237-0485

**WHEN:** On display through March 30th.

### In Memoriam: Patrick M. Tynan

The Massachusetts Horticultural Society lost a long-time trustee and friend on December 31 with the death of Pat Tynan. In recent years Tynan, 66, grappled with ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) and, though it was difficult for him, he was able to remain very active to the end of his life.

An avid amateur horticulturalist and botanist, Tynan devoted substantial time to MassHort, serving as both a volunteer and on the Board of Trustees where he was secretary.



Born in New York City, Tynan attended Manhattan Preparatory School and was graduated from Manhattan College in 1965 with a degree in Philosophy. He then moved to Northampton, MA, where he pursued a graduate degree in Philosophy at UMass Amherst, and where he met Mary Ann, his beloved wife of 42 years. They were married in 1967 and moved to Dedham, where he became a teacher at Dedham Country Day School.

He loved teaching, and stayed at DCD for 34 years, during which he taught almost every subject, coached almost every sport, and worked in Admissions, Placement and Development. Upon his retirement in 2001, a scholarship fund was created in his name. The fund seeks to promote diversity in education, a mission that was very important to him throughout his life.

His children, Cate and Emily, were born in 1976 and 1979, respectively. One of the great joys of his life was being a father to his girls, and later, a grandfather to Ellis, born to Cate and Brendan in 2008.

He loved being out of doors, whether bird watching on long walks, or in his garden in Dedham to which he devoted much of his energy, or at his homes in Trescott and Deer Isle, Maine, places that were very dear to him, or at the botanical gardens and arboreta to which he traveled.

He enjoyed his interest in the outdoors and in public service after his retirement. In addition to MassHort, he served as a trustee for the New England Wildflower Society. His volunteer efforts also reflected his love of public institutions and his communities in Dedham and Maine: he was former member of the board of directors of the Dedham Community House, a member of the Ralph Lowell Society Committee at WGBH, Boston, a volunteer at the Franklin Park Zoo, and he was involved in any number of land conservation efforts in Maine.

Those wishing to honor his memory may make a contribution to the Patrick M. Tynan Scholarship Fund at Dedham Country Day School, 90 Sandy Valley Road, Dedham, MA 02026 or to Mass General Hospital's ALIC M. Clinical Research Fund, 165 Cambridge St., Suite 600, Boston, MA 02114

### Short Takes

Congratulations go out to the Berkshire Botanical Garden of Stockbridge on their 75th anniversary in 2010. On 15 acres, they grow 3,000 species of regionally appropriate plants. It is one of New England's oldest and most treasured public gardens. As early as 1941 it received a Gold Medal from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for "an excellent and well-planned garden with the understanding utilization of a difficult terrain".

If you've ever seen a car bearing a bumper sticker with the legend, "NO FARMS NO FOOD" and thought it a sentiment you shared, they're available without charge from the American Farmland Trust at www.farmland.org or 1-800-431-1499.



### February Horticultural Hints



by Betty Sanders  
Lifetime Master Gardener

Our January thaw brought us rain and warm temperatures last week, but with temperatures plummeting again, bundle up and check your garden. All that rain melted their snow cover and, without that snow to blanket them, perennials and some small shrubs could have been pushed out of the ground. If the soil isn't frozen, try pushing the plants gently back into place so roots won't freeze. If that isn't possible, use mulch, compost or even piles of leaves to cover the roots and provide some protection. As early as possible in the spring, replant them properly.

Grapes, blueberries and most fruit trees should be pruned now. Check gardening books or dependable web sites for details such as when to prune and how to prune. Wash leaves to remove dust. Prune out any dead or yellowing leaves. Because days are longer now, you can start repotting houseplants. And begin fertilizing houseplants a long later this month.

Use bad weather as an opportunity to finish ordering from seed and plant catalogs. Ordering now means you get the widest choice of seeds and plants, and ensures you'll be ready to start seedlings for spring planting. Some seeds need to be started now to in order to be ready to transplant when the soil is warm enough. You can safely order bare root trees and tender plants now. The nurseries will ship them at the right time.

More bad weather? Read those gardening magazines and order seed that have piled up while you were busy with the holidays. Lay out your vegetable garden on paper (don't forget to book seed to replant areas as spring crops finish in early summer.) Sketch your property plan and decide if there are areas you want or need to renovate.

Houseplants may need some extra attention now. Dry air in our homes encourage predators such as mealybugs and aphids. Mist plants or use pebble trays to increase humidity. Wash leaves to remove dust. Prune out any dead or yellowing leaves. Because days are longer now, you can start repotting houseplants. And begin fertilizing houseplants a long later this month.

Finally, give the gardener in your life a Valentine gift certificate to a favorite nursery or a signed-for garden tool instead of a bouquet of flowers or a box of chocolates.

### The January Thaw



by Neal Sanders  
Leaflet Contributor

It is a myth wrapped in hope, buttressed by observation, but ultimately nothing but serendipity. The January thaw came one morning last week and temperatures that day soared into the fifties. Coupled with an inch of rain, the blanket of snow on my lawn was temporarily reduced to a few strips of white thrown by the snow blower.

As a naturalized citizen of New England I come to the January thaw as an observer and not necessarily as a true believer. I am well aware that for the past thirty days the temperatures have seldom crept above freezing. But I also still have the irrefutable evidence that I retrieved the newspapers that morning in nothing but a robe. So, indeed, because that day's Boston Globe bore a January date, it must have been the January thaw.

I first heard of the January thaw when I lived in North Carolina after college. A co-worker who had grown up in Schenectady, New York, told me that when the Capital District enjoyed its one- or two-day January thaw, people drove around in convertibles with the tops down, in tee shirts and bikinis. This happened despite the fact that temperatures would top out at around 40 degrees. I didn't believe him: It was too preposterous. But then, I didn't believe the tale of the L Street Brownies descending into Boston Harbor on New Year's Day, either.



The January thaw begins a three-month-long ritual of shifting plants. Last month, I wrote that the tropics which summered on porches and patios came indoors for the winter to glean sunlight through south facing windows. A contingent of perennials and quasi-hardy plants made do in the garage where they jostled for the feeble light through a single window.

On the first morning of the January thaw, those plants rode on wheelbarrows outdoors for two days of January sun. They were encamped in rows on the driveway where the asphalt provided additional retained heat. That there was snow just a few feet away did not matter. The rain washed their leaves and provided their first moisture in weeks.

This year we are wintering over approximately twenty containers (another twenty or so to re-group them in the garage. Last year, a smaller number of containers made more than a dozen such excursions. Some were as short as a single day but in March and April, the outdoor respites stretched to three and four days.

If my math is correct, that means I'll spend eight or nine hours over the course of this winter running a plant shuttle. It's a modest price to pay for early greenery and to see old, reliable plants come back stronger each year.

Finally, as a side note, the accompanying photo of snowlingers plants out for their January sun also shows our efforts to protect a Thuja occidentalis, or western cedar from the depredations of owl blowers. In November, we pruned metal fence posts into the ground around the Thuja, then placed burlap roughly five feet high between the fence posts, strung with wire. As of the end of January, the burlap is light and the tree untouched. It is both decorative and effective.

*Neal Sanders is a frequent contributor to the Leaflet. We encourage you to read his contributions to our In the Gardens Blog where he focuses on interesting cultivars that can found in the Elm Bank gardens. Neal's first novel, Murder Imperfect, has just been published. You can learn more about it here or order it through Amazon.com.*

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### About the Massachusetts Horticultural Society



Founded in 1829, the Massachusetts Horticultural Society is dedicated to encouraging the science and practice of horticulture and developing the public's enjoyment, appreciation, and understanding of plants and the environment.