

Leaflet

A MASSACHUSETTS HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION

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Leaflet - Flower Show 2010

The Curtain Goes Up on Wednesday!

You know what Boston needs? A really good flower show. And do you know what it's about to get? A really spectacular flower show.

For the past three months, in greenhouses all over New England, in sunrooms, in window boxes and in carpentry shops, teams of people have been putting together the Boston Flower & Garden Show. On Wednesday morning at 10 a.m., the curtain goes up for five days of color, scent and texture.



The show is proving that winter has an end and that after six months of snow, nor'easters, monsoons and leafless trees, there's light at the end of the tunnel.

Getting there is easy. The Seaport World Trade Center is a short walk east of the Financial District. The Silver Line from South Station stops just a block away and there are ample surface parking lots at very reasonable prices.

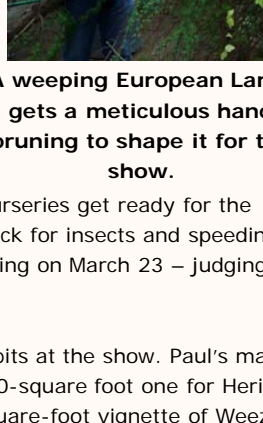
If you've already gotten your tickets, just walk into the show. If you haven't gotten your tickets, you can still beat the lines by going on line and buying them at the Paragon Group's the Boston Flower & Garden Show's web site.

Once inside, be prepared to be overwhelmed. It's a big show with lots to do. There are 40 landscape exhibits and hundreds of vendors. There's a lecture hall featuring all-day talks on gardening subjects and a demo stage with subjects to appeal to every taste. Click here for the full schedule. Don't forget that MassHort has programmed a full day of talks on 'Gardening Essentials' on Thursday!

As you make your way back through the landscape exhibits, keep an eye out for exhibits organized by MassHort's: there's a fabulous display of orchids presented by several New England orchid societies and stunning plant rooms. When you see the Big Red Chair (it's hard to miss), you're at the Weezie's Garden vignette and you're welcome to bring the kids in for a photo in Elm Bank's iconic piece of oversized furniture.

Beyond the Big Red Chair lies Blooms!, MassHort's flower show within the flower show. Through the doors of the Conference Center are 14,000 square feet of inspiration. You'll see the top Amateur Horticulture competitors, two floral design competitions featuring 112 exhibits by many of the top amateur designers in New England, more plant rooms, window exhibits, plant societies and gracious Ikebana.

So, go for the professional landscapers or to see how hundreds of amateur horticulturalists can grow such beautiful plants. Go to shop the gardening-themed vendors or to hear the big-named lecturers. Go to see all those breathtaking floral designs or to get ideas for your back yard this summer. Above all... go! It's a feast for the senses, and it's not to be missed.



A garden vignette under construction

Getting Ready for the Show

The two greenhouses near the Falmouth Country Club are unobtrusive. Each 100 feet long, they're set well back from the road in a farmer's field. Sheathed in translucent plastic, they might shelter hothouse tomatoes or tropical plants on this chilly day in mid-March.

But inside is something entirely unexpected: six thousand square feet of exuberant, emerging New England springtime. Plants are jammed pot to pot: roses are showing tiny buds, azalea and rhododendron are ready to burst. A 25-foot-tall weeping magnificum Katsura is laying on its side, fully leafed out, its root ball soaking wet and protected by tires and bags of mulch. It is an even 80 degrees with fans moving the wonderfully humid air.

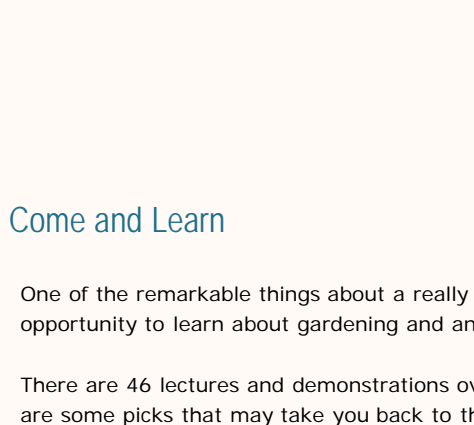
Welcome to the greenhouses of landscaper Paul Miskovsky. It's a Friday, twelve days before the opening of the Boston Flower & Garden Show. Wearing a tee shirt and sweating in the heat and humidity, Paul is going over every plant, assessing its progress toward spring flowering. The Katsura is right on track. It will likely occupy a place of prominence in his main exhibit. Nearby are a trio of stunning red maples that need only an overwintering picnic hamper.



A weeping European Larch gets a meticulous hand pruning to shape it for the show.

"This is what people expect to see," Paul says, gesturing at banks of azalea in nursery pots. "They want to see the middle of spring with everything in perfect bloom. Our job as landscape exhibitors is to deliver that perfect day in May."

Clippers in hand, Paul attacks a tall weeping European larch. Branches are meticulously pruned back to greenery, the better to force the tree into prime condition for the show. Behind him, rows of yellow Knockout roses with their deep reddish brown leaves are budding up.



Everywhere, horticulturalists are grooming plants, check for insects and speeding or slowing the flowering process; each one striving to be perfect starting on March 23 - judging day at the Boston Flower & Garden Show.

From Paul Miskovsky's greenhouse will come material for four exhibits at the show. Paul's main garden exhibit will be 1100 square feet. He has also designed a 650-square-foot one for Heritage Garden and Museum and will supply trees and shrubs for a 200-square-foot vignette of Weezie's Garden for MassHort as well as for the information booth of the Massachusetts Master Gardeners.

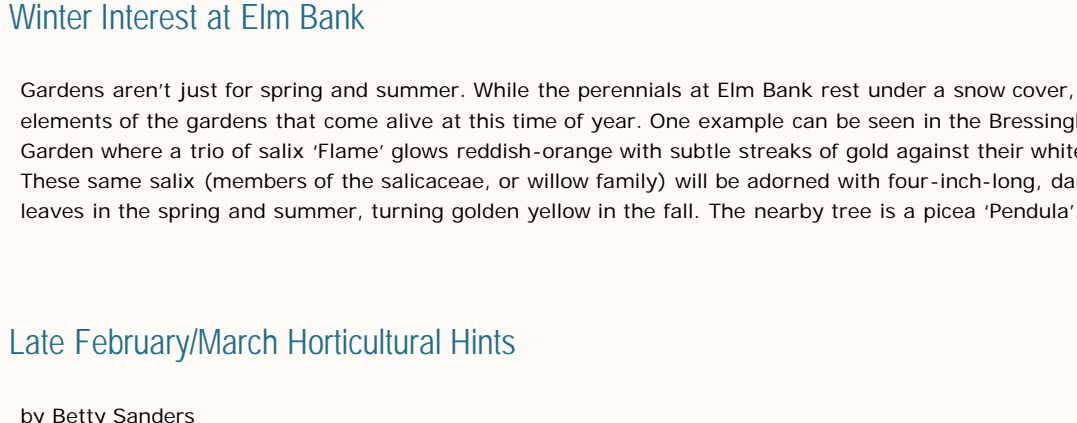
Paul is a veteran exhibitor at flower shows. Heritage Garden and Museum is new at the game and Paul offered to help them out. "With the Sagamore Bridge under perpetual construction, people need all the reminders we can give them to come out to the Cape," Paul says. "Heritage is bringing one of their great antique trucks, which we'll also fill with flowers and a surprise. It's going to look terrific."

But that's only about two thousand square feet, a visitor notes. There are three times that amount of plant material in the greenhouses. Paul nods and smiles. Only the best of these plants will go into the final display: the ones with the perfect blooms. There are also extra plants to help out other exhibitors with whom Paul has worked in the past.

"We're all working toward the same goal," Paul says. "We all want to see the looks of peoples' faces when they walk in out of the cold and see a perfect spring day in New England."

Behind the Scenes

Painting, carpentry, writing, pruning, staging. An event of the scale of the Boston Flower & Garden Show requires months of planning and a small army of volunteers to make it happen on time. Shown here are just a few of the people who are working to ensure the show is a success.



From left to right, Carrie Waterman, Lee Patterson, Clark Bryan and Diane Cullen mock up an exhibit that will honor Cortiss Engle

In a Norwood sunroom, Norwood Evening GC member Vivien Bouffard grooms plants planned for that club's display at Blooms.

Small tasks for a large project - Doris Shiels schedule for paints lumber for the Master Gardener information booth.

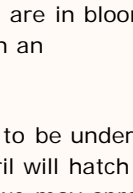
Vera Bowen, who wrote the schedule for Division II, inspects placement of 'Dessert Anyone' Look for it in the Seaport Ballroom

Come and Learn

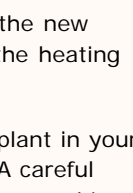
One of the remarkable things about a really good flower show is that it's more than just an opportunity to look at beautiful gardens. It's an opportunity to learn about gardening and ancillary subjects.

There are 46 lectures and demonstrations over five days at the Boston Flower & Garden Show. A full list of them can be found here, but these are some picks that may take you back to the show on multiple days: On Wednesday, there's Bill Cullina, Gardens Curator of the Coastal Maine Botanical Garden. Bill has authored some of the best books on plants written in the past decade and he's a great speaker. He's on at 11:30 a.m. At 5:00 p.m., garden writer Hilda Morrill take the stage with 'A Feast for the Garden Traveler'. Hilda is as entertaining as she is knowledgeable.

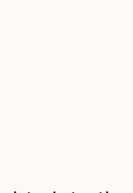
Thursday is MassHort's 'Gardening Essentials' day, which kicks off with Art Scarpa at 11:00 a.m. speaking on 'The Care and Feeding of Houseplants'. At 12:30 p.m., Roger Swain, Paul Miskovsky and Kerry Mendez take the stage to field questions on any subject. Between these three, there's no question that can stump them, so why not stop in and ask your best one? At 1:30 p.m., Rita Wollmering offers 'Ready, Set, Plant', an expert's guide to vegetable gardening. At 2:30 p.m., Betty Sanders sorts through the hype and arguments about 'organic' versus 'inorganic' lawns with 'The Green, Organic and Affordable Lawn'. Then, at 3:30, Cathy Felton shows you how to reinvigorate an older garden with 'Time to Renew: Editing the Mature Garden'. Finally, Sally Muspratt addresses the needs of the city gardener with her 'Small Is Beautiful: Landscaping in the City' talk at 5:00 p.m.



Art Scarpa



Roger Swain



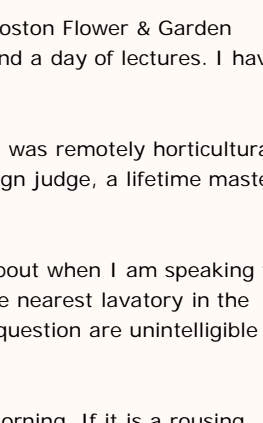
Kerry Mendez

On Friday, don't miss Scott LaFleur, Director of Botanic Gardens at the New England Wild Flower Society, when he talks on 'Listening to the Landscape: Using Nature's Clues to Design a Garden That Works'. If you missed Roger Swain on Thursday, you can catch this wonderful speaker and raconteur on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. when he offers 'Tool Talk'.

Last, but hardly least, Carol Stocker takes to the lecture stage on Sunday at 3:30 p.m. Her talk will be 'The Garden Tourist' and will be on the less-well-known nurseries of New England and the unusual plants you'll find there.

Winter Interest at Elm Bank

Gardens aren't just for spring and summer. While the perennials at Elm Bank rest under a snow cover, there are elements of the gardens that come alive at this time of year. One example can be seen in the Brevingsham Garden where a trio of salsic 'Flame' glows reddish-orange with subtle streaks of gold against their white backdrop. These same salsic (members of the salicaceae, or willow family) will be adorned with four-inch-long, dark green leaves in the spring and summer, turning golden yellow in the fall. The nearby tree is a piece 'Pendula'.



Late February/March Horticultural Hints

by Betty Sanders
Lifetime Master Gardener

It's almost March which means it's almost time to start watching leaf and flower buds swell on the trees and shrubs. It's definitely time to cut some branches for indoor forcing, and perhaps to enter in the Flower Show (see the nearby article).

The ground is still frozen but planning your 2010 garden should be well underway. Your flower and vegetable seed order should be arriving soon. Check the packet for advice on when to start seeds. Starting them too early often leads to leggy or weak seedlings from having spent too long waiting indoors for warm weather to arrive. Use only sterile soil mixes to prevent damping off of seedlings.

Take a walk around your yard (staying off frozen ground) and enjoy the earliest flowers. Witch Hazels (Hamamelis) are in bloom and cornelian dogwood (Cornus mas) are close behind. As snow cover gives way look for hellebore blooms to put in an appearance along with the early bulbs such as snowdrops, Siberian squills and crocus.

If you had a lovely blizzard of moths last November or December around your outdoor lights, your plants will soon to be under attack. That blizzard was winter moths -- an unwanted invader of our land -- who between mid-March and late April will hatch from eggs laid in the bark and crawl into the leaf buds of many of our trees. Once there, safe from any pesticides we may spray on them, they will chew away at the new leaves. They seem to particularly favor oak, maples and fruit trees but will eat almost anything they encounter including roses and perennials. After the leaf buds open, the mature caterpillars will spin threads and be spread further by the wind. Appropriately timed sprays can reduce their number and the damage to your plants. Contact a state-certified arborist to spray your trees particularly if they have been weakened by infestations in the past years. For more information about treatment for winter months, see [this article](#).

Your houseplants should have awakened from their winter slumber. If you haven't already, begin fertilizing to feed the new growth. Don't forget to keep the humidity up with misting or pebble trays--our homes remain very dry as long as the heating systems are on.

Your best plants deserve to be shown at the Boston Flower and Garden Show. There's a category for every plant in your home. Take a look at the [Amateur Horticulture entry list](#) under Blooms on MassHort's website and start priming. A careful cleanup, from washing leaves with warm water to removing imperfect leaves and errant dirt and debris, is the path to a shiny ribbon. Entry day is March 22, 12 noon to 8 p.m. at the Seaport World Trade Center.

Coming Clean

by Neal Sanders
Leaflet Contributor

It is time for me to come clean.

In these essays over the past year, I have shared with you what I hope are some moderately amusing insights into the world of gardening and horticulture. I have written of my brush with Lyme disease and the formulation of the Rule of Three. I have pontificated on the rite of the January Thaw and the rights of the turtles that lay eggs in my garden.

For the past nine months, though, I have been living a double life. And because I will be unmasked in the next few days (and my double life has been hinted at in the press on at least one occasion), I feel you should hear of that transgression directly from me.

I am the chairman of Blooms!

Blooms, as you know from reading the rest of the Leaflet, comprises six distinct activities at the about-to-open Boston Flower & Garden Show. There are two floral design divisions, an amateur horticulture division, a bevy of plant societies, Ikebana, and a day of lectures. I have the overall responsibility for making certain these things happen on schedule.

I spent 35 years in the corporate world, managing 'stuff' (further explanation puts me to sleep), none of which was remotely horticultural. I am blessed, however, with a spouse who has achieved in their job descriptions. Clark Bryan is MassHort's director of plant gardener, and an astute observer of the human condition.

Because of her, I am able to parrot certain phrases that allow me to sound as though I know what I am talking about when I am speaking to the heads of the various divisions. It is a skill akin, when in a foreign country, to being able to inquire where is the nearest library in the local language. Unfortunately, just as when I have been in Egypt or Greece, the words spoken in response to my question are unintelligible to my ears. Only the accompanying pointing is useful.

Despite my hopelessness to the task, the 2010 version of Blooms! will be unveiled in all its glory on Wednesday morning. If it is a rousing success, it will be the result of six astonishingly accomplished people. Like me, none of them volunteered for this. They were pushed to the front by their respective organizations or else they stepped up when they saw that help was needed.

If you are in the Blooms! area and see their names on badges, please stop them and congratulate them. In no special order, they are Carrie Waterman and Ellen Todd, the co-chairs of Amateur Horticulture; Art Scarpa, the coordinator of all things having to do with Plant Societies, Maureen Christmas and Joyce Bakshi, the irrepresible heads of, respectively, the Division I and Division II floral design competitions, and Gilbert Moore, who heads the Ikebana International display.

The time these people have given to make Blooms! possible is astonishing. Each has devoted, at minimum, many hundreds of hours over the past nine months to planning and executing their respective group's exhibits. Over the past few weeks, their work has been non-stop. They, in turn, have each overseen several dozen far-flung volunteers who worked on committees within committees.

Two professionals' also merit gratitude for going far above and beyond anything in their job descriptions. Clark Bryan is MassHort's director of facilities. He keeps in his head (and is slowly putting on paper) the enormous inventory of show-related property MassHort has in its basements and a warehouse. Every stick of furniture and every prop you see in the Blooms! area and in the three MassHort parcels was recycled from earlier shows, thanks to Clark's prodigious talents. The second professional who must be thanked is Paul Miskovsky. Paul is a trustee of MassHort and a virtuoso landscaper, but he is also extraordinarily generous with his resources. If you visit the Big Red Chair while at the show, know that everything around it was supplied by Paul, and that it was Clark who had the inspiration to build an exhibit around the chair.

My job has been, for the most part, to stay out of these capable people's way. When I have been of help, it has been to coordinate their activities with Carolyn Weston, who talked the Paragon Group into putting on a flower show, and who has choreographed the resulting taste of spring for winter-weary Bostonians. It is clear that Carolyn thrives on this responsibility and it shows in her consummate professionalism.

It is invigorating to be around MassHort these days. It's more than just seeing the first perennial shoots coming out of the ground in the Elm Bank gardens: it's recognizing that the organization has come through a long spiritual winter with its mission and drive intact. I hope you'll come to the flower show this week and share a sense of that re-birth.

Neal Sanders is a frequent contributor to the Leaflet. He encourages 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.